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**Return of the Indian:
Bone Games, Transcription, and Other Gestures of
Indigeneity**

by

Mark Allen Minch

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
in
Rhetoric
and
the Designated Emphasis
in
Women, Gender, and Sexuality
in the
Graduate Division
of the
University of California, Berkeley

Committee in Charge:
Professor Trinh T. Minh-ha, Chair
Professor Judith Butler
Professor Thomas Biolsi

Fall 2014

Abstract

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Native Americans are currently in what is being called a ‘renaissance.’ A term that in its application to Native Americans was originally understood to have been a matter of literary production, a re-birth on the level of imagination, its focus has shifted recently to the (re) production of peoples themselves through various projects of cultural and biopolitical revitalization. Much of the material basis for this (second) re-birth lies in material culture, more particularly, the collections in museums, echoing the use of stories and rites from the archives in Native American literatures. Rebeginning from and with the ruins: What are these materials collected during the heyday of colonial violence, understood by ethnographers and anthropologists at the time to be ‘salvage’ of the remainders of peoples on the verge of disappearance? In the somewhat rationally organized, but often baroquely cluttered, immensity of fragments, there is produced an odd relation to the post-apocalypse where the collections function as contested political sites of open and incomplete identity formation. Because of the difficulty of materialization in its relation to the scripted imagination, this space of (re) production is both gestural and transcriptive, made emblematic by the relation between the collection and the archive.

Return of the Indian explores the possible uses and misuses of these sensitive materials in their reappropriation by tribes for various revitalization projects, and tries to understand the current situation of Native American identity within such a politics and art of recovery. Drawing on perspectives from philosophy; postcolonial theory and indigeneity; literary theory; art practice; and women, gender and sexuality studies, this dissertation seeks a sensitivity to the materials that respects opacity and the role of the interval in the delicate practice of (re)making *Indians*. Located between what Michael Taussig has called the “rituals” of University based knowledge-production and the politico-tribal praxis of reproduction of indigenous subjects using the University’s materials and methodologies, it follows the path and praxis of an indigenous call for return.

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This dissertation is dedicated to my daughter, Mikaela Ysabel de Leon Minch.
As I continue searching for my voice, I look forward to you finding yours.

Introduction Moving Parts

Stories tell us that healing gifts,
along with other gifts, have
retreated into a cave, but
one day they will return.

--Adrian Smith (Concow), quoted in "Songs of the California Indians"

The world is revived in a masked form,
in a masked way, not as a mask, but
through a form of masking and as its
result. The masking does not precisely
conceal, since what is lost cannot be
recovered, but it marks the simultaneous
condition of an irrecoverable loss that gives
way to a reanimation of an evacuated world.

--Walter Benjamin, *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*

This dissertation is animated by two movements: loss and recovery.

The Ethno-Photographic Turn

In this day and age, it has become increasingly urgent to ask: what kind of image does one carry of her/himself when identifying as Native American? It is also important to question how--in what forms--this image, originating outside of oneself, is carried and in what circumstances it is confronted. One need only note the prevalence of cultural revitalization projects in this context, a prevalence seen in both the proliferation of such projects and the various levels on which legislation is passed on their behalf, to see that many Native identities are not easily reproducible; in fact, they require struggle and effort to maintain and to recreate. *Coming on the heels* of an understood threat of disappearance--overtly recognized in the practices of salvage ethnography and anthropology¹--the exigency to identify is mediated by various forms of preservation. To multiply these difficulties, the projects undertaken by both tribes and individuals are often done in concert with academics, researchers and institutions, the very same institutions and intellectual traditions that historically have been critiqued for facilitating the (perhaps virtual) disappearance of Native peoples through the preservation processes that

¹ From the *Dictionary of the Social Sciences*: "Generally associated with the anthropology of Franz Boas and his students among the American Indians around the turn of the twentieth century, salvage ethnography is an explicit attempt to document the rituals, practices and myths of cultures facing extinction from dislocation or modernization. Because the objects of such study are often already gone, it relies heavily on second-hand accounts and reminiscences rather than on direct participant observation." Salvage anthropology refers specifically to the collection of cultural artifacts and human remains rather than the general collection of data and images.

produced the materials now being used for revitalization. It is in such complex sites of encounter that this dissertation will *set up shop*.

Embodied, dialogic, multimediated, reflexive: these are the current conditions of representation towards a new *Total-Image*, a more supple and live one based on acts of critique, and sometimes resuscitation, of the fixed and dead images of the past by the self-correcting colonial forces in their perpetually updated ethnographic and anthropological modes. This new image isn't an image at all, it is said, nor is after a fixed totality, but rather seeks a step beyond the regime of representation through the intricate wedding of image and materiality. As Jean Baudrillard succinctly put it, *we have swallowed the mirror*. Representation has been consumed and assimilated by the forces of production. (Re)production. Medium. "What characterizes the so-called advanced societies is that they today consume images..." (Barthes, *Camera Lucida* 118-119). Multiple and with new powers drawn from its mutation, it now functions at a cellular level, locally, and dispersed uniquely into each and every identity, no matter how large or small, as an internalized caesura. The very darkness of matter now shimmers with an infinity of opaque reflections. Almost seen. Almost there. In relation to the project of revitalizing Native identity, this should give pause. While practices of representation--ethno-graphy, for instance--have moved in directions that seek to disavow their own pasts, dematerializing in some cases (moving away from collections as sources of knowledge), textualizing, performing, and seeking new, sometimes experimental, but more flexible and reflexive forms of representation/production, Native peoples have become the inheritors of the dangerous, abandoned images and objects of past knowledge-production: the collections and archives. It is in these so-called 'ruins of representation' that many revitalization projects are *taking place*.

These ruins take many forms thanks to the multimedia approach of many anthropologists, "...including texts (primarily in Native languages), ethnographic observations, sound recordings, artifacts, as well as photographs. All were discrete objects in some way, and all could ultimately be preserved in a museum or archives" (Jacknis 4). Speaking about the ethnographic collections located at the Phoebe Apperson Hearst Museum on the UC Berkeley campus, Ira Jacknis, former curator of and current researcher at the Hearst Museum, states, "Native people are now the most *interested* and dedicated users of these ethnographic collections" [my ital] (7). I can give a personal example to support this: in 1993, my mother, a basket weaver, was awarded a Native Arts grant to study the vast collection of California Indian baskets housed in the Hearst Museum. While in the collections, she was informed by the curator that many of their ethnographic photos had been digitally uploaded to the Online Archive of California. The curator offered to use the search engine to see if any of my mother's family members had their photos there, and, in the collection titled, "Guide to the California Ethnographic Field Photographs, 1900-1960," were two images of my mother's grandmother: a slightly blurry facing head shot and a more focused profile.

From this first encounter, I can confidently say that, when I arrived on campus for graduate school in 2006, I had *heard tell* of the existence of these images. I had never seen them, and, to be honest, I had half-forgotten them. But it had become part of family lore, a complicated mixture of colonial encounters in itself (like the marriage of my great-great grandmother, Julia Lowry, a medicine woman, to the settler John Lowry; Julia's father, who had arranged the marriage, was a Washo tradesman who traveled between Washo country and Maidu

country, where Julia lived, as well as between a family in each, and froze to death one winter while traveling in the mountains between them; the families only discovered each other when both went searching for the father, meeting somewhere in the middle). Needless to say, the conditions were there to *pique my interest*, as Jacknis alluded to.

While doing research (really just drifting) in the online ethnographic collections of the curator and anthropologist, Edward W. Gifford, close associate of the pre-eminent leader in California Anthropology, Alfred Kroeber, I came across these images myself. Taken by Gifford, they were entitled, “Edna Lowry August, 1922” and “Edna Lowry (profile) August, 1922.” Having heard tell of them, I was only half-surprised. In many ways, actually, I was confirmed. The ‘oh, there you are’ confirmation of family lore mingled, perhaps uncomfortably, with the ethnographic evidence of one branch of my Native descent--a question of authenticity that gets raised for many mixed Native people, especially in California due to its violent and turbulent past (this is no small matter as a firm, but problematic, line often gets drawn in Indian Country between those who remain close in some way to their Native descended genealogical records and those who have heard tell that they were Indian--the latter have even facetiously been offered their own tribe, the so-called ‘Wannabes’). Family and ethnography: a split in the function of the photograph is highlighted when the question of the use of these photographs gets raised during the process of recovery. Scientized objects recover their subjectivity through familial descent, after passing through death, a process that I somewhat metaphorically refer to throughout this dissertation as ‘transcription.’ “Photography transformed subject into object, and even, one might say, into a museum object...” (Barthes, *Camera Lucida* 13). Barthes is concerned in this quote with the imposition on his singularity by the process of being fixed as a museumized image/artifact, but what happens when, on the other side, that of the viewer, the actual museum object becomes a member of the family? In relation to the *image-repertoire*--the set of external images by which we perpetually constitute ourselves--the becoming object of the subject is a “micro-version of death (of parenthesis)” (14). What of this micro-death gets inherited?

The role of the family in photography, and photography in the family, as it gets understood in relation to being Native, resonates with the genealogical record, those spaces of identity that are provided as metrical and quantified proof of one’s Indianness. This is a familial form that has been produced in tandem with (hard) scientific evidence (it is seen as somewhat socially acceptable, though still highly problematic, with certain mixed-raced peoples to ask ‘how much’ of a race/culture/identity they are, yet with no group other than indigenous peoples has it become a refrain: ‘how much Indian are you?’; this is a question that marks the continued anxiety of disappearance, and it gets scientific support through the criterion of authenticity, as evidenced by this quote from Jacknis, “The lives of Native Californians had changed immensely since contact, especially in such crucial aspects of material culture as clothing and houses. Even their bodies had changed, with significant degrees of intermarriage. The camera could be of little use in documenting ‘the appearance they presented on discovery.’ It could not record a vanished culture” (4)). Neither precisely the intimacy of the bourgeois family, nor supplement to the insecurity of the burgeoning nuclear family, this familial form *isn’t quite kinship either*. Marked by a logic of race, mediated by an algebra of ‘past and present’ across the divide of a fragmented image, it holds within itself this image as an impossibility of recording a vanished culture, presencing an absence in the family tie, yet continuing to disturb the familial affect. Ancestor,

evidence, object, (great- (grand-)) mother, “A family’s photograph album is generally about the extended family--and often, is all that *remains* of it” [my ital] (Sontag 6). Why aren’t ethnophotographs on the wall or in the album? Are they left in the collections for a reason? My mother does have a photograph of Edna Lowry with her husband, Robert Lowry, on the wall in her house, but it stands in distinct contrast to the ones in the collection, as the two figures’ full bodies are shown standing next to each other, still posed, but lacking the objectification inherent in the ethnophotographic image. The one on the wall fulfills a typical, sociologically defined function of family rite. The ones that *remain* in the collection no longer serve scientific purposes, even though they still bear the form of science, and are *interesting* only to us, their descendants. This ambivalence marks such objects/subjects as ‘postvernacular,’ participating in a pastiche of the everyday. Passing through death, family lore meets hard ethnographic evidence in the form of *interest*, self-interest as mediated by an objectified fragment, partial self and partial other: an interest in reanimation as work on the image-repertoire. This is part of the continuing legacy of the violence of encounter between knowledge-production and indigenous peoples. “To collect photographs is to collect the world” (Sontag 1). To re-collect them is to collect an evacuated world.

In the frontal image of my great grandmother, the process of becoming death through objectification itself gets objectified in the distinct reflection in her eyes of the light source. If, as Barthes has argued, the photograph as a medium is distinct for its matte-ness, its function as objective evidence that the referent was indeed ‘there’ (the indexical gesture of a child, for him), then the absolute inseparability of the referent from the medium of representation exposes the violence the medium enacts on the referent through its very act of preservation. “The Photograph belongs to that class of laminated objects whose two leaves cannot be separated without destroying them both...” (6). One cannot separate the referent from the medium, my great grandmother from the ethnophotographic image of her, without destroying both. “It is as if the photograph always carries its referent with itself, both affected by the same amorous or funereal immobility, at the very heart of the world: they are glued together, limb by limb, like the condemned man and the corpse in certain tortures...” (6). The photograph sticks, like a flypaper made of light. What kind of delicate treatment is necessary to handle such a sensitive image? And what kind of rescue is possible? Even a more moderate claim, such as the one by Eric Michaels, that, “One could pursue at length the ethnographic significance of people’s fear of cameras and accusations of spirit theft. Or one might simply admit there is a certain sense to the proposition that using someone else’s image, property, or life as a subject to be recorded, reproduced, and distributed is a kind of appropriation,” maintains a sense of the harmfulness of image-making (Michaels 2).

The gluing together itself, as act, has been captured in this image. In the moment of encounter between a technology that one could assume lies outside of my great-grandmother’s image-repertoire *and* her image-repertoire proper--the object of ethnography--which gets eclipsed in the articulation caused by the light source, by the two lines of reflected light slicing across the irises of her eyes, objectification gets objectified. The reflected light is the invisible glue holding together the seemingly inseparable referent and medium, a seam in the otherwise translucent lamina. Appropriately, the reflection interrupts her gaze, obscuring the pupils, a gaze which, if left uninterrupted, would be, like the technologically limited recordings of certain songs

of mourning, unbearable. The glossy eyes show the effects of lamination. This irruption of the medium into the flattened distance between lens and eyes raises several questions: What did she see when asked to pose before the camera? What infinity did she stare into, knowing that the condition of her being recorded was her and her people's assumed disappearance?

My mother had initially told us that Edna Lowry must've been dying when this image was made due to her drawn-in face, accentuated by her protruding, crooked teeth and large, glossy and etherealized eyes. She did die of tuberculosis, but not until 1938 (the photograph, as mentioned, was taken in 1922). Yet, my mother was not wrong. Edna Lowry is caught in the moment of dying, by the very technology that makes of the image both a death and the deferral of death, a mourning and the deferral of mourning. "These early technologies stage the vanishing 'now' to construct a past that can be accessed (and mourned) at some later time" (Sontag 4). She is going to get tuberculosis/she has tuberculosis. She is going to die/she is dead. "Whether or not the subject is already dead, every photograph is this catastrophe" (Barthes, *Camera Lucida* 96). Barthes was inspired to write this statement by a photograph of a young man, Lewis Payne, waiting in his cell to be hanged, in relation to a photograph of Barthes' recently deceased mother as a child, whom Barthes was still mourning (perpetually mourning in a state of melancholia). But in the photograph of my great grandmother the catastrophe is ongoing in a different way. The staging of the vanishing 'now' links the medium performatively to its use for knowledge-production, of 'the ethnographic present.' The staging of an unadmixed past through the prosthesis of media, the production of the ethnographic present has been heavily critiqued for its ideological quality of illusion (the image of a whole). But this doesn't alleviate the effects of such an image materialized in the archives and collections, especially as these become the materials for reproduction of a people. It's not simply a moment or an individual that is risked and lost by technologically produced nostalgia, but the past itself for entire peoples.

The scientific side of things carried its own split. Author of *California Anthropometry*, Edward Gifford was interested in the intersections of ethnology and archeology (the ethnos and the arche). Both reconstructions, the 'ethnographic present' and the 'archeological past,' met, for him, across the measurements of the body. This is why my great grandmother is photographed both in front-view and in profile (though, the online titles are reversed, indicating the stirring of vertigo in the space between text and image). Such a facial identification system, most recognizable as the form of the 'mug shot', is here part of the survey of physical anthropology conducted during the developmental years of California Anthropology. The difference between the intent of the mug shot and that of physical anthropology is made clear, though, by the fact that the subjects of the ethnographic photo often remain unnamed. Though my great grandmother is named, Alfred Kroeber, in relation to his photographs, for instance, often only

gave the tribal association and some general cultural information. Even his Deer Creek series of photos of Ishi are labeled simply “Yahi.”²

Generally, Kroeber presented his images very closely to how he originally photographed them, with little cropping, enlargement, or retouching. In his captions, he used his pictures to construct an ‘ethnographic present.’ None of the people illustrated in the Handbook [*of California Indians*] are identified by personal name, which were often known to Kroeber. For instance, pictures of Ishi shooting a bow and drilling fire are identified as “Yahi” instead of with Ishi's name. Nor did Kroeber date any of his photographs in captions until after 1940, when he began to publish his research in collaboration with his students. By then, these images had achieved a kind of historical significance. (Jacknis 6).

Despite the formal analogy of face-profile in both ethnophotography and ‘the mug shot,’ survey and surveillance take distinctly different valences. The recognition system of the mug shot acts as a database for individualization and legal responsibility, while the “head shots, posed in linked frontal and profile pairs,” “suitable” for a physical anthropological survey, act as evidence for arguments concerning broader racial (and/or cultural) groups, a form of deindividualizing across multiplicity (of tribes) (Jacknis 5). The ethnographic use of such a posture in the image and relation between images follows the development of the technique for legal procedures. It also follows the more arbitrary and incipient use of photographs in general to recognize suspects, such as in the famous case of the French Police’s use of photographs to identify Communards, the evidence leading to their arrests and subsequent executions.

But, photography’s beginning, as an art of the person (identity, civil status, the body’s formality) is complicated by the splitting of identity that occurs in ethnophotography where the sacrifice of the individual for the race is played out on the representation of the other, who becomes pure stand-in for the race. The individual identity, emblemized by the mug shot, is made possible on the material ground of the racial identity based on scientific difference. This event of death is even more significant in the case of salvage ethnography in that the purpose was to capture a stilled image of a disappearing race for the record, even if only in shades (“1/2 Achumawi, 1/2 White”). Barthes’ “impossible science of the unique being,” as a labyrinthine search for the essence of photography through what is most loved, by entering Love and Death

² Ishi was a Yahi Indian who spent the majority of his life in the Sierra Nevada foothills. His tribe was massacred in successive attacks, until Ishi and his family went into hiding. With the exception of an encounter with a group of surveyors, in which the surveyors took everything of value from the camp, including the blanket in which Ishi’s sickly and elderly mother was hiding, the tribe was considered extinct for nearly forty years. In 1911, Ishi came into the Northern California town of Oroville looking for food. He had burnt off his hair, a sign of mourning, and it is thought that he had outlived everyone in both his tribe and his family. He was at first arrested for “thievery” and then taken by anthropologists to live in the University of California, Berkeley Museum of Anthropology as both a research assistant and a display until his death in 1916 from tuberculosis. During this time he had befriended Kroeber, calling him affectionately ‘Big Chief.’ His presence had also caught the imagination of the American public as “the Last Wild Indian.” The recovery of his remains from the Smithsonian and subsequent burial is a controversial case of repatriation that is detailed in Orin Starn’s *Ishi’s Brain*.

backwards (Barthes as parent to his mother), is precisely what is foreclosed by the ethnographic photo entering the ‘family’ through the possible attachments of kinship and resemblance (*Camera Lucida* 71). What is most insidious and to be feared in the photographic image, for Barthes, is the appearance of “a genetic feature, the fragment of oneself or of a relative which comes from some ancestor” “the inhuman distance of Stock” (103, 105). Yet, the ethnophotograph is precisely the accentuation of these traits.

Under the titles, “Hybrids” and “Achomawi,” in which it is said “They are grouped under the respective California groups to which one parent belongs” are the list of numbers associated with (the photos of) my great grandmother:

Edna Lowry. F 37 St 1710 Hsh 1405 HMF 640 Str 1760 HS 900 WSh 360
 LF 450 LH 190 BH 144 LFH 186 LFN 123 BF 135 LN 52 BN 35 LE 66 BE
 32----RI 102.9 CI 75.7 FI 91.1 NI 67.3 EI 48.5 (half white----U (lighter than)
 24 E 25 (ruddy on cheek bones) (Hrdlička 298).

Measurements of her age, body (primarily) and skin tone, these numbers insert themselves into the metrical space between the two photographs. Like all metrical units, they both facilitate connections and infinitely separate. Simply facing the camera, the image could be read as a pared down document of humanity exposed, similar to Dorothea Lange’s or Walker Evans’ work (though, significantly, not Edward Curtis’), minus the aesthetic composition or even steady hand (it’s a bit blurry, testament to the frantic nature of the survey as a snapshot of quickly disappearing peoples). But adding the complement of the profile, the turn away from the direct gaze of the camera with its capture of the soul in the subject’s eyes, turns the affect away from humanism towards scientific meter. The turn here is both a metrical step and a step into meter. This would seemingly put the images outside of the purview of Barthes’ intended project, one, oddly enough, summed up by his dream of being “a primitive, without culture” while looking at the photographs he loves (*Camera Lucida* 7). These images would be simply ‘cultural,’ made so by the obsessively cultural gaze of the ethnographic frame, in a series, scientized by the metricization of the body. But perhaps some wounds aren’t personal. Can one be excited, enticed, *interested* (and not the mediocre form of interest that Barthes classifies as *studium*, “that very field of unconcerned desire, of various interest, of inconsequential taste...”) by the resolutely impersonal that is us/not us (our orthopedics)? (27). In this sense, Barthes’ primitive without culture is an impossibility, or perhaps a condition, or a desire. Inappropriate, to family, to culture (hybrid), to science (antiquated form), the ethnophotograph is too cultural and too savage, an impossible existence to maintain, condition for revitalization and maintenance.

I had thought, at first, that the sensitivity that poststructuralism has had for disappearance would offer me a way to think through the problems associated with the politics of recovery for Native Americans. In troubled ways it has, but Roland Barthes, as mentioned, who wrote of the photograph of his dead mother as the departure point for researching all photography, a departure

point found only after having entered the labyrinth along a thread of light³ and a photograph that he insistently hid from the reader, could not have discussed the discursively produced disappearance of his great grandmother, found in a public archive and viewable to all, with the same categories he so delicately developed for his subjective science. His photograph was insistently intimate, while ‘my’ photograph was part of the ruins of representation in a way that was made persistently anonymous to me. Similarly, the current trend to think indigeneity through the lens of routes/roots, a homonym made rigorous by James Clifford, doesn’t seem to take into consideration the time period of colonial confinements, forced marches and relocations, opting instead to think indigeneity across mobilities in the form of past trade routes and current articulations. It was the realization that the best tools for approaching the sensitive materials that I’m *interested* in had limitations that has lead me to begin listening to the concepts deployed with an other ear for indigeneity, including the complex relation between poststructuralism and anthropology, what Christopher L. Miller, in discussing Deleuze and Guattari’s, *A Thousand Plateaus*, has referred to as “the power of anthropological borrowing” (quoted in Byrd 15).

There are, of course, many different situations in which ‘museumized’ Native American objects and texts exist, including public museums, private museums and collections, and tribal museums. In this dissertation I have focused primarily on those collections and archives under the control of ‘institutions of higher learning’ both public and private. This is in part to highlight the roles of property and power in relation to histories of knowledge-production, particularly as this relation has played out in the co-constitution of anthropological disciplinary sciences and tribal/indigenous identities. As laboratories of identity, Universities and Colleges have played fundamental roles in the colonization of Native peoples, and the rich and ongoing debate over the ethics and usefulness of entering into this difficult terrain of academia that carries on the legacy of these laboratories within Indian Country is one that I gladly throw my hat into. But, more importantly, it is the bones and such that I follow in their persistent opacity. And the pattern of the bones has dictated that repatriation as an indigenous gesture will be played out in the ongoing encounter between Native peoples and institutionalized knowledge-production.

Curating the Self

The salvage archive is a secondary image-repertoire for Native Americans, one that is discursively produced as an impossible priority. It is an image-repertoire externalized, materialized, and, like the laminated photograph according to Barthes, objective. The individual in relation to the image-repertoire has been theorized as incomplete, a project that is an ongoing assembling of fragments. This process is made explicit in the confrontation with the archive in a factual way. The archive (collections) is an assemblage of fragments according to the idea of a whole. Like the museum, then, the self is curated. In the context of academia, one cannot dismiss the tools of one’s creation. This curation of the self is also a textual situation, and participates in the role of the author(ity) of the text.

³ “...it is necessary that, leaving aside vast regions of darkness..., a slender thread of light search out not other symbols but the very fissure of the symbolic” (Barthes, *Empire...* 4). Also Barthes quotes Nietzsche’s prophecy, “A labyrinthine man never seeks the truth, but only his Ariadne,” in *Camera Lucida*, following along his “slender thread of light,” of the photographic essence towards the photograph of his mother.

There are often two movements of the introduction of the author in relation to the produced text: the consolidation, even if a questioning one, of an ‘I’ of *the narrator* through the narration of an origin of the writing (an emergence narrative); and the consolidation of the ‘I’ of *the author* through disappearance, a careful expiation of the personal, into the content. Both the performance of originary voice in the form of narration and the dispersion of voice into the text itself uphold the authority of the “I”; the first through an obvious procedure of introducing a personal account of the origin of research (this text began with such and such encounter) which is assumed to also be that of the author, and the second by eliding such a discussion in jumping right into the material or filling it with a tissue of quotations. Either the text foregrounds the narrative voice of ‘I’ or neutralizes it by foregrounding the content of the text: a false dichotomy. And yet, what is one to do? In facing the problem of writing an introduction to a text, one that introduces the reader to...(the text? the author? the material? them-self?), how can this be done? And, if the ‘body’ of the text doesn’t necessarily call for an account of its production in relation to the author, does the introduction? The introduction is caught between the ‘auto-biographical’ ‘emergence narrative’ and the de-personalized contextualization and abstraction of a ‘traditional’ preface that Jacques Derrida famously deconstructed in his own preface to *Dissemination*, a depersonalization that asserts the authority of the ‘I’ all the more strongly through erasure into objectivity. This mirrors, of course, Derrida’s analysis of prefatory writing, of which he says, “Prefaces, along with forewords, introductions, preludes, preliminaries, preambles, prologues, and prolegomena, have always been written, it seems, in view of their own self-effacement” (Derrida 9).

The knee-jerk reaction to this dilemma is/has been to fantasize a full disappearance into the text, thereby abnegating responsibility. Some have seen this as the very gesture proposed by the *death of the author*; a notion that I explore in the last chapter in relation to its figuration and elision of indigeneity, but one that is more complicated than it at first seems. It does raise the question: Why the anxiety and its effect of either hyper-identification or absolute exteriorization? The problem cannot be to reach the point “where one no longer says I,” but it is rather, as Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari have eloquently stated, to reach, “the point where it is no longer of any importance whether one says I” (*A Thousand Plateaus* 3). Social criticism, in this vein, would partake in the struggle of authorship as an important form of identification and commitment, one that places the author somewhere between the forces of creation that are the material/textual means of representation and knowledge production *and* the never fully stable context of writing. Consistently seeking but never finding the appropriate means of expression, the text can be a site where the ‘I’ comes and goes, never settling, never finally arriving or departing, and never, most importantly, comfortable in its ambiguity. The ‘I’ is first and foremost a tension. And ‘I’ feel it most when ‘I’ write “I”. And yet, I also feel its twinge when I write certain other words. For instance, I cannot write the words ‘Native American’ or ‘Indian’ or ‘American Indian’ without simultaneously including and excluding my-self. This has been a difficulty for me that runs through the entirety of this dissertation, a writing *on* Native Americans in large part.

Gerald Vizenor’s approach to this problem is useful in that he rigorously distinguishes between instances of representation with different terms. He writes, “the simulation of the *indian* is the absence of the native, and that absence is a presence of the *other*, the eternal

scapegoat, but not a native past; the native is a trace of presence” (*Fugitive Poses* 35). Relying on a logic of simulation, the *indian*, for Vizenor, is the product of literary and (pseudo-) scientific representations of ‘the native’. Through such an effacement, though, the native is only known through absence, an absence marked by the simulation that is the *indian*. Presence and absence depend upon each other, as the *indian* as simulation couldn’t presence without the absence of the native, while the native past, it could be argued, wouldn’t be known, even in its absence, without the presence of the *indian*. This difficult interplay of absence and presence gets worked out through what he calls ‘the ruins of representation’ which is the space of both fragments of images that have undergone various forms of critique, the shattering of the *indian*, and the material fragments of a people laid to waste through colonial encounter which still maintain a ‘shadow’ of the native. In this space of ruins, of images and things, it is the trace, the written remainder, that dominates the logic through absence and presence, but Vizenor opens up the possibility of a third term, what he calls the *postindian*, who works with these difficult materials in a way attentive to the ‘heard words’ of a shadow language, or the continuation of stories in a different way. The remains of the spoken word, after having passed through ‘oral literature,’ a distinctly transcriptive process, retain shadows of an origin. The shadows are the trace-like remainder of such words as they have been heard, an inversion of the logic of the written trace. This inversion complicates Derrida’s notion of phonocentrism by reminding that indigenous peoples have been structured in colonial encounters through the orality/literacy divide, through a valuation that turns phonocentrism on its head. And, like Deleuze and Guattari’s notion of a minor literature that exists in a major language, Vizenor situates these shadows in a *paracolonial* language that participates in, para-sitically, the dominant colonial language. So it is not the actual words that are heard but their shadows, a shadow language of stories.

The terms available, then, have various trajectories. Primitive-Native-Indigenous make a series, tracing an assumed progression in discursive encounters from early travel narratives to colonial reports to transnational declarations. Indian-American Indian-Native American make another series that seemingly also marks a progression bounded by state borders and national development, one that slowly effaces the ‘indian’ for the ‘native’ across the shift from adjective to noun, qualifier to substantive, of ‘American’ (an equally ambiguous, though thoroughly hierarchized, term).⁴ Indigenous-Aboriginal-Indigene-First Nations-Tribal Peoples...The Fourth World make a series that resists progression by constantly indicating priority, a mode of collectivity made available across borders (at least, ideally) that nonetheless continues to refer back to each of their specific contexts in their differences. In relation to the term ‘indian’, Gayatri Spivak has pointed to the difficulty and specificity of situating oneself in a position from

⁴ This movement is realized most strongly in the ubiquitous hyphenating of ...-American, with its attachment to any and all cultural and national identities as a form of multi-cultural, liberal assimilation and reduction of the specific identity to an adjective for a more universal US citizenship. The ‘Native’ of Native American, then, would be a simple placeholder to be filled in with other identities, a position that both includes and excludes the native from the multicultural conglomerate. The possibility of full inclusion has to do with both the assumed priority, noted by the term ‘native’, and the fact of being a minority within a minority, multiculturalism marked as it is by its own paradox of being a major discourse that includes minorities through the good graces of the major (whiteness).

which to speak, in this case by reference to the ambiguity of India and the Americas.⁵ Russell Means has questioned the accepted doctrine that Columbus misjudged the size of the earth by indicating an etymology of the term, *in dio*, or ‘of God’, which would assign an edenic position to the peoples he encountered, an interpretation born out by the perpetually vacillating sign of savage/primitive that runs throughout early colonial documents.⁶ And Jodi Byrd responds to Louis Owens’ attempt to divide the term with some stability and leave the “geographic homonym” behind in his critique of postcolonial theory, “As If an Indian Were Really and Indian,” by pointing to becomings that invert the East/West divide through a rhizomatic understanding of geography as a way to say “Yes they are!” (Byrd 13). So to write “I” (already a difficult proposal) in the same sentence as “indian” cannot be anything other than to participate in ‘a situation of writing’ in the very robust, yet elusive, sense that Roland Barthes gives this phrase:

This situation is the very one in which a certain disturbance of the person occurs, a subversion of earlier readings, a shock of meaning lacerated, extenuated to the point of its irreplaceable void, without the object’s ever ceasing to be significant, desirable. Writing is after all, in its way, a *satori*: *satori* (the Zen occurrence) is a more or less powerful (though in no way formal) seism which causes knowledge, or the subject, to vacillate: it creates *an emptiness of language*. And it is also an emptiness of language which constitutes writing; it is from this emptiness that derive the features with which Zen, in the exemption from all meaning, writes gardens, gestures, houses, flower arrangements, faces, violence (Barthes, *Empire...4*).

And what is the desirable object for many Native Americans? That which resides in the ruins of representation. *Part and parcel* of indian identity, these fragments *come with the territory*. All the lines of identity run through the colonial encounter, whether *we* want them to or not, and this means that identity runs through the images, discourses, and artifacts associated with knowledge production, as made evident by the ubiquitous call to recovery and work done on the archives and collections. To be *postindian* is to write bones, round houses, flicker feathers, deer-toe rattles, baskets, as well as tattooed savages, ‘indians without ancestry’, bricoleurs, nomads, potlatch and Tonto, indian in the cupboard, dancing with wolves, to write them in such a way that the heard stories hear.

⁵ Speaking of the different, geographically specific appellations of identity to which she answers, she writes, “In the United States, she is ‘Indian.’ Subterfuges of nomenclature that are by now standard have almost (though not completely) obliterated the fact that that name lost some specificity in the first American genocide” (*Outside...4*).

⁶ This ambivalence exists in the term ‘savage’ itself. At a particular moment in Old French, the English words salvage and savage met fortuitously in the same morphological *salvage* or *sauvage*. Going further back, they fork off again into other directions: *salvaticus* and then *silva* both meaning ‘wild’; and *salvere* meaning ‘to save’. How can this fortunate meeting, in a linguistic form, of the forest and the sanctuary, just a brief linguistic moment, be thought, and what has happened to the savage’s wandering “L” (curved sometimes into a “U”) ever since?

Like Luna's *Artifact Piece*, discussed in the third chapter, one way to curate this relation between 'I' and 'indian' is to keep returning to the disturbance of the boundary between the anthropological museum and the art museum in order to continue to think about the politics of cultural revitalization as a praxis of un-making, un-writing, and working with the dangerous, preserved and transcribed materials as debris of the ruins of representation and the destruction of a people. Gail Tremblay's film baskets, which I discuss in the first chapter, are a wonderful example of this practice. My critical position as being someone intimately related to both the anthropology museum (my great grandmother's photos being in Kroeber's ethnographic archive; my Mom frequently does basket weaving demonstrations in museums, has built traditional dwellings in museum displays, and has even included me in a display of "Native Americans of the future" as exemplum of a "student," an experience I describe in the final chapter) and the art museum (the Maidu artist and auto-ethnographer Frank Day blurred the boundary between plastic arts and ethnography by questioning the relation of language and image in relation to cultural preservation in his paintings and self-recordings; he was the teacher of the artist and cultural leader Frank LaPeña, the leader of the Bear Dance spring ceremony that I have been attending most of my life; he also influenced my Mother's cousin, Judith Lowry, who is a well known painter in the Native community), which I navigate through postcolonial, gender, and indigenous critical discourses, is an entryway into the critical interval of the curator. The personal is representational and productive, and the world walks by, with each step taken.

Interdisciplinarity and the Sacred: A Gestural Relationship

The 'Go Now, Pay Later,' formula of the travel agencies might as well read: 'Go Now, Arrive Later,' for it could be argued that such people never really leave their beaten paths of impercipience, nor do they ever arrive at any new place.

--Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media*

Winona LaDuke begins her book, *Recovering the Sacred: The Power of Naming and Claiming*, with the question, "How does a community heal itself from the ravages of the past?" (11). She finds an answer in the "multifaceted process of recovering that which is sacred." Relating this to the problem of the fullness or emptiness of the museum and the history of knowledge production based on this vacillation, in chapter two I discuss the concept of *heritage* as remainder in the form of neglected collections. The dematerialization of many disciplines has lead to a situation where the products of salvage collecting practices are no longer significant objects of study, and yet, to paraphrase one scientist's opinion on the matter, they are kept because *like books in a library, you never know what you are going to need*. What is interesting about this situation is that the negotiations between museums and tribes seeking repatriation have often ended in a system of sharing, in which the items continue to be housed in the museum, while being used for ceremonial purposes. In an indigenous epistemological sense, this is a form of making sacred, as many sacred spaces in Native American cultures are derived from disuse or removal from everyday dwelling practices, a process that I term the *postvernacular*.

A genealogy in critical theory has worked on such concepts as *everyday use* and *the removal of things and beings into a separate sphere*, often deemed the spheres of the profane and the sacred. Walter Benjamin's notion of "aura" functions in this way, with a progressive technological development of reproduction and access by the masses through dissemination together causing a withering of such a form of power through use, a profanation (*Illuminations*). Taking this notion further, by somewhat inverting it, Giorgio Agamben makes the museum the primary figure of dis-use, "The Museum occupies exactly the space and function once reserved for the Temple as the place of sacrifice. To the faithful in the Temple--the pilgrims who would travel across the earth from temple to temple, from sanctuary to sanctuary--correspond today the tourists who restlessly travel in a world that has been abstracted into a Museum" (Agamben 84). The museum is the secularized version of the sacred, the sphere to which things and beings are moved when consecrated to the gods and removed from the use of "men." The museumification of the world, that Agamben describes, indicates a more universal sense of this movement brought on by capitalism, an important discussion but one that will be deferred because of the constraints of this introduction. It does, however, raise the concomitant idea of the *worlding of the museum*, another issue of disturbing the boundary placed between representation and production, and between theory and praxis. To say that museums contain worlds is a banal fact and a weak piece of advertising, but to say that the museum worlds is to say that something generative is going on in such a site, or even that the site situates in a processual way. This would make the museum a dwelling; it would also be the exact inverse of the museumification of the world and its implication of the impossibility of dwelling anywhere.

The impossibility of using has its emblematic place in the Museum. The museumification of the world is today an accomplished fact. One by one, the spiritual potentialities that defined the people's lives--art, religion, philosophy, the idea of nature, even politics--have docilely withdrawn into the Museum. "Museum" here is not a given physical space or place but the separate dimension to which what was once--but is no longer--felt as true and decisive has moved...everything today can become a Museum, because this term simply designates the exhibition of an impossibility of using, of dwelling, of experiencing" (84).

Agamben calls such a condition the "unprofanable" or that which is permanently consecrated to the gods, permanent because the caesura that marked the threshold across which the sacred and profane moved is now distributed horizontally across the board, enacted in each and every thing as a museumizing (transcriptive) process. It is the power of display. How would Agamben, though, respond to the use of museumized artifacts for spiritual purposes? How would LaDuke's call to recover the sacred, in a multifaceted way, be read here? This seems to be a double maneuver of removal from the sphere of the human and use. Two different forms of separation, into the museum and the sacred, an anachronism which indicates the secularization and universalization of the religious functions of sacrifice to the pagan European gods on one side, in the form of museumification, and the desecularization of the products of knowledge production, remainders, for the sake of the sacred space of non-dwelling. Recovery here is a double

procedure involving both museum and ritual. This might not lead to the “human” defined by spiritual potentialities that Agamben is interested in, the one who rules over the sphere of the profane, managing it with contagion over what is edible,⁷ but it could lead to a different sense of “community,” one to whom the stories and healing gifts have returned after their going under and into the cave, as described by Adrian Smith in the epigraph. Perhaps.

One of the potentially important aspects of interdisciplinarity is the struggle with outmoded, inappropriate or even dangerous discourses. In consistently putting one’s writing at risk of such appropriations, the other risk of shoring up boundaries is potentially avoided. In some sense, this is playing through resonance, or perhaps registration, by putting something marked into play through discourses that cannot contain it. There’s also the struggle constantly renewed to develop a space, an interval, that would belong to no one, what Trinh T. Minha refers to as “an ‘empty’ center, non-aligned, always-and-not-yet-occupied space where the tension between past and present is politicized, hence neither negative nor simply positive” (*Framer Framed* 205). It is precisely such a space that is necessary to work with the materials described as somewhere between the ruins of representation and the sacred, to recover what has been lost in such a way that recognizes the impossibility of this recovery. This interdisciplinary space lies somewhere between the sciences (social or hard depending upon the materials) and the humanities, and this dissertation seeks to straddle this divide, work within this interval, in such a way that rigorously prolongs the neutrality of the sacred. In terms of writing, one should feel the struggle with the discourses. It shouldn’t be seamless. Rhetoric remains important, in this regards, because of the questions of signification and discursive production that get raised by such a movement. But the failures of texts to adequately reference or signify things get pushed to an extreme point, materialized, through the disappearance of a world--in fact--as it relates to the disappearance of languages. The notions of “gesture” and “the neutral” are important as they require one to work within the politics of making, the intervals and seams through which a discourse or text is put together. Organizing principles, when followed rigorously, often refer back to this neutrality, and considering the so-called dead end of postmodernism’s conception of the ruins of representation, return is something that must be made in order to understand the current state of revitalization politics for indigenous peoples who rely upon the fragments housed in archives and collections.

This type of research requires a dual path, one that follows a critique of language, texts and signifying systems, and one that follows the bodies impacted by those modes of signification and their critiques, a condition that Butler, in her *Afterword* to an edited collection on *Loss*, “After Loss, What Then?,” refers to as *catastrophe* (469). A notion of language as torn, fragmented, and rendered impossible, and yet, in the materialization of it caught in recorded voices in the archive, this dead and dying language that materializes the theoretical concerns of poststructuralism tends towards things in a different way. This is because the world referenced has likewise disappeared, which indicates the material side of the equation. Archives and collections, then, lie in intimate and yet infinitely separated proximity to each other, and

⁷ “One part of the victim [of sacrifice] (the entrails, or *extra*: the liver, heart, gall bladder, lungs) is reserved for the gods, while the rest can be consumed by men. The participants in the rite need only touch these organs for them to become profane and edible. There is a profane contagion, a touch that disenchant and returns to use what the sacred had separated and petrified” (74).

practices, performances, rituals, and revitalization programs need to be thought in terms of such a difficult reanimation as a form of making politically and ontologically. Such a relationship can be understood in relation to Butler's notion, borrowing from Benjamin, of *gesture*. Gesture, in the form of voiceless movement--mime, has lost its referent. It is through such choreographed movements that loss emerges, "when established narratives begin to falter, suggesting that narrative functioned as a way of containing loss" (468). In particular, the narrative of eschatological hope has faltered, and it is only through a certain spatialization of history, the catastrophe and failure of a progressive narrative, that this loss registers.

What emerges from the ruins? An impossible speech and gestures without referents. In fact, it is the impossibility of speaking that animates the body, possessing it in some sense, by marking it as interrupted, quotable, "as if telling is supplanted by moving, and moving, which has no direction and is motivated by no causality, becomes its own kind of display" (470). This empty movement, perhaps despite Benjamin, can be read as ritual, as the empty form that is tradition. In the collapse of history into spatialized practice, one that registers loss and also registers the irrecoverability of what has been lost, there's another strange inversion possible in relation to indigenous peoples. Eschatological hope has not been lost, as that was not a hope in the indigenous framework, but it is the accomplishment of eschatology, collapsed into the catastrophe by being acted out on indigenous peoples through colonization and continuing forms of domination, materialized (unlike Agamben's "Museum"), that leads to an irrecoverable loss. It is the task of indigenous peoples to recover not what is unrecoverable, but the sacred in which "irrecoverable loss...gives way to a reanimation of an evacuated world" (471). This requires movements of loss and recovery, choreographies of what remains in the ruins of representation, and the bonds formed when loss becomes the condition for new relations and senses of community, ones "for whom the irrecoverable becomes, paradoxically, the condition of a new political agency" (469).

Chapter 1 approaches writing from the standpoint of *what remains*. Writing, understood in its material and figural senses, in the articulation of these two, is a trace that both remains and effaces that which it represents. In the context of indigeneity, writing initially comes in through the act of transcription, the written, the act of preserving or making remain what has been described as disappearing, which, as salvage ethno-graphy, makes fragments. What is lost in transcription, as Roland Barthes has noted, is the body. In the act of recovery, through the use of fragments, writing (as differentiated from the written) acts as the embodied motion of investing the fragments with a new corporeality, a practice best exemplified by certain versions of feminism, particularly women's writing, but what is risked is the effacement of the disaster itself through the (re)production of life.

Chapter 2 turns to two specific cases of controversy over the repatriation of human remains. Part 1 investigates 'culture' through the legislated notion of 'culturally unidentifiable,' a category created during the passage of the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) as a catch-all for the remainders of the collections housed by governmentally funded higher education institutions after having passed through identification procedures that have failed. This failure opens up questions of voice, representation, and institutional power through the location of a research team whose task it was to identify the remains. Part 2 investigates 'race' through the ambiguous remains of a skeleton, collected from the Columbia

River bank in Washington state, that was identified by one scientific discourse as morphologically caucasoid and by another as chemically over 9,000 years old. This contradiction strikes at the heart of notions of priority and belonging as they relate to the formation of Nation-States, and is not cleared up by the predominant form of testing for geographic origin, as the bones are so old that they are essentially empty of DNA. The aporia produced by these conflicting discourses opens up a radical potential through the framework of an indigenous epistemology, one explored by Gerald Vizenor's "modest proposal" to institute a federally recognized court to hear the cases of Native American bones, to listen to their testimonies, to let them tell their stories.

Chapter 3 follows the path of Bone Game, a traditional Native American gambling game, in its physical, gestural, and consciousness forming aspects. As an emblem of cultural continuity and tradition, the game acts as a center for cultural identification but one that, like the ash of the fire across which it takes place, remains empty thanks to the rules of the game and the roles of those who play. As a space of encounter, it opens up the relation of research between anthropologist and informant to interrelation, challenge and a politics of night and the dream.

Chapter 4 takes the notions of 'path' and 'interrelational space,' developed in Chapter 3, further as it examines the continuing role of research in the context of indigenous peoples. It seeks not a technical writing about research methodologies, written for those who speak such a language, but rather an 'other writing' and an 'other research,' that work within the shifting dynamics of researching, un-researching and re-researching. As Linda Tuhiwai Smith notes, this isn't simply a matter of anti-research. Even in the case of indigenous peoples, where she writes famously, "From the vantage point of the colonized, a position from which I write, and choose to privilege, the term 'research' is inextricably linked to European imperialism and colonialism. The word itself, 'research', is probably one of the dirtiest words in the indigenous world's vocabulary," the positioning required is complex (1). Disturbing the boundary between 'insider' and 'outsider,' this chapter seeks to explore a position of the insider-outsider, a position that continues to point to the difficult relationship of encounter/contact, the ongoing relationship between indigenous peoples and Eurocentric institutions of knowledge-production, as it gets mediated by research, a situation that Smith refers to as 'struggle.'

In the move from primitive to native to indigenous subjectivation, understood both politically and formally as occurring through a return, research continues to thread through the colonial discourses that claim knowledge of the indigene, passing through the neutral concept of gesture. It is through gesture, often understood to relate to the plastic space of the indigene--standing at the threshold of nature and politics, the immemorial and historical--that current calls to revitalization become indigenized. This indigenization happens in the uptake of anthropological concepts into theory as well as in the critical theory turn of Native American studies through an active refunctioning of research as an indigenous agenda. And gesture, in its theoretical formation, as the spatialization that avoids historical action, marks the limits of the production of anthropology's "reign of worn codes," as well as its transgression, through a suspension of meaning (Trinh, *Woman, Native, Other*).

Chapter 1 Writing What Remains

Suspended between forms either disused or as yet unknown, the writer's language is not so much a fund to be drawn on as an extreme limit; it is the geometrical *locus* of all that [s/he] could not say without, like Orpheus looking back, losing the stable meaning of [her/his] enterprise and [her/his] essential gesture as a social being.

--Roland Barthes "What is Writing?"

...The idea of creating people from feces occurs in some Chippewa tales...in our series Wenebojo creates some Indian Warriors by defecation here and there and sticking feathers into turds.

--Victor Barnouw (quoted in Gerald Vizenor's *Earthdivers*)

Return to the Sources of Creation

Native Americans are currently in the throes of a cultural revitalization taking place on multiple levels. One of the questions I will be concerned with in this chapter is the status on one of these levels of remains. This question can be read doubly as either meaning: what remains of a culture that has faced a disaster such as the settlement of a Nation-State and/or how is such a disaster reflected in the material remains collected and preserved during the settlement process? And, in the product of recovery itself, the implicit question that haunts the other two, likewise haunted by them, is *what remains of the disaster?* This implicit question points to the difficulty of the material and/or materialization of the remainder, as evidenced by *the idea of a cultural whole* that preceded the encounter, the encounter which produced the notion of "culture" through difference, a thoroughly immaterial sense, but one that continues to animate the use of fragments in the collections and archives, that are material remainders of the violence of this encounter, for recovery. This is to ask if recovery is possible in any total sense, while knowing fully well that it is not because the *notion of totality* is what led to the fragmentation in the mode of salvage ethnography. It is also to ask, in such a condition, what is the mode of making that is recovery? This is the question of writing what remains in the disaster.

What is the disaster? "I call disaster that which does not have the ultimate for a limit, but bears the ultimate away in the disaster" (Blanchot, *Death Sentence*). From Maurice Blanchot to Jean Baudrillard, it has been noted that the disaster leaves everything intact. *That* is its threat. On the topic of health and population, for instance, Baudrillard notes that, demographically speaking/boasting, there are now more Indians than before contact (*Simulations* 22). His response, though, is that this biological resurgence is a form of death that betrays the very concept of limitations imposed by tribal organization, an ethnographically produced concept that he himself is critiquing. "Demographic 'promotion', therefore, is just one more step towards symbolic extermination" (23). This is a form of death that makes any event of Death impossible. Drawing on a concept based in ethnology which, for him, is already marked by the murdering act

of preservation through representation, Baudrillard here shows the difficulty of existing between two different modes of authenticity, one delimited by the pressure of survival--tribal--and the other erasing this limit through the promotion of life itself using “prosthetic” means--demographic population management. Together, the two make the current notion of indigeneity as reproduced and reproducing tribal peoples, a notion that partakes in two forms of death at odds with each other. Marking a separation based on similarity, he writes, “*We* too live in a universe strangely similar to the original--here things are duplicated by their own scenario. But this double does not mean, as in folklore, the imminence of death--*they* are already purged of death, and are even better than in life; more smiling, more authentic, in light of their model, like the faces in a funeral parlor” [my ital]. The disaster, in this sense, lies somewhere between a “we” and a “they” and requires the return of a time that is only marked by knowledge production in the form of ethnology--so a time strictly unknown--and is used to decimate the limits that were artificially produced as authentic in order to produce this notion of time. Blanchot calls such a notion of temporality the “interval” and places it somewhere between the *no longer* and the *not yet*. The *no longer* and the *not yet* are two forms of catastrophe. Between catastrophes lies the disaster, which, in the case of Native Americans, is based on the materialization of such a non-event as described by Baudrillard in the vacillation of living/dead in the face of the made-up corpse: transcription. It seems that something more is at stake than nostalgia for “real indians,” a nostalgia that even Gerald Vizenor rehearses with his concept of the *postindian*, a hyperreal construction that fills the gaps in reality with the signs of real “Native Americans.”

To resist the disaster is to ask *what remains* in such a way that the erasure or effacement, effected through the very act of preservation or renewal, is made visible in its being written, the line of transcription that deletes whatever movement it was meant to preserve in the very act of “promotion” itself. As that which has been theorized most in relation to both disaster and remains, it is towards *writing*, as both an act and as representation, that this question will point. ‘Writing of the Indian’ in the double sense of writing about the Indian and the Indian’s (impossible) writing, marks the site of encounter as one mediated by transcription, where the orality and literacy divide vacillates in value between the illiterate savage, who speaks into the recording device on the precipice of disappearance, and the poetic (perhaps phonocentric) primitive, who remains closest to the sources of creation. This necessarily requires exploring different notions of space and time, as “Clock time is dominance, and those who research the unsaid in time are marooned in the ruins of representation. The shadows of heard stories are not bound by the measure of time and space” (Vizenor 14). Marooned on an island, or reservation, what Vizenor also refers to as a *landfill*. “Landfill meditation restores the tribal connections between refuse and the refusers” (Vizenor, *Landfill Meditations* 99). So what is left? “Come meditate on trash and swill odors and become the waste that connects us with the earth” (105).

Products of colonization, industry, and the search for knowledge, and yet stubbornly resistant to being fully accounted for, the materials collected and housed in institutions of higher learning during the heyday of salvage ethnography incessantly point to an origin imagined to be whole and to their own status as fragments, whole in their partiality. In the wake of devastation, many Native Americans have access to their identities as tribal peoples through such materials, placing their identities outside of themselves and inside the institutionalized processes at work in and on the archives. This makes these collections and processes imminently significant to Native

Americans. “Linda Hutcheon pointed out that accession to the past in fiction and histories is through the traces of “documents, the testimony of witnesses, and other archival materials. In other words, we only have representations of the past from which to construct our narratives or explanations” (Vizenor, “The Ruins of Representation” 8). Despite Vizenor’s claim regarding Hutcheon’s statement that such a, “narrow accession would burden the narratives of chance and the shadows of tribal survivance,” I feel that it is important to linger in this narrowness. Perhaps it is precisely such a burden, a burden perceived in the ambiguity of *what remains* where the very force of reanimation can be activated. Approached as an enigma, both in the force of the question and in its form, one that would continue to make visible the act of erasure, the phrase has a number of possible meanings: how does one write (...) the remains?, a fairly pragmatic problem that leaves open the space of the preposition (about, of, with, to, in, beside); how does one even write the question, ‘*what remains?*’, an ethical and political issue about the appropriateness of this question in the context of cultural revitalization for Native Americans; and finally, what remains of writing itself?, both technologically and philosophically an issue of representation. Amidst the articulations of all these ambiguities, the silent and difficult spaces, lies the burden to begin again in the ruins of representation.

If we do indeed have a “desire to understand present culture as the product of previous representations,” something Vizenor sees as such a burden, how do these representations relate to the collected materials, themselves understood in some way to be representative of a culture? It is in writing that this relationship takes place. “The Native American Indian ‘implicitly acknowledged he could continue living only in the white man’s representation of him,’ wrote the historian Larzer Ziff. ‘The process of literary annihilation would be checked only when Indian writers began representing their own culture’” (Vizenor, “Ruins of Representation 14). Burdened with the weight of the image of a cultural whole and the material remainder of a disaster, it will be in confronting how to write this, the impossibility really, where the enigma will be felt as weight, the weight and claustrophobia of the question *what remains?* In confronting this enigma it will be important to try to keep ambiguity fresh and active throughout.

Trinh T. Minh-ha has said “that the writer’s choice is always a two-way choice. Whether one assumes it clear-sightedly or not, by writing one situates oneself vis-a-vis both society and the nature of literature, that is to say, the tools of creation...neither entirely personal nor purely historical, a mode of writing is in itself a function. An act of historical solidarity, it denotes, in addition to the writer’s personal standpoint and intention, a relationship between creation and society” (*Woman, Native, Other* 20). Form and politics: two ways to commit oneself as a writer. Two ways one must commit oneself in order to be a writer (to choose not to commit is still a choice that bears on commitment). Society here is, of course, not a monologic concept but is rather deeply divided, articulated and hierarchized in a number of ways. There is no *society in general*; there are always multiple temporalities at work in any social encounter. To ignore this is to assume a spirit of the times that, even when revolutionary, cannot but have a hegemonic cast, placing the writer in the position of reactionary. But the struggle is multiple and takes place on multiple sites, multiple levels and in multiple ways. “As focal point of cultural consciousness and social change, writing weaves into language the complex relations of a subject caught between the problems of race and gender and the practice of literature as the very place where social alienation is thwarted differently according to each specific context” (*Woman, Native,*

Other 6). The question of *writing what remains* in relation to gender will be approached in Part 2 of this chapter, but here it will be noted that the profound task by certain feminisms of re-writing the woman's body, a body repressed and fragmented by the monologic speech of phallogocentric discourse, has carved an important path through the politics of representation, a path with which this dissertation will weave. "A shattered mirror still functions as a mirror; it may destroy the dual relation of I to I but leaves the infiniteness of life's reflections intact. Here reality is not reconstituted, it is put into pieces so as to allow another world to rebuild (keep on unbuilding and rebuilding) itself with its debris" (23) In such an approach to the ruins of representation, indigeneity must be thought in terms of gender, as both act as sites of original separation, marking the impossible space of time immemorial. Having complicit tasks, then, they articulate at the site of the body. "Gathering the fragments of a divided, repressed body and reaching out to the other does not necessarily imply a lack or a deficiency. In writing themselves [their bodies], women have attempted to render noisy and audible all that had been silenced in phallogocentric discourse" (36).

Remains refer to a more whole past and to a disaggregated present. This past can be both the past of the body as well as the past of larger entities such as social collectives. To place remains at the center of this problematic of writing that Trinh outlines is to ask the question of what remains of the social collective *and* what remains of the body simultaneously and to do this both in terms of language and style. This is what Roland Barthes refers to as the vertical dimension of the opacity of the body's biology/biography meeting the horizontal plane of language's historicity. In the first epigraph to this chapter, Barthes puts language in a geometric or abstract position to the writer. It is all that remains unsaid with the added dimension that by turning around to the remainder, by turning back and gazing like Orpheus at the situating of this locus, the writer loses the stable meaning of a social gesture. To write what remains, here, is to try to say what is unsaid in such a way that the writer is threatened with disorientation and loss. Barthes locates style in the body, a vertical dimension that dives into an opaque experience of matter. The body's linings and lineaments, the membranes and seams, act as material sedimentation that can make its way into the materiality of the writer's words. These two together, style and language, make up what he calls, "...a Nature, that is, a familiar repertory of gestures, a gestuary..." (12). Looking back and diving down are two movements that disorient through a turn, backward and down, toward gesture: towards and into the unsaid of language and the unseen of the body.

When considering writing in the context of Native Americans, particularly regarding writing what remains, it cannot be forgotten that Native American languages have been systematically repressed, destroyed, and then recorded in their fragmentary forms for the sake of preservation. If writing does indeed have language as its limit, a language that "is a kind of natural ambience wholly pervading the writer's expression, yet without endowing it with form or content," one that "enfolds the whole literary creation much as the earth, the sky and the line where they meet outline a familiar habitat for mankind" (Barthes "What is Writing?" 9)--in other words, a language that acts as an horizon, orienting and comforting the writer--then this limit is pierced, the boundary overthrown, the perspective rendered dazed by the infinite pieces of a torn language seeking the shattered world to which it once referred. In every text in English by a Native writer, behind the language lies another in disarticulated fragments of a child's voice

whose mouth it was ripped from, behind every world brought into view lies another splintered and piercing the eye that wanders incessantly in language's lineaments. Writing as a Native American for this very reason is distinctly uncomfortable. Writing what remains is unfathomable. To confront "society" in this discomfort, return to the sources of creation...

Part 1: The Writing of Baskets

A return to the sources of creation, via writing, has often occurred through the detour of text, because text indicates its difficult relationship to materials. In this vein, this part will interrogate the role of textuality as it relates to both a lifting from the origin of the materials through an act of cutting, collecting and weaving--textile--and the seam or stitch that marks a second lifting, from the second, already-woven materials, in such a way that continues to reference the original material substrate, through wounding. What is effaced is the first sense of material as origin. This "metaphor" for writing follows a particularly European history of technological progression that is also gendered. Further displacing the program of writing, along another line, through the specifics of cultural revitalization in the form of traditional basket weaving, will offer a way borrow while remembering the cut.

What remains? What essence? When 'it' (to be always determined, but, provisionally, I'll say: a way of life) is violently torn up into a million fragments, and stuffed into the shithole of the knowledge industry? Bones; technologically limited recordings of songs, words and voices; baskets; gaming pieces; regalia; clapper sticks; bird bone flutes; and other things that find their way into museums and other centers of higher learning. Two movements make up this tearing: 1. a dividing in two--before and after, here and there--that is always and forever chasing an impossible recuperation *and* 2. an absolute differentiation of fragments one from the other with their subsequent categorization. There must be a tearing from the cloth in order to arrange the bits. On the tearing up of identity into ID cards and its being crammed into a hegemonic language such as English, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak writes, "You cannot say that the result is a smoothly woven text" ("Acting Bits" 795). That is to say the least. And it isn't even clear yet that I/we (you) should even be concerned with text. In fact, in relation to such materials, text as a mode of analysis or even as a metaphor is on the outs, seemingly. But even those interested in such things as the 'cultural text' already knew this: Spivak quotes Jacques Derrida in order to bring into question the functionality of the dominant trope of deconstruction, "Yet we have mistrusted the textile metaphor. This is because it still keeps...a kind of...naturalness, primordially, cleanliness [*proprete*]. At least the textile metaphor is still more natural, primordial, proper than the metaphor of sewing, of the seam [*couture*]." Preferring something like a *cultural seam* to the cultural text, a conjoining of fragments that marks its own erasure into a textual whole, Derrida's quote performs a sort of metaphorical history of technology that progressively lifts the technique and its products from the earth, from roots and origins, via the cut, separation or wound. *Does it do the same for the materials?*

Let's follow Derrida back along this imaginary line, stepping one step further into primordially (a step he always assumes to have passed and yet one he himself never takes). Prior to the textile is the weave, the basket really, made from "natural, primordial, proper," traditional materials like rose bud, pine needles, willow rods, bear grass, sedge roots and flicker feathers. A vast amount of them entombed behind glass cases or on shelves in massive storage

areas beneath museums, baskets are special specimens that act as: 1. an example of the technical superiority of indigenous peoples (displays of baskets so small that a magnifying glass is required to see them: no better argument exists for deskilling in my opinion); 2. a craft around which culture continues to be reproduced (basket weaving classes are usual at indian education centers and community colleges; there are international basket weaving conferences held that bring together indigenous peoples from around the world; the ecological movement for many Native Americans is intimately tied up with the cultivation of basket weaving materials, which are understood to be at risk); and 3. evidence of the loss of instrumentality of both the technical superiority in (1) and the unconscious reproduction of culture in (2) through the museumification of the baskets. What does this do to the metaphor for writing?

Certainly it could be argued that baskets, as the first technology are even more natural and primordial than either textiles or seams. They *are* more rooted; though, I would argue, they are made of grass, shoots, feathers, as well as roots. And, it is widely known amongst weavers that one never “finishes” a basket, exactly. A single stitch is always left imperfect or undone.⁸ For humility? Perhaps, though there are definitely basket weaving superstars. Theological, in the sense that the basket reflects the imperfection of the made world and the weaver her/himself? This is a commonly used explanation, but I would argue that it is anticipatory and not representative. Perhaps the intuition--that one is approaching too close to the belly button, the first scar, through attempting perfection--would lead to foresight of the repetition of this very scar, a type of mourning for the future. Spivak explains: “...we mourn the loss of aboriginal cultures as underived fictions that are the *condition and effect* of the subject’s history merely because it is the founding crime of the world we live in. There is no question of unwriting or rewriting history here. The bad-faith hybridistic essentialism of discovering diasporic hybrids and offering that transcoding of the popular as in itself a radical gesture cannot bind that wound of history (Spivak “Translation as Culture” 17) [my ital]. *The founding crime of the world we live in*, doubly, both as the irrecoverable access to an origin and as the marker of the various colonial violences that made the contemporary world possible. This is how condition and effect can be conflated, while at the same time retaining their irreconcilable difference. An underived fiction that is the founding crime: *fictional* because irrecoverable and *founding* because it is an origin. It is somewhere between these two wounds that the imperfect stitch makes sense.

What happens in the relation to materiality in the move from text to seam is that the material plays a dual function: text as a metaphor was important because of its maintenance of a material substrate, the woven quality, as that which is excluded from the voice, in terms of accents and grain, and the signified, in terms of the trace of writing. But the seam plays a different function in that it presents a different affect of materiality, the wound, as opposed to the substrate of materials in the form of production. It is a grafting that remembers contexts, as opposed to a text that, as textile, through technique, remembers the materials of production in the erasure of their sources. This ties in very nicely with the emergent moment reproduced continuously in western discourses of historical development. From Marx’ use-value to

⁸ In certain traditions this flaw doesn’t affect the actual stitching but the design. The reasoning in this instance is that the imperfection leaves a hole for the spirit to enter into the basket. Like this footnote, an interruption occurs in an otherwise congruous and somewhat linear weave, that opens up what is understood to be closed onto an open system, open by definition.

Rousseau's world of gesture, this plastic space is always imagined as prior to history, making it significant that Derrida begins his own history of production with the textile metaphor, one that marks a moment out of this space, away from use value, on the Benjaminian road of mechanical reproduction. But what if we take a step back, force Derrida to step back into this space? What if we begin, instead, with the first technology, the one that remains intimately connected to its materials, the basket?

The First Technology: Women's Work

As the first technology, baskets are traditionally associated with women. Theda Purdue begins the introduction to her edited collection, *Sifters: Native American Women's Lives*, with the initializing question of gender, "'Is it a bow or a sifter?' inquired nineteenth-century Cherokees upon the birth of a child. A bow, the weapon of war and implement of hunting for centuries, epitomized masculinity; the sifter, essential to making bread, was a woman's most important tool" (3). The French ethnologist, Pierre Clastres, furthers this gendered identification of tools in another context. In his essay, "The Bow and the Basket," about the Guayaki Indians of Paraguay (now better known as the Aché), he writes, "It is hardly necessary to stress that the bow, the hunters' only weapon, is an exclusively masculine tool and that the basket, an essentially feminine object, is used only by women: the men hunt, the women carry" (148). This type of metonymic relationship clearly has dangers, such as essentializing and structuring roles for gendered activity, a risk that Jonathan Goldberg's reading of Clastres in his essay "Sodomy in the New World" clearly shows (Warner 12-15).

In this essay, Goldberg analyzes two non-normative figures described by Clastres, who both transcend the usual metonymic relationship by being a *man with a basket*. What is interesting is that within this category there is a difference as well, as one of them, Chachubutawachugi, is a more abject figure, who refuses to carry his basket in the same way as the women, while still identifying as a man, just one who doesn't hunt (or have a wife or participate in any of the other masculine activities). The other basket-carrier, Krembegi, is closer to the ethnographic description of a two-spirit person ('berdache', to use a controversial and outdated term), participating fully in the lives of women as one of them, including taking male lovers. Goldberg rightly calls Clastres out for his homophobic descriptions of Krembegi, quoting Clastres, "'Krembegi was in fact a sodomite' (108), we are told. He was 'an incomprehensible pederast,' Clastres continues. 'Krembegi was homosexual'; he was 'an unconscious invert' (109). He's also naturally artistic" (14). Goldberg also notes that Clastres celebrates Krembegi as a figure that is superior to Chachubutawachugi, because, unlike the abjection of remaining straight in this instance, Krembegi's "homosexuality had permitted him to find the topos he was logically consigned to by his unfitness to occupy the space of men" (14). Chachubutawachugi's transgression was to remain unfit within this space, relegating him to an in-between space of abjection, carrying the metonym of woman, the basket, but shouldered, and therefore embodied, in a different way.

As a *krypy-meno* (anus-make-love), Krembegi also raises the issue for Goldberg that transgression of gendered activity is only carried out by "men," so that, in Clastres' description, no possibility seems to exist for bow-carrying women, or for "female-female sexual expression" (13). This makes the basket, as metonym, the sole object to cross these borders. It

is because of this, and because of Clastres' liberal acceptance and praise of Krembegi, that Goldberg argues "nowhere...does he acknowledge the preposterous truth that the bow and the basket is not only a figure for man in opposition to woman but also for a cross-identification that could define men's bodies or women's bodies, and the multiple possibilities for sexual relations of men with men and of women with women" (15).

To place this gender differentiation at the origin of technology also runs the risk, in the bourgeois historical narrative, of resituating the gendered division of labor within the family unit, thereby normativizing material critique and analysis, something many feminists have attempted to avoid in their imminent critiques of the Marxist historical narrative.⁹ Luce Irigaray writes, "For woman is traditionally a use-value for man, an exchange-value among men; in other words, a commodity. As such, she remains the guardian of material substance..." (368). With the first division of labor being domestic, in such a framework, gender differentiation becomes the ontological model for subsequent class divisions and the production of ideology. Prior to class and ideology, this separation marks the most imminently material form of exploitation as it is the source of reproduction, prior to labor relations. This is why Irigaray can say that woman is both use-value and exchange-value, a dualism that takes place across property, but a proper body that also is imagined to exist prior to territorial allotments. The first property, by rite of marriage alone (clearly the bourgeois organization of the social is retroactively imagined in its inception by Marx' origin narrative), the gendered division of labor is marked in the ambiguity of the term 'labor' and is why woman stands, for Irigaray, at the threshold of material nature. This is not a condition that has disappeared despite passing through specific historical developments: "...women do not constitute...a class, and their dispersion among several classes makes their political struggle complex, their demands sometimes contradictory." It is for this reason that the category of woman, particularly regarding *women's work* and, more subversively, *women's writing (as work)*, remains an important intervention in the Phallogocentric values of violence, technical efficiency, and competition.

Irigaray has theorized the importance of continuing to think sexual difference despite the violent differentiation phallogocentrism imposes. It is not simply that women have been repressed by phallogocentric discourse, but they are also the conditions of its possibility, as evidenced by their role in relation to material substance. They are, quite literally, its nourishment, and, as a substrate, women are positioned to be able to fundamentally disrupt exchange and use in the phallogocentric economy, as the guardians of materiality: mother-matter-nature. Despite being the material basis, women, and their bodies, have been represented by phallogocentrism as the waste-product of knowledge, the obstinately unknown, the irrational, the disgusting. "'She' is indefinitely other in herself. This is doubtless why she is said to be whimsical, incomprehensible, agitated, capricious...not to mention her language, in which 'she' sets off in all directions leaving 'him' unable to discern the coherence of any meaning...For in what she says, too, at least when she dares, woman is constantly touching herself...when she returns it is to set off again from somewhere else" (366). Unable to attend to such an unknown,

⁹ For the narrative, the beginnings of its critique and its more recent furtherance see: Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The German Ideology*; Friedrich Engels, *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*; Gayle Rubin, "The Traffic in Women: Notes on the 'Political Economy' of Sex."

the capricious departure, phallogocentrism hyper-values women's bodies as objects for male consumption, desire and reproduction. In this way, women remain the unrecognized infrastructure for a male-dominated social order.

But the difference that marks the female body also, for Irigaray, marks a separation from the unitary, phallic body, and underscores the multiplicity of desire and pleasure, the diffuse and tactile that is the other side of what is written. Irigaray asks, "Must this multiplicity of female desire and female language be understood as shards, scattered remnants of a violated sexuality? A sexuality denied?" (367) For this line of thinking leads to the conclusion, "The rejection, the exclusion of a female imaginary certainly puts woman in the position of experiencing herself only fragmentarily, in the little-structured margins of a dominant ideology, as waste, or excess, what is left of a mirror invested by the (masculine) 'subject' to reflect himself, to copy himself." In relation to the written, she asserts that it is possible to hear, through this doubling process, an "other meaning" that is the process of "weaving itself," one that hears because of the shards a "silent, multiple, diffuse touch" (366-367). This is not to fully occupy a position outside of phallogocentrism, as that discursive economy works through totalization and its laws and grammar organize many different discourses and domains. It is instead to listen with/to the tools at hand with "an other ear," one that hears the silences and, rather than simply expressing them, as in a repressed truth (a masculine endeavor anyway), playfully mimes the gestures that equate the feminine with the material, through another form of writing, women's writing. And this requires taking a difficult position...*of never being simply one* (367).

If woman is *mother-matter-nature*, as Luce Irigaray has said--the other of the masculine unitary subject, silent, and yet the condition for the masculine subject to reproduce and be heard--then writing in the scene of the original technical division, through the gendered metonym, needs to continue to be practiced in relation to woman (77). Womankind works the materials while being identified with them through the intermediary of language. "Making material: spinning and weaving is a euphonious heritage of wo/mankind handed on from generation to generation of weavers within the clapping of the shuttle and the creaking of the block--which the Dogon call 'the creaking of the Word'" (Trinh *Woman, Native, Other* 128). Clapping and creaking, rhythm and motion, make up the soundtrack of technology.

Returning to baskets and basket making as gendered in order to rethink the metaphor of text also requires a reexamination of the masculinist approaches of many Native American theorists. From Gerald Vizenor's use of "wordarrows" to discuss academic and literary confrontations between white colonizers and Indians in what he termed the "word wars" (*Wordarrows*)¹⁰ to Craig Womack's "Red Stick" theory as a mode of literary analysis based on the use of red war clubs and ceremonial red sticks by resistant Creek warriors and

¹⁰ Based on N. Scott Momaday's linking of language to arrows in "Man Made of Words," there's a difficult assumption that life and death are decided by language. In the story, the arrow maker hears someone outside of the home. Separated from the stranger by a hyde wall, he speaks, as if to his wife, informing the stranger that he is going to kill her/him if s/he doesn't respond. S/he doesn't and is shot and killed. It seems the inability to translate what is intended to signify can be a place of risk as well. Outside of the home, hearing an unknown language come from within, this place is not only of an enemy, but of those who have lost home and are attempting to return. And what if the outsider is aphasic or mute or deaf? A silent presence, present all the more because of its silence, this is the role of the outsider to both home and language.

medicine men (*Red on Red*), there has been a predominate notion of writing as a form of masculinist violence in Native contexts. Paula Gunn Allen, on the other hand, offers a writing that continues to struggle with matter and the maternal. Turning to the origin, she recognizes a figure of the weaver as creator.

The Keres conceptualize the supreme being as a puzzling figure commonly referred to as Old Spider, Grandmother Spider, or Spider Woman. Spider Woman's Keres name is translated as Thought Woman (it can better be understood if translated as Creating-through-Thinking-Woman). She is the dreamer, the ritual center, who sang her sister goddesses *Uretsete* and *Naotsete* into life and taught them the rituals they used to sing everything in their baskets, their medicine bundles, into being (98-99).

Here the notions of mother and matter are artfully conflated into the figure of the spider who produces the most delicate material from herself in order to weave a web. Unlike Friedrich Nietzsche's famous reference to man as spider who produces a gossamer web out of which a conceptual apparatus may be built ("On Truth and Lying"), one that houses concepts which, like the husks of trapped insects, are the remains of creative metaphors that have had their life drained from them, Allen's Thought Woman slips outside of such rigidification. This is because the web is also a song, and unlike Western theological traditions that often see creation as coming from the spoken word, here and in many Native creation stories, the world is sung into being. An original resonance persists, while acknowledging that notes are merely differential. Clapping and creaking of the shuttle and block, the textual weave, as well as the rhythm and motion of weaving a basket, work to this song. Mother-matter-nature does not have to be silent, because nature, as the articulation of language and style, depends upon a matter that is differential, rhythmic and strung along a line of song. Matter is thus always plural in the form of materials, and they need to be gathered. "Among the things in their baskets were the heavens, the waters, the mountains, the earth, the katsinas (the spirit messengers and protectors), the creatures, and the plants" (Allen 99).

Gathering What Remains: Making a Techno-Basket

Tongva-Ajachmem artist, L. Frank Manriquez, speaking at the California Indian Conference in 1992, describes her encounter with anthropologist John Peabody Harrington's writing as a form of gathering materials for weaving:

Coming from a background, as I did, where if you graduated from high school you were doing real well, drifting into Harrington's work is a real stunning thing. I first picked up a book called *Encounter with an Angry God* [by his ex-wife Carobeth Laird]. The illustration on the cover--well, I'm an artist, it caught my eye and I thought, "This looks fascinating," and I opened it up, and it was about this man and this woman and their lives and, you know, tying her to the front of the car, and all these different stories. But at that point when I read that book, I didn't know I was California native. I knew I was native, because I'm the family

throwback, so it's been pretty obvious my whole life. But I found out that I could be connected to this anthropologist, through my people, and that led me to the Morongo reservation--Malki [-Ballena Press] put out this book, *Chinigchinich*, [by Father Geronimo Boscana, revised and profusely annotated by Harrington] and this is kind of my Bible. I use this to start off on just about any topic, mainly it's our language, but what I get from it--it's a connection back to my people. You know, you get so immersed--he writes about the cosmology, and the plants, and the village sites, and it's all in these bits and pieces, and it leads me to museums, and microfilms; just little bits and pieces, and then I meet this person over here, and they have this little piece, and then another person over there, and they have a little piece. And then I try to put all these pieces together to see what rings true with what actually I dream and I feel.

...In this book he talks about basket materials, about basket shapes, basket designs. That led me down another road to...weaving with the native materials, so that led me to go out to gather, which leads me to ethnobotanists who tell me which twig, which tree, what time of year to choose...I feel with Harrington it's kind of like what basket people talk about, that baskets are all around us, we have to just go out and gather them together. And it takes a long time to do this; it takes a long time to make a basket. And so that's how I feel with Harrington's work, I have to go out gathering all the materials to come together, and it will be a pretty good picture at the end (quoted in Hinton, *Flutes of Fire* 209).

Manriquez describes very well the detouring process of research. She notes how to work with materials in the form of fragments, the slow unfolding process that makes it akin to art, and the patience required to make the right selections. She also shows how the existing horizon, here of text in the form of a bible, written by a priest/ethnographer, links to the unknown of her body and spirit, "what I dream and feel." The limit of her horizon is repeatedly broached and this breaching takes place in a very strong movement of recovery. *It takes a long time to make a basket. Baskets are all around us, we just have to go out and gather them. Just little bits and pieces. I have to go out gathering all the materials to come together, and it will be a pretty good picture at the end.*

What are these materials? Miles of ethnographic recordings of songs, taxonomies, stories, and conversations on wax, wire, clay, tape, ones and zeroes; her voice, his voice; songs and stories; transcriptions on paper; words, texts, commentaries and analyses; mountains of baskets, regalia, tools, game pieces, weapons, and other "material culture" artifacts; piles of film canisters and video tapes; images of dancing, rituals, architecture, the dead; stacks of photographs on various types of paper (metaphors and scales of measurement reach their limit here, because while it is easy to imagine stringing out recordings for miles, or piling artifacts up into mountains, photographs seem to resist this accumulation and its sense of the sublime). The analog versions of the various recordings, in their material bodies, make up the archives and collections in many Museums. The digital, including the painstaking and ongoing digitalization of analog recordings, often exist now on websites and are open to the public. A technical basket

left imperfect so as not to capture the soul; the smallest difference. The totality of any collection, as fuzzy as the edges of such a set may be, is only one side of the problem, that of accumulation (the task of the salvage ethnographer in the colonizing mode), but the task of framing any single fragment from one of these collections, no matter how small the piece, if one doesn't want to fall into the usual and accepted modes of analysis, is an infinite task with each moment proceeding forward through ambiguity with a number of forking possible directions. This is both a problem of selection and use.

Gail Tremblay, Mi'kmaq and Onondaga writer and artist, describes her use of traditional basket weaving techniques on nontraditional materials.

As a child learning to be an artist my work was made of traditional materials. I learned about working with husks, splits, grass, leather, bark, and porcupine quills; my adventures away from things grown locally were with beads and commercial dyed yarns to finger weave belts. Otherwise, materials were gathered and free for the labor of finding and growing, of cleaning, pounding, splitting, sorting, dyeing, drying, soaking, et cetera. This taught me a patience with things that has shaped the way I work even with such radically different materials as metal and synthetic metallic yarns and braids (quoted in Fowler "Hybridity as a Strategy" 75).

She has taken this appropriation of new materials by traditional techniques further in her work on film baskets (literally baskets made out of film). Two baskets she has made show this selection process well. The first, "It Was Never About Playing Cowboys and Indians" (2011) begins with a 16mm sociological documentary film called, "Play and Cultural Continuity: Montana Indian Children" that shows images of Blackfoot Indian children beading, dancing, and playing with dolls, amidst commentary about how culture reproduces itself through play. Tremblay cuts it up into pieces, marking herself as also a film editor, and uses traditional patterns and stitches from her own tribe (a curling ribbon stitch, e.g.) to weave it together with blue and red film leader. The result is a visually stunning and complex object that has zero use-value. "I enjoy keeping traditional basketry patterns from the area where I come from alive with this new material and this conceptual object rather than a practical [object]...I mean, you couldn't put your threads in the baskets I'm making and use them as baskets. They're art pieces" (McMichael). Resisting the obvious move to read this appropriation of ethnographic material as a form of ideological critique, it is rather in the mode of selection, of gathering what-has-been-said, in which Tremblay works materially with images. Wandering across the terrain of broken representations, some already critiqued, some half-critiqued, and many still waiting to be spoken of, it is from ethnography and Hollywood that Tremblay draws much of her material. These are, in some sense, realized possibilities, but the next basket takes the notion of imagic possibility further.

The second, "Possibilities for Sound (1998)," is woven from unrecorded, sound-only 16mm film called 'full coat'. Full coat usually accompanies a reel of silent 16mm film, separating the audio from the visual, opening up the problem of syncing. It resembles the visual, single-perforated 16mm film, except the surface is solid brown instead of a series of image frames. For this basket, Tremblay used a traditional bird mouth stitch. Cultural anthropologist

and curator Tressa Berman observes, “a bird mouth stitch forms a beak that points to didactic narratives ‘about’ American Indians. A basket becomes a vessel for the unheard voices and unseen images. Unrecorded full coat suggests how voice and image can be brought in sync, where they resonate with new possibilities” (quoted in Fowler “Hybridity as a Strategy” 75). Certainly this commentary is reading over the image, an interpretation that turns bird beaks into abstract indices, yet the unheard and the unseen resonate. It is across the technical problem of syncing (voice and image) where such resonance is associated with possibility. But this is a different kind of syncing than what usually occurs with film in that it is through the stitch, a visual and tactile pattern, where the syncing occurs. Splicing is a physical process, but one that gets erased in the production of a seamless image. In this case, the image is a pattern that represents bird mouths, but, in their very repetitious nature, their tendency towards form, Native American basket patterns don’t simply represent but push the represented image into a series and, further, into texture.

Subtly invoking recorded voices in ethnographic audio archives that have been unscrewed from the mouths that spoke them, another problem of syncing that occurs for revitalization projects, this particular work of salvage addresses the problem of language death and revitalization through the suggested sound of birds singing, or perhaps their silence. Hundreds of bird mouths, made out of unrecorded full coat, disrupt the simple possibility of recording sound, a possibility actualized in the very salvage process critiqued. No sounds will be recorded with this film, and yet silence, the profound silence of possibilities derealized, is woven into the form of hundreds of open, silent mouths. Do the birds still sing? Silences on top of silence render this question impossible. (The basket’s resemblance to a deer-toe rattle also *cannot be shaken.*)

This impossibility of sound through its derealization by an active silence is an added dimension to both the politics and the formal issues of working with film. Both sound and the image have been derealized, reduced to materials to be gathered and selected for the sake of their material qualities. But these material qualities maintain a suggestion of filmic content that arises in the assemblage of pattern, material (what is on the film and what the film is on), and the art piece’s name. To continue basket weaving as a practice using an ethnographic film on play as a form of cultural continuity for material opens up differences in the concept of play as well as in continuity. Westernized children play cowboys and indians, while indian children merely “play” to be Indian. A sociological documentary discusses the form of play that makes culture continuous, while Tremblay plays with form to keep tradition alive. “I really enjoy the form and playing with the form. That’s how I came to make film baskets.”

Like with Manriquez, the role of the artist for Tremblay teaches patience in learning how to select the right materials.

When people ask me how long it takes to make a basket, I always ask them, well, where do you want to start? Do you want to start with going out to find the ash tree, cutting it and cleaning the bark and making the splints and splitting the splints and sizing the splints and shaving the splints and gathering the sweet grass and braiding the sweet grass and then weaving the basket? Because if you want to understand that whole process, then it’s something that takes a lot of time. It’s

something that's very valuable in terms of a human life investing something in an object. Even when I'm thinking about conceiving of a film basket, I have to find footage I want to use, I have to get a concept or an idea, I have to decide on colors and size and a whole bunch of stuff. And film, unlike ash splint--ash splint you wet and when you put it there it stays where you put it--film is slippery, curly and it has a whole set of different problems that you have to work through in order to make the basket work. That I think is an interesting kind of thing. When you're shifting materials in a form you're problem solving, and I find that problem solving is a part of the design process in weaving that's really interesting.”
(McMichael)

You need to know where to begin (in the process and where to gather), you need to know which materials to use (which ones are the best), and you need to know how to work with them. [more]

Baskets and Transcription: Working with the Materials

How does one work with the materials? “All basket materials had to be kept wet to make them soft and pliable while in the process of weaving. Maple and willow were split into sections and the hearts were removed. Each piece was scraped to an even texture and a perfect roundness and size” (Potts 35). Marie Potts, a Maidu Indian woman and founder of “Smoke Signal,” the oldest Indian newspaper in the US, here describes the preparation of materials in the past tense. In the context of her book, *The Northern Maidu*, the past indicates a time prior to her entering boarding school. In twenty short chapters, she describes aspects of her tribe, ranging from “baths” to “neighboring tribes” to “physical characteristics,” all in past tense. Looking “back to the days of her childhood at Big Meadow,” she details the specific geographies and conditions, including travel and trade, for finding the right materials for weaving (back cover). An activist who, “played a key role in establishing the American Indian Press Association and was co-founder of the Federated Indians of California Inter-tribal Council,” it seems she is here making a clear grammatical distinction between the natural and the political, or, perhaps, simply the past-as-it-was and the present-in-its-needs. Two things oddly interconnect to make sense of this biographical situating around basket materials.

First, she writes,

My mother used to go out, pick from a maple thicket what she wanted, cut the rest down and, after spreading the leaves, set it on fire. In two years there would be new growth of fresh shoots. In present years it becomes difficult to get the materials. The Forest Service no longer allows digging, nor can fires be made. Much of the basket materials are now on “private property,” where we are not allowed to go. Materials that grow in public parks are not available (38).

It becomes difficult. Prohibitions on burning and digging in order to “protect” the forest together with ownership by both private citizens and a public citizenry are foreclosing most of *the access to good materials*. In fact, through naturalizing nature, the materials themselves are made no longer good or viable as weaving materials, as they become overgrown. This narrowing access

has lead to a concerted effort to materially reproduce glimpses and scenes from Marie Potts' past. An example of the interconnected aspects of such a cultural revitalization, the California Indian Basketweavers Association (CIBA) narrates their founding on their website: "Following a statewide gathering of weavers, museums, public land agencies, ethno botanists, and funders, a council formed in 1991 with the goal of supporting weavers and addressing the problems of access to materials. The following year this council formed the nonprofit California Indian Basketweavers Association (CIBA). Based in Woodland, CIBA's goal is to preserve, promote, and perpetuate California Indian basket weaving traditions while providing a healthy physical, social, spiritual, and economic environment for basketweavers." But what happens if one lingers in the narrowing?

Second, in the colophon, the page on the verso side of the title page, which contains technical information in the voice of the printer, there are two very interesting lines of text. The publisher is "Naturegraph Publishers Inc," and is said to have been "publishing books on natural history, Native Americans, and outdoor subjects since 1946." And, unusually, there is a dedication that reads, in italics, "*With acknowledgement from the publishers to Margery Greenleaf for her friendship and diligence as amanuensis.*" The linking of Native Americans to natural history and outdoor projects, particularly natural resources, is a very old practice and has taken many forms. The linking of nature to writing is also an old practice but here takes a very specific path. The publishers' website describes their history (copied-and-pasted as-is):

Vinson Brown founded Naturegraph in 1946. He named his new company Nature (for nature) graph, (for well written or drawn). With his love of nature and a masters in natural history from Stanford University, he decided to publish nature leaflets and maps, which were purchased by school systems. In 1950 he was joined by his wife, Barbara. and nature books replaced the leaflets. With a degree in anthropology from U.C. Berkeley, CA plus Vinson's love for Native people, a second publishing niche was added, that of Native Americans.¹¹

It would be easy here to show the ideology behind such connections, particularly the purchasing of nature leaflets and maps by the school system, which funded an expansion into books and a new niche--Native Americans. I'd like to forestall such a reading and, instead, think again about the graph as "well written or drawn," a productive ambiguity that gets amplified by another ambiguity in that 'Naturegraph' can mean both a written or drawn nature and/or a writing or drawing with nature (think of a pictograph; it is not a writing about pictures, but one where the pictures are the very act of writing). Marie Potts, then, in writing her own story, is conflated with nature-writing-(with)-itself, especially in terms of a niche market.¹² This isn't exactly the usual criticism in which it said that Native Americans are represented as a static image of nature, one

¹¹ There are a lot of ways for the spirit to enter into this quote.

¹² The pedagogical relation between these niche markets, a large percentage of the consumers being Native Americans, and the readers who learn sometimes about themselves is a complicated and under-theorized aspect of revitalization.

without history, as against the image of the active and progressive colonizers. A difference nonetheless persists.

The dedication to Margery *Greenleaf*, an auspicious name to find on the underside of the first leaf of a book published by Naturegraph, thanks her for her friendship and “diligence as amaneunsis.” *Who has she transcribed for?* An amaneunsis, literally an enslaved hand (writing), is a secretary that is within hand’s reach, an ear that offers a hand to graph what is heard without translation or distortion. An extension of the master, the dutiful slave is part of the mechanism that exteriorizes thought through the master’s dictated speech and marks it on the page like a writing machine, thereby making the process of writing, in relation to the author, transparent by way of transcription. “This inscription, what does it cost us? What do we lose? What do we win?” asks Roland Barthes in his essay “From Speech to Writing” (3). Halfway there, somewhere in between, it is the question of loss and gain, of cost, or even, perhaps, debt, that situates transcription. On the way, from speech to writing, lies a rest, stop, a pause-- within this mechanical apparatus that turns thought into marks on paper. What is this interval, marked as loss and/or gain, between the voice and the ear, the thought and the hand? For Barthes, between speech and writing lies the written, and “writing is not necessarily the mode of existence of what is written”. He prefers the term ‘scription’ and describes this process through which the written is produced, with the further detour of an audio recording,

We talk, a tape recording is made, diligent secretaries listen to our words to refine, transcribe, and punctuate them, producing a first draft that we can tidy up afresh before it goes on to publication, the book, eternity. Haven’t we just gone through the ‘toilette of the dead?’”

Scription. Scribe. Again, *diligence*: from its etymology, to lovingly gather and select the parts. Master over death. A careful embalming of the master’s body by the dutiful slave allows the body to be written, inscribed, gathered.

Or perhaps, in another sense, lost. For Barthes, scription loses three things: 1. the innocence of speech’s tactics, theatrics, bumbling, ruptures and everything that gets edited out, what he refers to as “the watered silk of our image-repertoire”; 2. the rigor of transitions which allows “thought” expressed aloud to be made consistent through inflections of the struggle with putting-into-words; and 3. the meaningless interpellant appeals and modulations that we use to make sure the other is listening, *you know what I mean?* “It should be understood...that what is lost in transcription is quite simply the body...” (5). This is, of course, a body in conversation with another, an “exterior (contingent) body which, in dialogue, flings toward another body, just as fragile (or frantic) as itself...” But for whom is Margery Greenleaf an amaneunsis? Whose body is she embalming? The publisher Naturegraph’s or the author Marie Potts’? This, of course, implies the question, *who is speaking?* Who is thinking aloud? Is this a conversation or a dictation exercise?

Marie Potts’ text lies somewhere between ethnography and autobiography. Yet, it doesn’t seem to quite fit into the category of auto-ethnography, or act as a biomythography (a term developed by Audre Lord). Perhaps this is because it is difficult to locate a subject in the writing. It is also sparse in terms of literary devices, offering instead brief snapshots of how life

was before boarding school in the barest of factual language. An example from the section labeled “Physical Characteristics”:

The full-blooded Maidu people were of medium height: the men averaged five-foot seven inches, and were sturdily built; the women somewhat shorter. Their heads and faces were broad, noses narrow, and lips thin. The women were comely, often plump, being remarkably industrious at such tasks as preparing acorns for food and weaving baskets. Men and women had dark eyes and usually straight, black hair; however, there were some individuals with curly or light brown hair. I remember one Maidu man with red hair. Men, women and children all cut off their hair when there was a death in the family (11).

The only thing differentiating Potts’ text from an ethnography is the inclusion of the pronouns “I” “we” “our” and “my” at strategic points, articulating an author identifying with the text in an autobiographical way. That and the very few moments when she breaks the voice of neutral description and either makes a comparison between now and then, as in the quote above about the role of the forestry service and property ownership in making the gathering of basket materials difficult, or when she offers a reminiscence, as in the final section of the text, entitled “Reminiscences.”

In a word, one could say that this text is *written*. Floating somewhere between speaking (the oral tradition) and writing (literature), this type of ethnographic form (prior to *Writing Culture* and distant from Zora Neal Hurston’s “big ole lies”) feels a bit stuffy, stuffed even. Yet, doesn’t the voice of the (gendered) Native lie here? Who is thinking out loud? In telling her story, Potts is already differentiating between her natural and political selves, as mentioned. In the quote about her mother, she moves from the management of land through fire, one that has been described by early accounts of contact as producing a “nature” that looked very park-like (as opposed to the dichotomy of overrun nature and civilized space today), to an eco-political voice contesting the failure of propertied land, in any form, to be adequately cared for. A failure because it no longer produces good enough materials.

As the founder of “Smoke Signals” and an activist, would she have needed an amanuensis? Clearly she could have written the text, so why speak it? She was born in 1895 and this text wasn’t published until 1977, so it’s possible that she might’ve preferred to speak out loud because of her age. Or perhaps she simply enjoyed the role of dictator. Or maybe it had something to do with the bio-historical time she was speaking about. As a journalist, she was known for her struggle for Indian rights, even being honored by the state of California in 1975 for her political work, to which she responded, “I’m glad you did it while I’m still alive” (Potts 46). Writing, as a politically motivated journalistic enterprise might’ve been distinguished for her from reminiscences and ethnographic details, those events of her life prior to boarding school. Maybe she could only speak about the past, knowing that it must inevitably pass through transcription, embalming of the body, onto eternity.

Narrow access. Narrowing access. Even the space in the ruins of representation gives scant access to (gendered) native voices. The desire to self-transcribe lies here, as does the (gendered) native voice, in this turn to ethnographic form (such as the Maidu spiritual leader,

Frank Day, who, after his stories were questioned as to their legitimacy by ethnographers, began recording himself in ethnographic interviews.)¹³ Auto-amaneunsis, both master and slave, voice and ear/hand. The difficulty of gathering materials links to working with the materials in a different way. They must be kept wet. And yet the archive is dry. Burn by reading in order to clear the land. [dictated but not read]

What Remains in the Basket: a Literal/ry Pataphor

It's no such thing as art. It's spirit. My grandma never taught me nothing about the baskets. Only the spirit trained me... I only follow my dream. That's how I learn.

--Mabel McKay (quoted in Sarris *Mabel McKay: Weaving the Dream*)

The spirit bubbles up and teaches: a technique lost to its own perfection. Though it sought imperfection by principle (a spiritual principle), it is recovered in order to reproduce culture in a self-conscious manner, developing an eco-logical politics along the way, and yet threatened by this very recovery. This is more than a metaphor for writing. It's too messy to be a model or example. It's difficult to even call it a figure; it risks fetishism too much for this. You can almost smell the earthiness of the materials, feel the skin of the red bud as you strip it off the clean, white stem with your teeth. This literalization of the theoretical, in its very priority to theory, gathers together images, senses, activities, and languages in unpredictable ways. The relations here between technique, materials, and products get complicated by the question of how to write *what remains?* Like Spivak said, nothing smooth.

I find it useful to consult the trickster, Alfred Jarry, who described one of his 'pataphysical principles as the ascension of a vacuum (a unit of nondensity) toward a periphery, as opposed to the fall of a body towards the center (22). The emptiness spreads outwards. In this principle, the periphery acts as a series of unaligned and dispersed centers, like bubbles on a surface. The other side of the center-periphery relation that is understood to organize power--with the center seat firmly occupied--here, instead, the vacuum, the void, that makes up the center (like the center of a Japanese city, as described by Barthes) ascends to a higher periphery, a pataphysical one (*Empire of Signs*). The 'pataphysical was understood by Jarry to be, absurdly, above or more fundamental than metaphysics--metaphysics, of course, already being above or more fundamental than the physical realm. The literary side of this relationship between the physical, the metaphysical and the 'pataphysical was described by the writer and musician Pablo Lopez as a 'pataphor. The 'pataphor was meant to hold the same relation to metaphor that 'pataphysics holds to metaphysics. There is an important difference to keep in mind, though, as metaphysics as a discipline indicates the fundamental aspects of reality, of which physics, or nature, is only an appearance. The metaphor, however, generally indicates the carrying over of a sense into another, figurative, sphere, one that illuminates something of the original. Both maintain the sense of alteration or change through a leaping of spheres, but it is in their opposite movements, towards and away from an original, that the 'pata- finds its purchase. Appearance is

¹³ CSU, Sacramento houses a large archive of Frank Day's self recordings.

once again affirmed as reality, in Jarry's account, but only after passing through the metaphysical real of nonappearance; a new reality is created in Lopez' account, but only after having passed through the fictive sphere.

These are not necessarily opposed movements as each indicates the movement proper to its medium: text and things. As shown, the problem of how to write what remains passes through an embalming process. Transcription puts speaking into the written, into fragments. The things themselves have likewise passed into collections to be preserved. It is in the connection between the archive and the collections, the written and the preserved, where technology takes a stutter step, one in no direction, a step backwards, perhaps, but along no line. Writing then has a chance, an absurd one that hints at a new real, to gather these bits and pieces in order to weave a basket (again). Somewhere between the written and writing-with...as a tool, is a link to Barthes' notion of scription but with a slight step back, retaining the sense of recovery in a stasis. To say that voice or the body returns and operates through writing is too easy. The written is exteriorized and forces a passing through the toilette of the dead, but the recovery through writing links up with the lining of the body, the flesh. The materiality and materials of the basket *act like this flesh*, having passed through the museum, but the recovery process is complicated and continues to invoke transcription as a 'pataphor. It syncs up with an atavistic moment of erasure within the metaphor of textuality/seam, one that still refers to the mechanization of the voice: a techno-basket made of empty tape and bird mouths.

In such a writing, things should appear in their gray light: neither as objects nor as figures, but showing their lineaments and the neutral behind, before them. This is the purpose of using something very material, like baskets, in a way that could be seen as a critical tool, yet exceeds the metaphor-example-figure-model-type-of-writing, whereby the object of writing is effectively retained. It's important to maintain consciousness of the act of writing, and, in so doing, use rhetorical, material, and literary modes of writing in order to show the neutrality of the thing/subject relationship. *De-hierarchize the text*. The basket is none of the usual forms of evidence or modes of illustration. It is something else. Useless use-value (*postvernacular*) that, nonetheless, garners a high price from collectors (nowadays), but simply fed poor indians in the past (who sold them to collectors in the transition to capitalism). The 'pataphor gets closest. Though that too emphasizes the literary dimension at the expense of others. Literalization of theory, literarization of the empirical, and the priority of the real. As always, language fails us.

Part 2: Turds with Feathers

What could it mean to profane defecation?
 ...a matter of archeologically arriving at
 defecation as a field of tensions between
 nature and culture, private and public,
 singular and common. That is: to learn
 a new use for feces, just as babies tried to
 do it in their own way, before repression
 and separation intervened.

--Giorgio Agamben, "In Praise of Profanation"

I began Part 1 by paraphrasing and dislocating a quote from Jean Genet, beautiful man that he was, about shreds of “a Rembrandt” shoved into the asshole or toilet, the “shithole.”¹⁴ This situation caused him to ask, “what remained?” “Very regular” and regulated “squares” in a hole full of shit. Roughage. I’m curious, was the Rembrandt lost when immersed? Or did the cutting up of the painting cause its loss? Or even, was it the cutting into “very regular squares,” causing its form to hold symmetry even in its state of decomposition, the reason for the loss? These are important questions to ask when trying to understand *what remains?*, a question that cannot be dissociated from the conditions of remaining. In the act of losing, what is the threshold that marks loss? What relationship to this threshold do the remains have? Certainly not a quantifiable one. I couldn’t, for instance, recover the very regular squares, carefully clean them, put them back together like a puzzle, and thereby have erased the loss. The ghost of the shithole, no matter how carefully and diligently I clean, how painstakingly and technologically perfectly I piece back together, will situate itself somewhere in the recovered Rembrandt. Even if only in a ghostly whiff...

The quote from Genet also opens one side of a violently rent text between the “spirit and the fart,” by Jacques Derrida called *Glas* (Spivak “Acting Bits” 794). On one side, German idealist philosophy in the form of Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, on the other, Genet’s fart or the spirit in the body:

Of the remain(s), after all, there are, always, overlapping each other, two functions.

The first assures, guards, assimilates, interiorizes, idealizes, relieves the fall [*chute*] into the monument. There the fall maintains, embalms, and mummifies itself, monumemorizes and names itself--falls (to the tombs(stone)) [*tombe*]. Therefore, but as a fall, it erects itself there.

The other--lets the remain(s) fall. Running the risk of coming down to the same. Falls (to the tomb(stone))--two times the columns, the waterspouts [*trombes*]-remains(s) (*Glas* 1-2).

¹⁴ What’s the functional difference between receptacle and depositor when both are holes that shit passes through? Thresholds. Hole to hole and back again. This is the complementary question to the one William Burroughs raises about a hole that pulls double duty as both mouth and anus.

In the first part of this quote, ‘Hegel’ gels or congeals. Makes a monument of monumentalization. In the portmanteau ‘monumemorize’, memory is monumentalized, given concrete form, while the monument has its borders extended through the fluid, qualitative densities of memory. Embalmed in sheets of glass, the spirit has a sort of translucency, a gel-like quality. While in the second part, ‘Genet’ puffs out in small gusts of scented air, ephemeral markers of the body, of its fleeting materiality: the invisible and amorphous stuff on the inside. This whiff gives a sense of seeing what one cannot see. In its absolutely ephemeral nature, the fart, in essence, is essence. It is the infrathin space that, like Duchamp notes, marks the separation between two identical things, *the tobacco smoke that smells of the mouth that exhales it*. For a brief moment, I “see” into your mouth by inhaling your exhaled smoke. How do you distinguish between my body and the food I have digested when you smell my fart? How do I distinguish between your body and mine when I smell yours? Is it of my nose? Or is it from your ass? Can I follow the trail back? And what of simultaneous farts? How do they mingle and how do we distinguish them? The fart is all of these in a very greasy immediacy. If performance is ephemeral, a fart is the essential performance, moving between and making indistinguishable performing and spectating bodies. And let’s not forget about the musicality of the fart! A whole range of possible sounds made by the body’s vibrations, announcement of the coming performance, and our embarrassment, what Fred Moten might refer to as “inspired materiality” (11).¹⁵ The inverse of this announcement being, of course, the most dreadful *Brown Note*, the vibration that undoes all retention and forces an immediate materialization of the remains: absolute release, a turning inside out without reserve. The entire auditory medium (of the world) as a dilating anus. Ohhhhhmmmm. Who knew that what connected us to Universal harmony was our ability to shit?!

From the shithole, the pungent air: vibrations: back through the remains to the shithole. Derrida calls this a *navette*, a shuttling, “Navette is the word. ... The word--*la navette*--is absolutely necessary. It will have had to be there. ... It concerns a small metal vessel in the form of a boat. ... And then the weaver's *navette*...coming and going woven in a chain. The weave is in the *navette*. ...Isn't elaboration [Derrida is using it in the expanded sense--*elaborare*, to work out] a weaver's movement?” (Spivak “Acting Bits” 794). Spivak quotes Derrida quoting Genet, “The question/statement (half a quote from Genet) with which *Glas* begins, in the right hand column, is: “*what remained of a Rembrandt torn into small, very regular squares and rammed down the shithole*’ is divided in two.” In such a citation that remembers citing there is a *play of origins*, both in terms of inexactitude as room for movement--the play in a loosely articulated steering wheel--and the theatrical staging of a play. What is cited, Genet’s quote, is remembered through the act of citation as it remembers its own having-been-woven in an original context. This is not an absolute memory, nor is it an absolute lifting from the roots. The tears in the canvas and the painted image are carried over to another context, sewn into a new text, like patchwork, but the seams still show. “This is a citing that invokes the wound of the cutting from the staged

¹⁵ What would it mean, borrowing from Marx, for the “senses to become theoreticians in their immediate practice,” in this context? This could change the sense of the title of Moten’s book *In the Break...* “a spirit manifest in its material expense or aspiration” (14). The fart is always already there. “For Saussure such speech is degraded, say, by accent, a deuniversalizing material difference...” Both in speech and music, it is accentuation that gives the fart its bouquet.

origin” (795). The navette and the origin: at play and being staged. The cut can be traced back via the wound-ing, experimentally pieced back together again like a puzzle. Paradoxically, though, one must attempt to unstitch the piece from its new context, which starts a whole new line. From this it is easy to see how the threads of the past, the trace, exponentially increase in a multitude of directions, while, at the same time, maintaining a unique direction towards an origin. Again, two movements.

And the basket remains; recovered in its practice; a technique; that maintains the seam; and the sense of the brute materials; useful and useless; as that to which text, textile and the seam; refer back to in their erasure of the materials; while, nonetheless, remaining a future project of mourning. And the basket is full of shit. An undone stitch. From wound to wound, hole to hole, nothing but shit, a vibratory world, world as basket, emptied reflexively in thrall of the Brown Note. “Cit[ing], as perhaps you have just seen: only to displace the syntactic arrangement around a real or sham physical wound that draws attention to and makes the other be forgotten...All the examples stand out, are cut out [*se découpant*] in this way. Regard the holes if you can” (Spivak “Acting Bits” 795). Regard the holes if you can.

Earthdivers

Beginning with the quest for, the question of, *what remains? What essence?* One is brought back to how one writes these remains, these questions. Writing is thereby related to questions of destruction, loss, and recovery. In another context, Gerald Vizenor tells the story of Wenobojo, the trickster-creator, who, *in the beginning*, up to his mouth in water, made the world because he was tired of having his own shit float up to and around his mouth (Vizenor, *Earthdivers* xii-xiv). He manages to persuade a few creatures, materializing as if from nothing, to swim down into the shitty water in order to look for land. Otter, Beaver, Muskrat, they all drown, but the last one, Muskrat, returns to the surface with five grains of sand clinched in his cold, rigorous claw. After breathing life back into the waterlogged critters, Wenobojo tosses the grains back into the water to form an island, from which he gathers and tosses more dirt. He kept throwing earth around, making the island grow.

It is common knowledge that many Native American creation stories implicitly or explicitly assume a re-beginning, a new jumping off point for the creation of the world, having left behind an old one. Always a second world. This explains the strange flexibility of matter, its expansive nature, and the many references to salvaged materials in these stories.

And Earthmaker, they say,
when this world was covered with water,
floated and looked about him.

As he floated and looked about,
he did not see anywhere, indeed,
even a tiny bit of land.

No various creatures of any kind--
none at all were flying about.

And thus he travelled over this world,
over the engulfed land.

It seemed transparent,
like the land in the Meadows of Heaven.

And he felt sad, they say.
“How, I wonder--how, I wonder--
in what place, I wonder--
where, I wonder--
in what sort of place might we two see a bit of land?”

“Well, you are very powerful
to have thought this world into being!
Imagine where in this world some land might be, then,
and when you have done so,
let us two float to that place.
If, in this world, you keep floating and looking around you,
floating and looking around you,
hungering, but indeed eating nothing,
you will die of hunger, I fear,”
said the other.

Then Earthmaker pondered.
“I shall not starve,” he said.
“There’s nothing I don’t know.
The world is very big, it is true.
If, somewhere or other, I should see a bit of earth,
then I shall make something good of it.

Thereupon, he sang.

“Where are you, little bit of earth?”
He said it, singing.
He kept singing and singing.

“Enough,” he said.
He stopped singing.

Coyote said:
“Indeed, there are not many songs that I don’t know.”
And then, after that, *he* sang,

kept on singing and singing.

“Where is there land?” he asked.

He sang and sang.

“Enough! I’m tired,” he said.

“*You* try again!”

And then, they say, Earthmaker sang.

“Where are you, my great mountain ranges?

O, mountains of my world, where are you?”

Then, “Enough!” he said.

“See what *you* can do.”

Coyote tried. He kept singing.

“If, indeed, we two shall see nothing at all,

traveling about the world,

then, perhaps,

there may be no misty mountain ranges there!”

Earthmaker said:

“If I could but see a little bit of land

I might do something very good with it.”

Floating along, then,

they saw something like a bird’s nest.

Earthmaker said:

“It really is small.

It would be good if it were a little bigger,

but it is really small.

I wonder how I might stretch it apart a little.

What would be good to do?

In what way can I make it a little bigger?”

As he talked, he transformed it.

He stretched it out to where the day breaks;

he stretched it out to the south;

he stretched it out to the place where the sun goes down;

he stretched it out to the North Country;

he stretched it out to the rim of the world;

he stretched it out! (Shipley 18-20)

To hear this story properly, it cannot be used merely as evidence for the general claim made above. This is why it is presented here in the totality of its fragmentation. It is an excerpt, but one that threatens the limits, the borders, of such an excision with both its unusual length and the repetition of its movements. Nothing clean. And yet it is an origin. The creator is alone and sad. The world is transparent. From here emerges, without any introduction or explanation, “an other” who fears the Creator will starve. They sing, taking turns, failing, and singing. Almost a challenge, they encourage each other, “see what *you* can do,” or boast, “there are not many songs that I don’t know.” They sing a questioning lament for “a little bit of land.” But it is something like a bird’s nest, again ambiguous in its emergence, from which the Creator makes the world. The absolute limitless transparency; 1-2 Creators in a boat with no orientation but the back and forth of their singing: stirrings of a *navette*? And it is a speck of product, something like a nest, woven from natural materials perhaps, a something that comes from nothing *and* something else, simultaneously, that acts as material substrate for the phenomenal world. Like the excerpt of this origin story, the nest, excised from (where?) points in the general direction of an origin and yet maintains multiple threads and traces that make the expansion of its limits not only possible but necessary.

It is also well known that Indigenous knowledges often credit animals for their teachings. Songs come from birds and insects; dances allow the dancer to become bears, deer and birds; hunting techniques follow the ways of carnivores; games enact the hiding and playing of squirrels and coyotes; does basket making re-enact the use of this nest?¹⁶ And how do these bodies move? Navettes, divers and floaters, there are a number of movements made by these actors: shuttling back and forth, diving from surface to depth and back again, and drifting/resting as a form of expansion. Each of these movements is a trace, and each trace a remain.

Diving Into the Void: An Other Writing

Trinh T. Minh-ha quotes Marie Cardinal on the subject of writing about shit as saying, “Why, when men speak about it, are they courageous and strong and why is it shameful when women speak about it? Why? Feces are feces” (Trinh *When the Moon Waxes Red* 130). Shit. There’s shame in speaking, so speak under your breath. Make your breath more loud than the word or the word more soft than breath. Shhhhh-it. Hushed whispers. Certainly in the stories about shit that I mentioned above there is a troupe of male actors with their biographers: queer, divine, philosophical, tricky, animal, mad, and native. Some have talked about shit, some have been closely associated with it, and some are newly besmudged, but all have played the role of the “courageous and strong.” They are *Earthdivers*; they have made the world. Cardinal’s point is well taken, and it opens up, for Trinh, onto an *other writing*, one that eschews the seeming gender neutrality of academese and violently rebukes the injunction to speak and write respectfully. Respect, for many women writers, according to Cardinal, amounts to repression of the marked body. Instead, “write brutally and disrespectfully” (128). “The serviceable words

¹⁶ There is much to be said about the difference between mimicry and becoming in this pedagogical relationship. For now, though, I’ll simply quote Frank LaPeña, a Wintu dancer, on the relationship between animals, spirit, and dance: “Whenever dancers in regalia take the floor, they put aside their own identities and become deer, bear, or another animal, or they become “stand-ins” for the human race” (16).

are without scars...” (124). Cardinal accuses the erudite male philosophers and thinkers of being “so afraid of their body that they no longer have a voice...” The difference, then, between my writing the word ‘shit’, as a male writer, and her writing the word ‘shit’, despite it being the same word, has to do with how close shit is to the body and how well the voice comes through it. When I write it, according to her, I have two possibilities: either I can tame the word through a theoretical examination that disavows my body and voice, or I have the ability to write with a “beautiful and simple strength” (128). The first is accessible to women writers at the expense of their gender and their own bodies, the second is foreclosed to them. Together, they create a difficult struggle of recovery through writing the body.

Gerald Vizenor echoes this point when he critiques the anthropologists’ interpretations of fecal and anal themes in Native American creation stories, which claim, “the Earth-Diver motif is a male fantasy of creation stemming from male envy of female pregnancy and an assumed cloacal theory of birth” (Vizenor *Earthdivers* xiv). Shit, piss and birth; the cloaca is the single orifice for all three functions, three products emerging from the etymological *sewer* (cloaca). The male storyteller fantasizes about being like a female bird and, through the indistinction of the three cloacal products, gains access to auto-reproduction. It is such a fantasy that intimates the author as a God-function. Piss, shit and babies must be indistinguishable from each other for God to create. Would God be the hole through which they pass? Vizenor challenges the anthropologists’ reading by turning production back onto them:

Some anthropologists seem to have little appreciation for sacred games in tribal creations. Their secular seriousness separates the tribes from humor, from untimed metaphors, and the academic intensities of career bound anthropologists approach diarrhetic levels of terminal theoretical creeds. The creation myth that anthropologists never seem to tell is the one where *naanabozho* [another name for *wenobojo*], the cultural trickster, made the first anthropologist from fecal matter. Once made, more were cloned in graduate schools from the first fecal creation of the anthropologist (xv).

Clones are made from shit. Like grains of sand, they are spread out and form an island. This movement of amassing an ever expanding island of shit creates an interesting tension between the *terminal theoretical creeds*, what Cardinal refers to as the closing off of the body in language or the closure of theory into a territory, and the *approach* to *diarrhetic levels* of these theories. Expand and close, expand in order to cover and close. Explosive, one could say, was the dissemination of the knowledge-production industry into the lives of native peoples, and yet look how narrow the world they were left with was after this explosion. Somewhere between flowing, solidifying, and being launched air borne, lies discursive production and the simultaneous assimilation and replication of *career bound anthropologists*. Another point well taken, but does Vizenor’s reminder that creation stories are sacred games played between the people--a way to connect through laughter--foreclose the discussion of gender brought up by the anthropologists’ reading? Is his ironic story about the origin and dissemination of anthropologists from the trickster’s anus simply reproducing the fantasy of male birth by erasing the mark of gendered difference with the ambiguity, or perhaps neutrality, of the anthropologist/

turd, a move erased by humor? And, in his turn to writing, away from terminal theoretical creeds, does he participate in the “beautiful and simple strength” from which women writers are blocked, according to Cardinal?

These are of course loaded questions. ‘Yes’ to all of them. These are perhaps the wrong kind of questions to ask, as they already have answers so close that the questions perform as statements. Trinh has asked a more rigorous question in the following way:

A woman for whom the question of truth and authenticity presents itself as a vital necessity cannot, without feeling herself betrayed, use a language whose words reflect man’s occupation of the territory. On the other hand, feminizing words would seem to be valorizing difference, creating a new alienation by the invention of a specialized language. What to do? Here we are again faced with the impasse of extremes (122).

What to do? A question without a simple or immediate answer and one that necessarily requires a form of praxis as response. I cannot sit idly by, playing in the realm of ideas, and attempt to answer this question. I also am not addressed by this question, as I am not a woman, and yet somehow feel implicated by the call to action nonetheless. But it is in the acknowledgement that this question places the reader in the *impasse of extremes* where this question’s force is felt. [more on this problem] In another text, in the context of writing in the feminine without “bursting into a series of euphoric, narcissistic accounts of yourself and your own kind” or “indulging in a marketable romanticism or in a naive whining about your own condition,” Trinh frames the question this way: “...how do you forget without annihilating? Between the twin chasms of navel-gazing and navel-erasing, the ground is narrow and slippery” (*Woman, Native, Other* 28). The navel here can be representative of the self, an auto-fixation in which the world is filtered through the lens of that particular scar and marker of individuation. It can also be the original wound that Spivak references, the path back to the origin barred by scar tissue, marking the site and its impossible recovery. This difficulty is erased through a forgetting in the form of annihilation. A smooth body, like a smooth basket, has no seams.

Her answer to the question of what to do, of how to forget without annihilating, is complex and involves a number of movements, each informed by the question anew, reasking without fully satisfying with a closed answer. “Undoing, doing, and redoing interact mutually in their dispersion and continuity” (*When the Moon Waxes Red* 137). An *other writing* is a form of *un-writing*, which doesn’t settle simply in the destructive mode but includes all three of the inflected forms of doing. Cardinal’s desire to write ‘shit’ in a way that isn’t repressed, for instance, that doesn’t need to pass through the neutralizing and refining processes that make its passage into theoretical discourse possible (and a subsequent proliferation of discourses to occur; cf Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction, Volume 1*), causes her to work within the values of shame and courage that mark the gendered usage of vulgar language. She repeats the word she has heard: “shit.” Through obstinately maintaining the same usage of the material of language, she seeks to (re)materialize the word, and this requires that women writers, “place [them]selves on the border of [their] bodies, express the unexpressed” (*When the Moon Waxes Red* 129). The unexpressed, then, doesn’t lack expression because of the words used, but

loses expression through the prior uses of language, something that already exists before a subject enters into it, makes a subject possible, and yet relies on these very subjects for its continuity: *condition and effect*. This repetition of the material sounds of the same word slides to the side of being merely oppositional or, on the other hand, trying to mimic masculine writing. It offers instead a difference. As a strategy, for Trinh, this is necessary because, quoting Roland Barthes, “‘There is no real...which has not already been classified by men: being born is nothing other than finding this ready-made code and having to accommodate oneself to it.’ Whence this affirmation: ‘The raw material of literature is not the unnameable, but certainly the opposite, the named’” (136). These ready-mades change the relationship to writing, as they require a difficult self-positioning, so that one must write with them in the mode of unwriting in order not to reproduce dominant discourses. No longer, for Trinh, is there an image of a solitary God making sky, earth, sea and beings, from the word, an image that is often translated into *writing* in the form of the author; the author no longer precedes the text. And the objectivism of the “universal” writer and the subjectivism of the “personal” writer are no longer opposed, as an absolute outside and an absolute inside no longer make sense. Both pass ceaselessly one into the other making a gray area of indistinction. This must also change research and how one responds to what is found. “As long as belief in the sacred origin of writing and the religious principle of hidden meanings prevail, there will be need for a “veracious” interpretation and commentary” (*Woman, Native, Other* 29). Neither interpretation nor commentary, unwriting instead takes the readymades as given, fragments whole in their partiality, and yet necessary in order to begin writing. The logic of the message, sent from an originating source, no longer discloses a secret, etiolated and corrupted the further it travels from the mouth of God. From God to Creator, self-creation to performative act of coming into being with the usage of salvaged materials to create, she asserts “I write in the thrall of the impossible (feminine ethnic) real, that share of the detour of inscription which is always a de-description” (43). “...not with inserting a “me” into language, but with creating an opening where the “me” disappears while “I” endlessly come and go, as the nature of language requires” (35).

To write is to work with/in/on the written, to have been scripted, inscribed, and yet to find space for expression precisely in the intervals left, the cracks formed, in the desiccation and loss of the body. If, as Edward Said, famously quoting Karl Marx, says, “They cannot represent themselves, they must be represented,” then this positional authority in its mission to represent, also produces the failed representations, through self-critique, through which unwriting is done. Across the archived body, amongst the ruins, there can be no “me” and yet, because it is writing, an “I” must necessarily remain. But this “I” carries with it the products of three modes of unwriting (doing, undoing and redoing) in a way that drags along the remnants of a past, inflected, that cannot be fully identified or identified with. Women’s writing has taken the path of relining these fragments with a continuous membrane, continuous with the flesh of the body, and, more particularly, the womb. Working with the products of a masculinized language, however, requires a notion of bisexuality in writing, one that, rather than being merely the neutralizing bisexuality of technical language where “fear of the body leads to a loss of voice.” Instead, quoting Cixous, Trinh offers an other bisexuality towards “the discovery in oneself, individually, of the presence, diversely manifest and insistent according to each man or woman, of both sexes, non-exclusion of difference nor of sex, and from this ‘permission’ that one gives

oneself, multiplication of the effects of the inscription of desire, on all the parts of my body and the other body” (Trinh *When the Moon Waxes Red* 124).

Trinh’s discussion of bisexuality in writing and the appropriation of birth by male writers is different than the analysis given by the anthropologists, which remains at the level of the theoretical, while her stake is closely related to the material, the womb. The male writer appropriates the act of birth as a conceptual tool in order to claim creation as his own, but critique of this appropriation need not take the form of ethno-cultural identification and academic disciplinization. Vizenor correctly sees the academic territorializing in this mode of analysis, but his mistake was to not see how his own body was implicated in the dirt-shit-cloacal origin story despite it. His usage of metaphor, humor and games does add a third possibility to Cardinal’s dichotomy for male writing, however. The relationship to the body is neither disavowed nor “beautiful and simple” but wry, the twist such that “writing and voice braid, weave, themselves together” (quoting Cixous, *When the Moon Waxes Red* 140). But not in a perfect stitch. This braiding, the wry twist, made possible by the open stitch, is lived in the gendered body, according to Cixous, as “a wrenching, a launching of self, a diving: There is waste in what we say. We need this waste...she writes as one throws one’s voice, forward, into the void” (140).

Author as (Gendered, Indigenous) Gesture

Rewriting you, I write myself anew. I am still author, authority. I am still the colonizer, the speaking subject, and you are now at the center of my talk.

--bell hooks, “Choosing the Margin as a Space of Radical Openness”

Once ideas go out into the world, people make of them what they will, and an author has little control. I hope that people have found the book useful in a good way.

--Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies*

The author is now understood to disappear into the text, and this is thought to open a revolutionary potential for the reader. But much has been said, lamented even, about the loss of the subject in its apparent irony with regards to the status of the dispossessed finally gaining access to agency. *No longer objects!* seems to be the cry, and *yet we are too late!* *The subject slips through our fingers and dissipates into ghostly emanations right before our very eyes.* But this isn’t irony. Not yet. The death of the author so heralded, lauded, and decried draws its dissipatory force from “ethnographic societies,” which are understood to be pre-personal, communal (Barthes, “Death of the Author” 142). The cross-pollinating of semiotics, structural anthropology, ethnography and poststructuralism has led to a theoretical dismantling of the subject along the lines of the alternative indigenous model. A desire for the subject-as-agent, grammatically imposed upon the dispossessed, is produced in order to resist objectification, while the authorized subject disappears into the theoretically appropriated figure of the

dispossessed themselves. Like Clastre's chief, who speaks an empty speech and owes such speaking to the tribe, the author is multiplied and empties out, disappears in this process at the moment the people for whom the chief had spoken gain access to his speaking. This is irony. The revolutionary potential of the reader-who-wounds-texts is given back to those who no longer want such a position, and the figure of indigeneity produced through subtilizing theoretical tools organizes the entire scene. Though, the death of the author is the birth of the subject, held together by language and discourse, and the reader moves from here. "Language knows a 'subject' not a 'person' and this subject, empty outside of the very enunciation which defines it, suffices to make language hold together, suffices, that is to say, to exhaust it" (145).

The temporality of the traditional author, as having a before and after, as being the source that nourishes the text, is historical and agential, while the "eternally written here and now" of *the modern scriptor* is related to the plastic and performative space of the indigene, the space of pre-history that has no relation to before or after, no possibility of entering or leaving: the primitive scene. "The hand cut off from any voice borne by a *pure gesture* of inscription (and not of expression) traces a field without origin--or which at least has no other origin than language itself, language which ceaselessly calls into question all origins" (146). [my ital] Priority belongs to the gesture, which is also the (non) action of writing. In such a space of non-origins, writing inexorably seeks to assert meaning while also inexorably dissolving it. Pure gesture. Pure inscription. Infinite re dis appearance.

In this writing that creates, "an opening where the writing subject endlessly disappears," the relationship between writing and death is noted to have both temporal precursors and geographically distant analogs, which are also, notably, precursors (Foucault, *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice* 116). This emptying of the author-subject then occurs through an "exterior deployment" which also marks the freeing of the signifier in its acoustic materiality from the signified, an interiority which requires "expression". Writing now "unfolds like a game that moves beyond its own rules and leaves them behind." These rules are atavistic vestiges of the crumbling of an interiority that marked the emergence of a self.¹⁷ This is the nostalgically mourned agent that was foreclosed for so many of the dispossessed. These rules are seen as quaint and outdated. Instead, the line of death, with its inversions of performances in language, is drawn out and followed so that Arabic Stories are understood to be "a desperate inversion of murder." The unending story of Scheherazade's *The Arabian Nights*, for instance, is seen as a detour through which death is subtly evaded. The ancient Greek narrative, another instance, is understood to consecrate and magnify the death of the hero, who thereby passes into immortality. Drawing on George Bataille's analysis of sacrificial economies in *The Accursed Share*, based in part on French ethnographers' descriptions of Northwestern American Indian Potlatch, the turn occurs when "writing is now linked to sacrifice and to the sacrifice of life itself." The

¹⁷ On the exceptional character of Western individualization and modernity that Foucault locates in the birth of the Author as "a privileged moment of individualization", several critical discourses display this "dead end" of the project of rational man, sometimes by even denying the project's existence (eg. Bruno Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern*). The first step was to claim exceptionalism. The second to normalize by excluding all others. The third is to reintroduce the excluded through projects of equity. The fourth to deny the existence of such an emergent moment of exception by analogically linking the pre- and the post-, thereby also nullifying these prefixes. These are, of course, indigenizing gestures of return.

relationship between writing and death remains, but the values have flipped, so that instead of infinitely detouring from death, writing is now a sovereign, which, “retains the right to kill, to become the murderer of its author.” This inversion takes place through an ambiguity which is once again based on the conjunction: “this conception of a spoken *or* written narrative as a protection against death has been transformed by our culture.” [my ital] By *our* culture. Spoken *or* written. Some boundaries are maintained while others pass into indistinction. Also, the famous reference to Beckett, “‘What matter who’s speaking, *someone said*, what matter who’s speaking.’ In an indifference such as this we must recognize one of the fundamental ethical principles of contemporary *writing*” (115-116). This finicky indifference to the medium, which is echoed by the indifference to the author/speaker, is due to the exteriorization which takes the form of a singular constant, a direction, a movement towards...what? For Foucault, it is truth. Of course, this truth changes. “...discourse was not originally a thing, a product, or a possession, but an action situated in a bipolar field of sacred and profane, lawful and unlawful, religious and blasphemous. It was a gesture charged with risks long before it became a possession caught in a circuit of property values” (124). Nonetheless, the action remains. Research remains attuned to truth despite the variance in what truth signifies, aligning somehow with the materiality of the signifier freed from signification. And the risk of death remains attached to writing despite the variance in value, aligning it with infinity. Gesture comes first. Possession takes over. Dispossessed. Between them: movement.

In an older time and in other cultures, the search for truth was hazardous in the extreme and truth resided in a danger zone, but if this was so and if truth could only be approached after a long preparation or through the details of a ritualized procedure, it was because it represented power. Discourse, for these cultures, was an active appropriation of power and to the extent that it was successful, it contained the power of truth itself, charged with all its risks and benefits (125 fn 20).

It is odd that the theorist who so profoundly altered the analysis of power, moving from oppressive sovereign power, through productive juridical power, to population-based biopower, surreptitiously (re)introduces the possibility of appropriating power in the old, sovereign sense by creating a dichotomy between it and property. To disrupt the shoring up of disciplinary fields, the accumulation of property through discursive forms of authorization, “it is as if the author, at the moment he was accepted into the social order of property which governs our culture, was compensating for his new status by *reviving* the older bipolar field of discourse in a systematic practice of transgression and by restoring the danger of writing which, on another side, had been conferred the benefits of property.” [my ital] The death of the author-subject, the “author-function”, in a movement of perpetual disappearance, is the opening through which the anonymous and empty speech that risks death for the sake of appropriating power is brought back to life. A gesture *in a bipolar field of sacred and profane*, it is the ambiguity of writing and speaking, the *hand cut off from any voice*, that the death of the author makes possible. The difference here, the magical incantation that makes this transformation possible, is the name.

The author has a name, but “the name of an author is not simply a proper name like any other, neither at the level of description nor at the level of designation” (Agamben *Profanations* 62).

What is the gesture that Foucault notes marks the function of the author? It is return. In contending with a discourse, practicing a form of research, there is a necessary *return to the origins*. “The phrase “return to” designates a movement with its proper specificity, which characterizes the initiation of discursive practices. If we return, it is because of a basic and constructive omission that is not the result of accident or incomprehension” (Foucault, *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice* 131). The author is open, full of spaces, without any possibility of completion. In fact, this very opening is a call back. To research is to return and this is a “gesture” or is marked by emergence from the space of gesture. Like the names of infamous men that Foucault describes in another text, the place of risk opened up between atavistic values of the sacred and profane, the cut off hand, moves in in-famy between anonymity and personalization. The chief’s speech is empty. The author returns to a bipolar field of risk. Discourse follows. “...the author is present in the text only as a gesture that makes expression possible precisely by establishing a central emptiness in this expression” (Agamben *Profanations* 66). And yet for the in-famous, “the gesture by which they have been fixed seems to remove them from any possible presentation, as if they had appeared in language only on the condition of remaining absolutely unexpressed in it.” The represented are risked, their lives put into play, by the violence of discourse, a discourse that carries the name of the author whose conditions of expression are precisely the gesture of risk, of putting at risk, both the lives of the written and the writer. And it is this double risk that Foucault claims is the ethical position of the author for contemporary writing, as a form of life, because, “the trace of the writer is found only in the singularity of his absence,” therefore, “he must assume the role of the dead man in the game of writing.”

Whenever dancers in regalia take the floor, they put aside their own identities and become deer, bear, or another animal, or they become “stand-ins” for the human race (LaPeña 16).

Chapter 2 Speaking of Bones

Chapter 1 approached writing from the standpoint of *what remains*. Writing was understood in its material and figural senses, in the articulation of these two, as a trace that both remains and effaces that which it represents. In the context of indigeneity, writing initially comes in through the act of transcription, *the written*, the act of preserving or making remain what has been described as disappearing, which, as salvage ethno-graphy, makes fragments. What is lost in transcription, as Roland Barthes notes, is the body. In the act of recovery, through the use of these fragments, *writing* (as differentiated from the written) acts as the embodied motion of investing the fragments with a new corporeality, a practice best exemplified by certain versions of feminism, particularly women's writing, but what is risked is the effacement of the disaster itself through the (re)production of life.

This chapter turns to two specific cases of controversy over the repatriation of human remains. Part 1 investigates 'culture' through the legislated notion of 'culturally unidentifiable,' a category created during the passage of the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) as a catch-all for the remainders of the collections housed by governmentally funded higher education institutions after having passed through identification procedures that have failed. This failure opens up questions of voice, representation, and institutional power through the location of a research team whose task it was to identify the remains. Part 2 investigates 'race' through the ambiguous remains of a skeleton, collected from the Columbia River bank in Washington state, that was identified by one scientific discourse as morphologically caucasoid and by another as chemically over 9,000 years old. This contradiction strikes at the heart of notions of priority and belonging as they relate to the formation of Nation-States, and is not cleared up by the predominant form of testing for geographic origin, as the bones are so old that they are essentially empty of DNA. The aporia produced by these conflicting discourses opens up a radical potential through the framework of an indigenous epistemology, one explored by Gerald Vizenor's "modest proposal" to institute a federally recognized court to hear the cases of Native American bones, to listen to their testimonies, to let them tell their stories.

Part 1: Mis/Identification and Silence at the Hearst Museum

In the wake of the passage of NAGPRA in 1990, the Phoebe Apperson Hearst Museum at UC Berkeley was required to survey its vast collection of human remains, upwards of 12,000 "individuals," and over a million artifacts, to determine any cultural affiliation to existing tribes and to repatriate any remains and associated funerary objects identified. A series of failures by the museum in this task lead to an ambiguous situation and a controversy in 2007 regarding the location and enunciative position of the research team responsible for collecting evidence to make cases for identification. Basing my claims on the correspondence circulating at the time, the question of who could represent the bones, or how they might be represented leads more generally to the postcolonial problem of voice. Who speaks? For whom? And, once spoken for, can one ever speak again? Because I don't want to be presumptuous about what kinds of things

can speak or carry a voice, I'd like to alter these questions slightly by adding the conjunction 'or' with the pronoun 'what': who "or what" speaks? For whom or what? And, once spoken for, can someone or something ever speak again?

Messages

This story concerns an e-mail correspondence that occurred in 2007 between Larri Fredericks, an Athabascan Indian and the former interim coordinator for the UC Berkeley NAGPRA research unit, and the Chancellor of the University at the time, Robert J. Birgeneau. The correspondence concerned the functioning of the unit in charge of overseeing and ensuring the Museum's compliance with NAGPRA. "The Repatriation Act requires museums and agencies (including universities) receiving federal funding to compile an inventory of their 'holdings or collections' of Native American human remains and associated funerary objects and to identify their 'geographical and cultural affiliation.' Once such affiliation is established, request by 'a known lineal descendant of the Native American or of the tribal organization' requires the 'expeditious return' of the remains" (Constable 81).

On the occasion of the first message, Larri Fredericks wrote to the Chancellor informing him of a recent decision by Vice Chancellor of Research, Beth Burnside, to "integrate" the formerly semi-autonomous NAGPRA research unit into the overall functions of the museum. A message that Fredericks sent simultaneously to both the Chancellor and the American Indian Graduate Student Association Listserv, which is how I received it. Seemingly a minor and internal matter of administration, it is precisely 'the minor' and 'the internal' that are at stake in this event.

The unit was founded in 1999, one year prior to the (already extended) deadline to be in compliance with the federal law and nine years after the law's enactment, a last minute effort to inventory and gather research for cultural identification of the massive collection--under the gun, so to speak. The NAGPRA unit was not responsible for determining which remains were to be considered culturally affiliated. That decision is the responsibility of UC Berkeley (UCB) and UC Office of the President (UCOP) committees, which are made up of faculty, curators and a few Native Americans. The unit's job was simply to provide the evidence upon which the committee's decisions were based. Though, Fredericks writes, "By *disbanding* the unit, the University avoids forcing the committees to make these decisions."

The integration of the unit into the museum meant, among other things, that Larri Fredericks' position of Coordinator was to be demoted from semi-autonomous supervisor of the unit to herself being supervised by two of the Museum's staff. To understand the weight of her position at the time, consider that, due to the time constraint written into the law (surpassed by five years—1995 was the actual deadline and the Hearst Museum didn't finish their inventory until 2000) the museum had identified 80% of its collection of the remains of over twelve thousand individuals and over a million objects as *culturally unidentifiable*. Fredericks writes, "It is crucial to understand that many inventories fall under the latter category simply because the Museum would have been out of compliance with the Federal mandate to have the collection inventories for NAGPRA completed by June 2000." The immense size of the collection, together with procrastination on the part of the Museum's administrators and a limited time frame--one year, made a comprehensive review of the documentation for thousands of

archeological sites impossible, a failure that led to such a large percentage of the collection being labeled *unidentifiable*. This shifted the burden onto the tribes to contest the classification and “present evidence based on artifact, style, period, oral history, etc, to support claims of cultural affiliation.”

It is precisely the failure to identify the remains, and the subsequent foreclosure of the ability to identify *with* the remains, that troubles recourse to the law. The stronger claim is that identification, relying as it does on scientific discourse as a form of justice, merely redoubles the assumed crime (for which the law was needed as corrective to begin with). The bones, then, are caught between identification and misidentification, as to be unidentifiable and to be identified both fall into the realm of the continuing disaster began in the encounter with Europe 500 years ago. Mis/identification and silence will be the points of articulation between a shattered speech and the remains of a shattered people in the form of material culture. In such a relation between the fragmented word and the thing as fragment, who or what can speak? And what (kind of) voice could this be?

Aporias of Discourse: the Scientific and the Legal

Because of this mass interpellation, the remains were placed outside of the discursive power of federal authority. Becoming the “neutral” objects of scientific discourse (thereby naturalizing *this* notion of object), they *were identified* and therefore contextualized, recognized, interpellated but in a different way. To be unrecognized by one code is to slip immediately into another, as one is always preceded by a system or network that sets the terms for recognition and for action. The term *culture*, in this particular case, indicates political and legally defined tribal affiliation *based upon* the very scientific processes that arose from practices of studying sites and collections like those at the Hearst Museum. The rhetoric here resides in the interpellation *unidentifiable* being based on a *legal* definition of “culture” in conjunction with past and present identification procedures practiced and collected at the same site. Here that particular mis/identification holds a certain *power* to cover over in the continuing interests of the scientific.

Objects *that were* identified as affiliated with a tribe underwent a different procedure whereby the tribes gained complete control over the objects and research could no longer be done without direct consent. Tribes could also simply ask to have the affiliated objects repatriated, which still required a case to be made before the committees. The NAGPRA unit’s primary responsibility after the year 2000 was the *active* identification of the already culturally *identified* remains and objects, through gathering the documentation necessary to make a case before the UCB and UCOP committees. This, however, left the *unidentified* mass of remains and objects thoroughly in the dark, legally speaking.

The result of the “folding” of the NAGPRA unit into the Museum’s daily functions, according to Fredericks, would amount to a shift of the burden of proof to the tribes to make claims “on a case by case basis”, as opposed to an ongoing active process of identification by the unit; thereby negating the original shift in power enacted by the law, which placed responsibility in the hands of the scientists to identify “in good faith” the artifacts and remains and gain permission from the tribes to perform research. Across discourses, the inclusion of the research unit into the overall functions of the museum amounts to a shift in “voice.”

This contested space of mis/identification is also the site of a split in cultural identity, effectively making it a laboratory not just of “neutral” scientific identification of “objects”, but also a political laboratory of *identification*: the power to speak for or represent. This split is part of a legal discourse which expressly distinguishes between the ethnological enunciation “Indian,” defined primarily as evidence, and the politico-legal enunciation “Indian,” through which subjects are defined and enacted. To be Indian in the politico-legal sense is to be called, addressed, and outlined according to 33 separate definitions of “Indian” used in federal legislation.¹⁸ This multiple codification, of course, produces complex networks of mis/identification across the same individual body. As Native Americans, in this sense, are primarily defined by their inclusion in a social-scientifically recognizable tribe and their eligibility for various types of governmental aid, in other words inclusion in a political system based on redress, this creates a heavily layered map of institutional recognition that falls on individual bodies in a variety of ways. These bodies are spoken about or spoken for; they are not spoken to in a dialogic sense, nor do they themselves speak. The situation of Native remains, as well as cultural items, falls into this same evidential discourse of mis/identification. The instrumental extension and biological *ruin*-ation of the body only intensify this process through metonymy.

An Absence of Stories

Simply being in compliance with the law was not enough for Fredericks. Instead, she called for representation of a storytelling epistemology that would speak for the remains in a different way, a way that the external review committee deemed “dysfunctional.” This lack of stories is no surprise if we consider the narrative that Fredericks herself recounts. It’s another story of prior correspondence and hushed voices. Take for instance this accidental forward from the Vice Chancellor, originally intended for the Assistant Vice Chancellor, Dr. (Bob) Price, who was the primary contact for Fredericks regarding the review process that ultimately lead to the Vice Chancellor’s decision. About it Fredericks writes,

What is telling about this email is that she sent it to me by mistake; she thought she was emailing Price to give him guidance. I quote the email in its entirety:

Bob, In a worst case scenario, you might address her issues by asking for a list of the last several months tribe visits and taking a random sample for the reviewers to interview by phone. That would give them input but not go near the idea they should be on the review committee. That's an absolute no. Maybe better to stonewall altogether but I see blackmail here that she's threatening to stir them up if we don't do what she wants. We should definitely not go there.
Beth

¹⁸ According to a 1978 congressional survey, there were upwards of 33 separate definitions of “Indian” used in federal legislation. The number of definitions increased when tribal enrollment statutes were included. For more, see Brownell.

So, should Native Americans be represented on a review committee affecting their ancestral remains and sacred objects? “An absolute no.” What is the “worst case scenario”? Ask Walker and Bettinger to conduct some random “interviews” by phone. But watch out! The uppity blackmailer might “stir up” the Indians (sounds like a bad Western). “Maybe better to stonewall altogether.” Price decided to stonewall.

This is a message in excess. Fredericks was not meant to read this and certainly not supposed to send it along the channels of communication (just as I was never intended to relate it to you). It is revealing through bungling, because it concerns an issue of colonial politics (and because a secret missive intended to be omitted from the discourse was instead emitted excessively and then made visible along a divergent network). Here is a clear issue of representation.

The committee, as Fredericks notes in her message, is made up of two white anthropologists. This committee created to decide the fate of the NAGPRA unit in its relation to the Museum is a mirror image of the UCB and UCOP committees that ultimately decide the fate of the remains and artifacts housed by the Museum. These committees are *top-heavy* with anthropologists and archaeologists. According to Fredericks, they don’t include any linguists, historians or oral history specialists that might counter-act the hegemonic process of a scientific identification of the bones (Fredericks).

The absence of stories within the museum is a subjugating of knowledge, of representation, allocating the bones solely as resources of information. In scientific representation, the bones are things to be studied, found, sought out, for the sake of a rational knowing that has its roots in the enlightenment’s distinction between ‘M’an (the subject of politics) and ‘N’ature (the object of science). Fredericks’ message seeks a re-remembering of this divide by politicizing the processes of recognition. There’s the imagining of a unified Native political body, on behalf of those for whom she works, the tribes (an employment relationship that lead to the label “dysfunctional”), and there’s the not so distant past which seeks to speak through her about the colonial silences of identification, the fragments calling for a return to an *imagined* wholeness.

Just Silence

Marianne Constable, in her book *Just Silences: The Limits and Possibilities of Modern Law*, furthers this connection by describing contemporary law as being based on sociological and empirical information. In this sense it is only “knowable” sociologically, an epistemology that privileges “efficacious power or control” (75). The most apparent form of control would be discourses which correspond to a sociological worldview. The affinity between the research agenda of the scientists and the management policies of the museum--an affinity based on technique--is supported by and supports in turn this notion of law. The alliance of these three levels of discourse: 1. scientific description and method, 2. institutional management of representation, and 3. legal recognition as control, complicate the narrative that Fredericks recounts.

Constable specifically addresses NAGPRA and the Native American Languages Act (also passed in 1990) as two moments in legal jurisdiction that exemplify the “sociologically

discursive and rule-like character of law.” She states, “language and religion, speech and the sacred, become objects of well-intentioned social studies that articulate the conditions for preserving culture” (75). The mass interpellation of the collection in the museum as ‘culturally unidentifiable’, then, is based entirely on a sociologically created notion of legal recognition, one that makes possible large blind spots. Constable focuses on language preservation and cultural definition of artifacts and remains to show the manner in which the indigene is subjectified in current politico-legal discourse. As a counteraction, she will highlight the silences of Native peoples as pointing to a different type of subject and, therefore, a different type of law and voice. She writes,

In the silences that U.S. law does not hear, there lie possibilities of law—as of language and of religion and of justice—that positivist jurisprudence and sociological society do not acknowledge and whose truths they cannot accept (74).

Constable’s discussion of the sociological ground of native legal claims is made evident by the discourse that subtends the NAGPRA research unit dispute in the form of evidence that is used on both sides. To make claims for the absence of ethnographic and linguistic evidence is to accept the basic ground, what she calls, “the pervasive privileging at law of the kind of discourse that corresponds to a sociological worldview.” Here the complex process of providing evidence, within the frameworks and intersections of legal positivism and social/biological science, as Constable shows, makes the terrain incredibly difficult to navigate, but makes the emergence of voice, in the form of difference, all that more powerful. As the mediator between the tribes and the museum (collections, researchers, archivists, administrators, etc) the research unit, in its “dysfunctional” approach, revealed the ambivalence of such a position.

From Culture to Heritage

The notion Constable raises of the preservation of culture through social policy will also become problematic, as it subtly slides into Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett’s definition of *heritage*. Kirshenblatt-Gimblett writes, “The power of heritage is precisely that it is curated, which is why heritage is more easily harmonized with human rights and democratic values than is culture” (“From Ethnology to Heritage” 1). It may seem odd to connect curatorial practices to legal practices, but the impetus of preservation that is written into both links them. *To take care* of something, of a collection, pointing back etymologically as it does to the curate, or parish priest, who cares for the souls of the parish, in this connection highlights the stewardship involved in passing laws to preserve (the ways of) a people. The transition that Kirshenblatt-Gimblett marks from culture to heritage is disciplinary, moving *from ethnology to heritage*, in that the discipline of studying culture, for her, has dematerialized, leaving materials--collected during an earlier period of salvage ethnography--behind in the museum, what she calls “the repository of outmoded, rather than current, knowledge formations” (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett and Frey 61). Both cared for and abandoned: this is to mark them with a double disappearance. The crisis of ethnology, a self-reflexive disciplinary concern with practices of representation and the concomitant fear of actively making the objects of research disappear, is what for her has lead to

such dematerialization. The materialization of ethnological discourse began from the presumed disappearance of culture and people, leading to the almost manic collecting practices of salvage ethnography, a period in time that created the massive collections in the museums. Making cultures disappear and then salvaging what remains is a first disappearance. Repudiating one's "own history" is a shame that lead to dematerialization and a second disappearance: in this way, ethnological practices, in their dematerialization, materially produce *heritage* as a hyperreal system of disposable objects ("From Ethnology to Heritage" 5).

Bones are no different in that, though they are derived (in collection) from a different discipline (archeology), they are the products of an intense and widespread interest in collecting what was perceived to be the remainders of a culture that both preceded the dominant one and was understood to be past or passing (see Thomas). To call bones heritage may not be precise, but one of the major distinctions between the products of ethnology and of archeology is often perceived to be the display value of ethnological objects. But, as Fredericks notes in her email, at the time of her writing, the display on California Indians at the Hearst Museum hadn't changed in over eleven years. Undergoing the shift described by Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, the objects housed in the museum are similarly remainders of the dematerialization of knowledge. This places them in the same condition of neglect as the bones, of which it is claimed, by at least one Director of the Museum, that *no one really studies them*.¹⁹ This also means that display, in the form of cultural representation, is no longer the primary form of power in museum-to-constituent relations.

Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, for her part, turns to history to rethink the dematerialization of heritage, and claims that the outmoded and perhaps embarrassing collections and displays in museums can become part of the history of how information was presented *at one time*. But, instead of immediately historicizing what is outmoded, drawing the objects into another discipline and form of representation, what if this embarrassment is allowed to open up to another, perhaps more troubling or difficult, possibility? Turning to an historian sensitive to how his discipline has and still can run roughshod over other ways of living in time, I prefer Peter Nabakov's description of the formation of spiritual spaces from outmoded architecture in Native American culture. He writes, it is because "...of their close association with earlier cosmological and social ideas [that these structures became spiritual]. Examples range from old pithouses of the Southwest that were remodeled into ceremonial *kivas* after their occupants came to reside in multistoried domestic room clusters, to rectangular Mandan earth lodges of the Missouri Plains, one of which was retained in each village as its *Okipa* ceremonial lodge...to the construction and ritual protocols associated with the Delaware Big House ceremony, which deliberately conjured up their multiethnic past" (157). This outliving of daily life, what I refer to as a form of the *postvernacular* (tying linguistics and architecture together in the transcendence of both regionalism and domestication), is the inverse process of the re-spiritualizing and re-usage of museumized spiritual objects and dwellings. Having passed through the transcriptive process of *becoming heritage*, where what was once spiritual becomes example of the mundane life of

¹⁹ "For many outspoken Native Americans did not object to science as such. Rather they invoked scientific standards to accuse scientists of shoddy storage of unused artifacts in roomfuls of unlabeled cardboard boxes, for instance, or of retention of bones beyond the period needed for study." Constable 81

Indians, displayed in a museum, this produced everydayness problematically *returns to spirit*. Tribes and museums often now share these objects and dwellings, for instance, with them serving both an educational purpose (teaching museum visitors including Native Americans) and a spiritual purpose (used in ceremonies), even going so far as to fund the building of dwellings for such dual purposes, such as the round house built behind the museum in Yosemite Valley. Such a return can only be understood if one highlights the intervals necessary for making, the empty spaces that make possible the articulations of discourses as they attempt to speak the construction of the display, the culturalized and the heritagized objects.

This return of/to spirit, for me, can be understood through the concept of the neutral, the interval, the empty space, which make possible, not *the remains of an identity*, but a current identity in its material making and unmaking--the unidentified bones function in this way. In the state of *waiting to be identified*, from one perspective the bones are captured by a naturalized scientific code of biological material, but from another, they participate in Roland Barthes' notion of the Neutral, of which he says it is the, "time of the *not yet*, moment when within the original nondifferentiation something begins to be sketched, tone on tone, the first differences...before meaning." (*The Neutral* 50) In each and every object of cultural heritage, glinting through the lineaments, is a teeming mass of disarticulated, unaffiliated bones. The use of museum objects for ceremonial purposes is closer to the ambiguities related to processes of museumification, death, cosmology and the neutral, than they are to the daily life of Indians: this is why I use the term *postvernacular*. Still following the thread of voice: what recourse is there for the collections at the Hearst Museum when the interval is taken into account? Perhaps to turn to stories, but in *another* way.

Stories

What is a story, or, perhaps more performatively, what can a story do? A story lives in the telling. It is neither true nor false, and therefore points endlessly to the form of its telling, to the relations between the teller, the tale told and the listeners. Trinh T. Minh-ha says of stories, "A story is not just a story. Once the forces have been aroused and set into motion, they can't simply be stopped at someone's request. Once told, the story is bound to circulate; humanized, it may have a temporary end, but its effects linger on and its end is never truly an end" (133). It's not simply that, as in the case of the Berkeley NAGPRA research unit gathering evidence for repatriation, stories were not included as evidence. That particular mode of exclusion is a contingent and empirical fact, but even the inclusion of such evidence would be reducing the stories to a criterion of truth, putting them into the service of an expanded notion of the scientific through a legal mediation. To take what is most precious and turn it into evidence is a redoubling of the crime. Stories have become important as part of Native American literature, as legal evidence, for ethnographic data, as collected and archived objects, as a living and performed practice or repertoire, and as the basis for certain versions of postmodernist and poststructuralist critiques. This multivalent trajectory of stories shows their continuing significance but it also elides their relations to non-humans, for instance, as it shows predominately the appropriations of stories for human ends. Even Nietzsche's radical critique of the production of the value of truth depended upon story-making and telling as an inherently human tendency, one that he used to critique the construction of the human world. But a story is

just a story, in another sense, in relation to silence, and perhaps we need to keep telling ourselves this. Perhaps we need to respect the end of stories, *humanized*, even as this end becomes the formal condition for re-beginning, *its effects linger on*, for the renewal of speaking and voice through the fragments of a people materialized and then dematerialized; through the fragments of speech, the story ends so that another may begin in a perhaps absurd and even inaudible way. This time, it is bones that tell it.

The Museum Inside and Out

The Museum is the site where distant places are brought together, different scales, different registers are united and aligned, collected and placed side by side. To define the mechanisms of commensurability, in this case through collection and categorization of material, is to be an active force, acting *as if* the forces you are acting upon are passive. The ambiguity of the research team depended upon the determination of whether it acted from inside or outside of the museum.

In an “expert outside review” for determining the position from which a process to identify remains and artifacts acts, for instance, the drawing of lines between an “internal” matter of administration and an “external constituency” creates an opacity on one side of the nature/social equation, the silencing of the narrative force of storytelling, as related by this quote from Dr. Price:

I don't think that external constituencies, whoever they are and whatever the area of endeavor, should be advising *the University* as to how it allocates *its funds* or structures administration [my ital]:

This is a subjugation of knowledge, in that, as discourse, it is doubly appropriable: stories can resist and therefore refer to a reality or they can become data in cultural definitions (an act of ventriloquism). The drawing of lines in this instance then is only an internal matter from the perspective of a container that claims to contain what it doesn't materially contain, documents which make it strong: the bones and the NAGPRA unit; and to do it convincingly. As Fredericks states,

The reason UCB has a NAGPRA unit is because the law requires the university to acknowledge legitimate tribal claims on its collection of Native American ancestral remains and artifacts. The law also requires that the university make a good faith effort to investigate, adjudicate and satisfy those claims when justified. A good faith effort requires that the university “structure its administration” in a way that facilitates legal compliance. Since the law identifies the tribes explicitly as claimants, their legal standing rises above that of an ordinary external constituency. I am not a lawyer, but I suspect that this standing provides a legal basis to hold UCB accountable. Accountability requires transparency, and the tribes cannot determine if we are acting in good faith if they have no access to the processes that govern NAGPRA funding and administration.

One can see the shoring up of a network of identification and management in the review procedure. Seven years after the “completion” of a mass identification that made the majority of the objects unidentifiable in one sense but usable for a different identification process in another, to label a review process as “external” that is conducted by “bio-archeologists who [also] study skeletal remains” is a semantic game that dis/connects the reviewers from/with a Native constituency, disallowing any other type of access than the strictly scientific. This is the building of a regime that reflects the overall interests of the Museum from top to bottom, inside to outside. How else can we understand the replacement of the NAGPRA unit with an osteologist? In some way the re-organization *is merely* a re-drawing of internal lines, as mentioned, from one perspective. It merely serves to increase the efficiency of both NAGPRA and Museum operations by blurring the budgetary and skill-set boundaries. The budget is stream-lined and the employees are made use of more efficiently.

As a counter-point, the politics of articulation, as discussed by James Clifford, makes use of the notion of “invention” as way to imagine an indigenous identity that is not rooted in enlightenment notions of authenticity based in the nature/man distinction. Through such a notion, the insider/outsider debates and line-drawing become de-naturalized, effectively de-centering the non-native position holding hegemony over a situation based upon this divide (480). In his essay “Indigenous Articulations,” James Clifford describes the need to understand the interpellation *Indigenous* as existing on a “jagged path” between “the seductions of a premature postmodern pluralism” and the “dangerous comforts offered by exclusivist self-other definitions” (470). This is a precarious position between being led astray, a wandering outside, the vagabond notion of postmodernity, without any dwelling to speak of, and settling into a cozy identity politics. To be indigenous cannot mean being entirely inside or outside. Out of a contested space of contested boundaries it is to straddle, as a subject, this space of re-occurring contact. Indigeneity includes dynamism, inter-*action* and dwelling-in-travel, “Black Elk somehow took Harney Peak along when he went to Paris” (470). Or can we say that Harney Peak took Black Elk with it? The definitional lines create multiple territories of belonging and dissociation occurring in one individual subject showing that the “edge” isn’t always “out there”, it is sometimes *in* here. Politics must always work the boundaries, the subtle ones.

Even linguistically, the term indi-genous has a specific resonance with endo-genous. The “genous” part of the etymology refers to being born, coming into existence. The prefixes refer to the manner in which something identified with this adjective is made to be. Both prefixes refer to an internalization of sorts. The endo- is literally being born within, a self-creation, and self-identification, while the indi- refers to being born Native to a specific territory, different but analogous scales of being. Both are “dangerous” in the sense that Clifford describes, as drawing clear internal/external divides. The indigenous subject would be tied inextricably and naturally to a territory. But a situation like the Museum’s *housing* of Native remains changes this notion. The endo-genous as dwelling within, as being housed, refers to the laboratory nature of the Museum in creating/identifying remains and artifacts, but the doubling of the internalization, the label of indigenous, internalizes the already internal, de-natures the process of research, by referring to the external nature of the remains. The bones are not at home, yet, like Black Elk, they carry their home with them. Their natural disposition is brought into the lab, secretly, internally and internal to their role as narrator of the report for the scientists, who attempt to

ventriloquize through them, believing that they have something to say about history. The remains re-create themselves on the local and the infra-local levels (the indigenous and endogenous), altering scientific procedure.

The utility of the Museum's resources works in the same ontology as the scientific practices of research that are identifying the bones, a legacy of collecting practices and desires. There's an inherent affinity between the Museum's notion of the management of people and funds and the research that manages the collections, an ontology of technique. This technique is necessarily opaque to any external constituency. By asserting a need for a semi-autonomous unit to mediate between the museum and the community, in order to make visible the functions of the museum, as well as make recommendations for inclusion of a different ontology, the ontology of storytelling, Fredericks is "inventing" a different subject position, one that changes the nature of the Museum, the communities and the movement of bones and artifacts. There's a different notion of voice at work here; one that seeks to speak along different lines of force. Fredericks, in her message, recommends that the unit remain physically in the museum, with recommendations for active participation, but that the administration of the unit be placed outside of museum and research agendas, under the Provost's Center for Race and Gender, effectively creating an other inside the Museum, which would, "function with integrity and without constant stress and pressure:" the stress and pressure applied by scientists with research agendas (read: desires). This is a critical difference on the level of the subject, what Clifford describes with Articulation Theory.

The opaque process that Fredericks criticizes is a magical relation of claims that keeps a certain occult status in the sciences. How are policy and science being related by her?

The committee was simply a ruse to give that decision the imprimatur of legitimacy. I say this because Burnside and Price: 1. scheduled the review on a very short notice; 2. would not meet with the NAGPRA coordinator or staff; 3. restricted committee membership to scientists; 4. misled us about the committee's purpose; 5. did not allow the committee members to interview Museum personnel with whom we had regular and positive relations.

This amounts to a test by her of the "neutral" judgment of the committee and information collecting processes of the review team. Rather than a scientific matter of efficiency, Fredericks is making policy a political matter, thereby creating an internal that is made public. The appellation *scientist* becomes a subject that is linked to this process through a certain type of desire. She is attaching the NAGPRA situation to a wider discourse of colonial erotics and knowledge construction; a critique of power and potency.

What is important to notice is that a simple dichotomous notion of colonizer/colonized or indian/white or modern/primitive is not appropriate for understanding the subtleties of power and identity that are occurring in the museum space. Homi Bhaba, in his essay, "Of Mimicry and Man," furthers this discussion by asserting that assimilation is only ever partial. There is always a critical difference that escapes, sometimes intentionally, the complete acculturation of another race or people. To quote,

It is as if the very emergence of the “colonial” is dependent for its representation upon some strategic limitation or prohibition within the authoritative discourse itself. The success of colonial appropriation depends on a proliferation of inappropriate objects that ensure its strategic failure, so that mimicry is at once resemblance and menace (338).

The inappropriate objects are *the subjects* of colonial discipline that are never fully assimilated. They are trained to behave in enlightenment-type categories, as functionaries (scientists and collectors themselves), but, as in the messages we are considering from Fredericks, “they do not believe that an Indian—or at least an Indian not closely supervised by whites—will serve the ‘institutional interests’ of the museum, which they equate with research goals and collection preservation” (Fredericks). According to Bhaba, this is a double articulation that takes place through a “complex strategy of reform, regulation and discipline” whenever an other is appropriated under the visualization of an *appropriate* power (338). This appropriate visualization of power is a mirroring or narcissistic effect that *desires* a recognizable other that is “almost the same, but not quite,” or, in this case, almost the same but not-quite-white (and therefore desirable). It is, in discursive terms, what he calls interdiction, or being between the codes, doubly appropriated, where *what is known* is kept concealed: through the internalizing of the NAGPRA unit. The assurance of strategic failure or menace of this mimicry is located in its being “within the rules but against them.” It is the logic of citizenship and liberation that is confronted with its own irrationality in the metonymic form of a disturbingly uncanny mirror image that has some internal difference. We must remember that in political theory, the citizen is initially *and therefore always* a straight, white, land owning male. It is only through inclusivist and assimilationist politics, ad hoc at best, that the Other is allowed to be deemed a “citizen,” which re-inforces and re-centers, through dispersion, the originary disposition. The active identification performed by the semi-autonomous unit is within the NAGPRA mandates, but against them, as the rules by themselves would allow for the shift of burden of proof onto the Native communities, based upon the initial interpellation of remains as unidentifiable. But the message by Fredericks enacts a different reading of the rules of engagement. She imagines a different subject through an enigmatic message contained in her e-mail. Bhaba quotes Freud on the nature of fantasy as being partial and caught inappropriately between the unconscious and the preconscious,

Their mixed and split origin is what decides their fate. We may compare them with individuals of mixed race who taken all round resemble white men but who betray their colored descent by some striking feature or other and on that account are excluded from society and enjoy none of the privileges (341).

In this complex nexus of identification, “the ‘normalizing’ that retains the mimetic difference alienates the language of liberty,” disallowing a cohesive, logical articulation, the impossibility of which “produces an other knowledge of norms,” a fantastic one, an imagined one (338). Here metonymy allows for a contiguity of incommensurable objects to be related on a table without a thinkable equating space. Fredericks is playing between logic and illogic.

The bones and the cultural artifacts housed in the Phoebe Hearst Museum, and the Native scholars who have been integrated into its inner workings, have something in common. They are connected by the ambivalence of the discursive and therefore venerable and situated callings by varying forces. A scientific discourse which would relate Native American bodies by kinship, physiological formation, archaeological placement, geological and temporal juxtaposition is radically different from a politico-legal discourse that identifies Native American bodies as sites of a bio-political preservation in the form of medical aid (I've seen the posters), as well as relating them through legal definitions of tribal affiliation that run the gamut of blood quantum, descendancy, evidential proof of significant time spent with the culture and people. With the academic dependency on Native remains for some scientists, and the acknowledged reliance upon Native support for Lewis and Clark to complete their mapping of the US, their dependence on the presence of Native Bodies, there is absolutely no metaphor in stating that the institutions of this country are built on, and continue to build, the bodies of Indians. The Phoebe Apperson Hearst Museum regularly loans out Native remains in the form of traveling exhibitions, though the Museum itself hasn't had a significant Native display in over eleven years, and makes a significant amount of money from doing this. There is much to be gained in the effective hiding of Native bones through their illusory unidentifiability. The bodies, the bones, the artifacts all point to the *in situ* establishment of reality that the contextual game of hiding and exhibiting supports. Kirschenblatt-Gimblett notes that mimesis places objects *in situ*, that is, arbitrarily sliced from the world and metonymically placed in a hyperreal situation that enlarges the object by expanding its boundaries. She writes,

Such displays... appeal to those who argue that cultures are coherent wholes in their own right, that environment plays a significant role in cultural formation, and that displays should present process and not just products. At their most mimetic, *in situ* installations include live persons, preferably actual representatives of the cultures on display (*Destination Culture* 56).

There is a famous example of a live person who lived his life, at least the end of it, in a museum: Ishi. After his death, his brain was kept by the Smithsonian and was one of the most controversial cases of repatriation in history. Native Americans have been placed under the watchful gaze of the department of the Interior which is in charge of the Nation's resources. Native Americans are identified as natural resources in this way, and so are their remains. And, as resources, forces of nature, they are subject to all the protections, as well as all the uses, of resources from/for scientific and economic gain. This final discursive mode seems to be, in some way, the most satisfactory. The subjection of the legal mode is perhaps dangerously useful, the objection of the scientific mode is wounding, and the return to a natural disposition in the resource mode brings back a hint of mythic time, where, "bones are in communion with the earth" (Vizenor *Crossbloods* 66).

Fredericks' doubleness as *one-who-identifies-things* and *one-who-identifies-as* leads her to send a message, and, in her words, ventriloquizing Birgeneau's message, "It is a terrible message to send to Native Americans." The silence that gets excluded from legal definitions, from scientific identifications and from forms of representation is an active silence, it is an

enigmatic message that speaks through an unspeakable transmission, implanting itself as an other inside of us requesting an analogous other inside in the operations of the museum. I can only reveal so much of this other, just as Fredericks can only reveal so much in her message, without becoming loquacious myself. An inside that is doubly inside, an other in me and in this paper, transmitted through an accidental encounter with Larri Fredericks' message.

Part 2: Native American Bone Courts

In Part 1, the mass interpellation of a collection of bones as *culturally unidentifiable* created an ambiguity in terms of their representation. Slipping out of the grasp of the various discourses that claim authority over the bones, they were instead held as markers of a more fundamental nature and a more pure form of power. This perpetuated mis/identification was made manifest in the controversy over the site and position of the research team responsible for gathering evidence towards identification. The postcolonial problem of voice, *who or what speaks? For whom or what? And, once spoken for, can someone or something ever speak again?*, was raised in the problem of the position of authority and in the question of what counts as evidence. This collection, in such a state of perpetual mis/identification, in the dark regarding legal status, belonging to no one and nowhere in its latent cultural affiliation, waiting, is the other side of what Susan Stewart refers to as the abstractness of the collection. The creation of a collection, for her, removes objects from their contexts and replaces the original contexts with classification, effectively dehistoricizing the objects by putting the past in the service of the collection itself (151). The collection, in this sense, would not be a matter of accumulation, but rather a rigorously organized set through a spatially delimited principle of reason. In a situation where such classification would lead to repatriation, the recourse to cultural mis/identification as a way to maintain control of the collection slides closer to accumulation, making both power and its relation to nature apparent in the form of a desire for ambiguous bones. As Gerald Vizenor says, "social scientists are loath to associate archaeologists with necrophilism, even in semiotic ironies; however, the distinctions between some methodologies and the peculiar practices of collecting aboriginal bones are blurred causeries in modern tribal consciousness" (67).

Stewart is herself making a categorical distinction--between *the souvenir* and *the collection*--one that is based on modes of (re)presentation: "The boundary between collection and fetishism is mediated by classification and display in tension with accumulation and secrecy" (quoted in Clifford 219). Associating fetishism of the concrete and unique individual object with the hoarder who *insanely* and obsessively accumulates property with unmediated desire and no rational organization, she draws a fundamental line illustrated by first the human/animal distinction (California wood rats) and then the sane/insane distinction (misers in insane asylums) (153). This discursive drawing of lines falls into the mechanism of production of what Donna Haraway has called "The Great Divide" between "Man" and all of *his* others (10). In framing it in terms of organizations that clearly use inclusion and exclusion as dichotomous principles, Stewart is also touching upon Michel Foucault's notion of the "heterotopé," a collection of objects that cannot be classified on a single rational plane and thus continues to refer to their original contexts/worlds. The "silver, tobacco, watches, tools, knives, matches,

pieces of glass” in the wood rat’s ‘collection’ “are without seriality, without relation to one another or to a context of acquisition” (153).²⁰

The rats and misers seemingly have no choice, their impulses to collect lying “somewhere between oral introjection and anal retention” (quoting Baudrillard, 153). To compulsively devour and obstinately hold-in one’s feces, clenching the anus, is to take voracious pleasure in all one sees and a more discrete pleasure in what is unseen. Is this not the bodily image of transcription, the risk of representation through practices of salvage, noted in Part 1 of this chapter, as a gobbling up of what seems to be disappearing, while preserving, holding on tight to, the product of this activity, the remains? “Here we might add that this form of insanity is, like anal retentiveness, an urge toward incorporation for its own sake, an attempt to erase the limits of the body that is at the same time an attempt, marked by desperation, to ‘keep body and soul together’” (153). A desperate attempt to house the soul, which has already flown the coop.

The culturally unidentifiable remains, then, begin to blur the distinctions between collection and fetishism, between classification and accumulation, between display and secrecy. In the quote above, Gerald Vizenor performs his own peculiar practice of mixing collection and secrecy by associating archaeologists with necrophiles, by blurring the frames of discussion that make up “modern tribal consciousness” as regards the “monologic methodologies” of science and the practices of a fetishist (73). In this way, Vizenor brings together things that are generally held to be far apart and separates those generally seen as close together. This, for him, is a diagnostic process of re-arranging symptoms or re-negotiating borders, to intimately connect two types of people under one appellation, *The Collector*. In this instance, a shift can be seen to occur in the relationship of the archaeologist to the aboriginal “specimen” from a simple (read neutral) organizer of a serial set of objects, which work according to a conceptual framework—the object as evidence in a coherent system of signs—to a direct and intimate relation between the person and the thing that is worshipped/released upon, something occult, something with character, Benjamin’s aura. Simply put, scientific research is made to have desire.

But in the reconstitution of this relationship, the rearranging and reconnecting of the parts, even if desire is the secret dispersed into science’s objectivity and research, as Vizenor claims, its reconstitution in the form of “modern tribal consciousness” holds the secret of objectivity somehow. He had already found a very productive confluence between the term “tribal consciousness” and the postmodern condition in which the loosening up of the text, the opening onto language games and play in terms of value, was something that Native stories, particularly trickster stories, also performed. This was a way in to an epistemology that was in the mode of self-critique, an epistemology that had been very harmful to Native Americans. What happens to the relationship of the fetishist to the fetishized object after being associated with archaeologists, for instance? Relying a bit too much on an antiquated notion of perversion, Vizenor unwittingly opens the door to a rigorous love of the object. If science attains desire in his reconstruction, then desire attains a science as well. Modern tribal consciousness would

²⁰ As is often the case, the burden of example falls on those excluded, the misfortunate, or those understood to be lacking in some way, like Foucault’s aphasiacs who organize objects on a table according to discontinuous and shifting criteria (xviii). Elevated to the level of figure, the theoretical and philosophical panoply of the abject indicate its own obsessions, though, like the bones in the museum, the collection is a cumulative, sporadic, contingent and somewhat collaborative product.

seem to be founded on confusing science with the love of death or dying objects. A rigorous mode of loving the disappearing thing would be the secret of “modern tribal consciousness,” itself a science of desire.

The Case of The Ancient One (aka Kennewick Man)

Moving from the collection in Part 1, it is a unique case in this section that opens up the problem of mis/identification. In July 1996, a skull washed out of a Columbia River bank near the town of Kennewick in Washington State. This led to the collection of a “nearly complete skeleton” from the bank by forensic anthropologist, Jim Chatters (Thomas xix). Reassembled on a table, measured, tested and catalogued, a pronouncement was made identifying the bones: “male, Caucasoid, 40-55 years old at death, height about five feet nine inches” (xx). Seemingly innocuous, especially compared to the possibility of foul play and its legal ramifications intimated by the forensic method, this process of recognition ran up against a deep contradiction when the bones were carbon dated to be over 9,000 years old. How could a racially caucasoid person, as defined legally, have been on this continent prior to many of the Native Tribes that are recognized as indigenous? The various claims to indigeneity and lineal descent made by tribal people, often understood as synonymous with priority, are put at risk by this contradiction. Especially considering that such claims are often mediated by anthropologically authenticated cultural identity, with a basis in the archaeological record. They are interwoven with legal discourses to produce subjects whose recognition depends upon a continuity with a pre-subjective identity. The claims themselves tend to be circumscribed in the spheres of national patrimony, history and subjection, through which the pre-nation, history and subject are understood. Scientifically speaking, the morphological method employed by forensics in defining both the biological features of legal subjects (gender and race predominantly) and how they are represented “before a forum” puts into relief the genetically and chemically based osteological methods employed in archaeology for determining the history of indigenous pre-national subjects (pre-subjects). The ambiguity called up by this ensemble, caucasoid-indigenous-body-remains, rests in the articulation of the scientific and legal spheres, rests in how bones are brought into the formation of subjects.

A legal battle ensued between Native American tribes demanding the return of the bones to a resting place in the ground, claiming ancestry to this ambiguous figure, who would thereby be protected under federal law; and scientists seeking to counter with stronger claims about the American “deep past” for use of these bones as research and evidence for a National sense of history and identity, as well as for the benefit of Native American bodies and their health (bio-politics and -power). The legal discourses and decisions regarding Native American remains through NAGPRA are fuzzy regarding such temporal contradictions. How could an indigenous tribe have any continued association with such remains, considering the inconsistencies and conflicts between competing scientific definitions of the tribes (as well as intra-discursive conflicts within their own stories): a question of descent; and how would the racing of these bones as caucasian enter into and enact the legal codes set up to protect these discursively defined tribes: a question of emergence?

Things were further complicated by the fact that the bones were so old that all genetic markings were nonexistent; this is to say, genetically speaking, the bones were empty. So the

geographically oriented genetic testing that is so popular today to test for origins by continent, race and/or kinship group, used also by many tribes now to determine enrollment issues, could not recognize these bones (for more on genetic testing for “Native American” markers, see Tallbear). A morphology raced them as caucasoid, and measurements of radioactive decay of carbon atoms dated them to be over 9,000 years old. In the various voices of scientific authorities and in relation to the quasi-sovereignty and plurality of tribal governments to determine their own membership, the positioning of these remains lies firmly outside any fixed bounds of identity; so also firmly within it. Being both, and neither, caucasoid (raced) and Native American (tribal), temporally, historically, spatially and geographically these bones are in a perpetual state of mis/identification, slipping in and out of the discourses vying to name (claim) them.

What is on the Table?

This is a question of location (what is *on* the table?), of identification (*what* is on the table?), and, of course, of what is up for discussion (what is *on the table*?).²¹ Foucault has noted how the term ‘table’ superimposes two meanings: the “nickel-plated, rubbery table swathed in white, glittering beneath a glass sun devouring all shadow--the table where, for an instant, perhaps forever, the umbrella encounters the sewing machine [the famous surrealist situation, derived from the Comte de Lautreaumont, of a fortuitous meeting between an umbrella and a sewing machine on a dissecting table];” and “also a table, a *tabula*, that enables thought to operate upon the entities of our world, to put them in order, to divide them into classes, to group them according to names that designate their similarities and their differences--the table upon which, since the beginning of time, language has intersected space” (*The Order of Things* xvii). The table is both the physical site of encounter where bodies are dissected and reassembled (according to the orders of science), as well as where incongruous juxtapositions are made possible; *and* the abstract space where data is organized in order to render into information and make communicable. In the case of *The Ancient One*, these two senses of table, in their de/materialized difference, are what produce the aporia of identification through the transition from language into code. The physical morphology of race was constructed through the discourse of forensic science, a science of the crime scene and a speaking before the law, in relation to bones laid out and reassembled on a physical table; the Periodic Table of Elements provides the site for the carbon dating of the bones and their chemical communication with the rest of matter; and the missing table of genetic markers, part of the Human Genome Project,--made eloquent through the ashes produced by the destruction of the test sample in the process--cuts the code from the material, sending the two discourses into a tailspin of recovery as each works within its own interior differences to re-account for the relation between code and material.

Foucault locates this aporia between the “already ‘encoded’ eye”--which perceives according to the empirical orders in which the scientist is at home--and the “reflexive knowledge” of theoretical production and philosophical interpretation--general laws of order most clearly demonstrated by questions of epistemology (xx). This “middle region which

²¹ Clearly this series of emphases leaves the grammatical marker of being ‘is’ aside. This is a significant exclusion, but one that cannot be dealt with here.

liberates order itself” is made manifest through “an initial separation” from the the empirical orders, an interval between the encoded eye and reflexive knowledge: “...it is only in the blank spaces of this grid [created by a glance, an examination, a language] that order manifests itself in depth as though already there, waiting in silence for the moment of its expression.” This interval is understood to be more archaic, fundamental, existing prior to and as a condition of *the beginning of time* in such a way that there continues to lie below the spontaneous orders organizing reality “things that are in themselves capable of being ordered, that belong to a certain unspoken order; the fact, in short, that order exists” (xx). This puts the critical mode in a fundamental position, the critical in terms of a revelation of what orders, of order itself: a historical, plastic, and, yet, *a priori* force that makes a culture either continuous and graduated or discontinuous and piecemeal, linked to space or time. This order is structural in that it changes over time, but, generally wholesale, it organizes both the theoretical (thought) and the empirical (experience), and it does so in a way that, while unconscious, can be brought to consciousness.

Akin to Nietzsche’s “middle faculty” of the subject as freely inventing, translative, and metaphor-producing, the emphasis for Foucault is instead put on the communal/structural quality of an agency that belongs to order itself, one that is forgotten or covered over, as is the creative subject in Nietzsche, but, when revealed, shows a critical ability to disorder and rearrange the existing categories (of both thought and the empirical world) (Nietzsche 252). It is the creative faculty in Nietzsche that liberates and gets liberated through remembering what is dangerous and forgetting the conceptually ordered and deadening apparatus, and this occurs through comparative work. It is in the interval between the conceptual apparatus or codes and the concrete experience or encoded eye that Nietzsche’s “primitive metaphor world,” as the system that orders, is renewed. This is an indigenous gesture.

In the split, then, between forensic and chemico-archeological discourses, between two different senses of the term ‘table’, *The Ancient One* lies in and has opened an interval through emptiness. The disappearance of the third term ‘table’ in the absence of genetic markers through the consequence of “deep time” implicates a wider notion of table: the deconstruction of the museum through the questions of containment, inside and outside, and difference, are all practices towards de-realizing the site of commensuration and measurement. The table, like a Borgesian kingdom, is crumbling away. No Atlas can maintain support of this series, and no dialectical relation or force can continue to hold it firmly in place through movement. This is a very important way of thinking about fragmentation, as it takes away both empirical site of scientific commensurability and poetical/philosophical/historical/phenomenological tension through which movement holds things in place. The museum, in being threatened with emptiness,²² is itself becoming heritage; just one more fragment among the many.

Two possibilities threaten to make use of this interval in a negative way: the taming of the heterotopes and their realization. In confronting the heterotopic space of Borges’ list of animals in the Chinese Encyclopedia, for instance, Foucault notes that monstrosity doesn’t exist in the list itself, as clear distinctions are made between real and fabulous animals, but rather in the equating space of the list. “The quality of monstrosity here does not affect any real body, nor does it

²² A claim commonly made by those in opposition to NAGPRA and repatriation more generally, that it begins a slippery slope process of emptying the museums and the loss of public heritage. See Cuno.

produce modifications of any kind in the bestiary of the imagination; it does not lurk in the depths of any strange power. It would not even be present at all in this classification had it not insinuated itself into the empty space, the interstitial blanks separating all these entities from one another. It is not the fabulous animals that are impossible, since they are designated as such, but the narrowness of the distance separating them from (and juxtaposing them to)...” the other real animals (xvi). It is, in fact, the inclusion of a paradoxical *set of the animals on the list* within the list itself that helps hold the list open. Similar to the museum-as-house becoming heritage, there’s an evident corrosive effect of inclusion in such a list. It is the space itself, the neutral and indefinable space, that becomes monstrous on its own. In such a disturbance, what can it mean to put things back in (another) order? To negotiate return? In one sense, this implies a forgetting and an acceptance of heterotopic orders and other worlds, but, in another, it renders these heterotopias necessarily legible before the law through scientific discourse and the injunction to give an account of themselves (as the primary means of such action). These fragments work like metonyms, not necessarily fully abstracted in the sense that Stewart gives the objects in the collection (what she refers to as metaphor), but this metonymic quality also threatens to tame through a tendency to settle in a zone of heterotopias on a (nonexistent) plane of equality. They exist equally together, at least in the sound of the voice reading the list. But it seems that such fragments must also face the collection, particularly the immensity and undeniable sublimity of what cannot be identified. The emptiness of bones tends in this direction which also holds itself up against the wall of plenary (sovereign) power.

In this sense, *is Foucault’s discussion of heterotopias a form of tourism?* Perhaps he is only able to imagine a non-site because he is touring through literature and thought. It is clear that, like Japan for Barthes, China is an imaginative space for Foucault--a scene of writing--and not an empirical one as source of ethnographic data. It is a literary China, through Borges, that he confronts. But, on another level, the desiccated speech, the dissolved myths lying in discrete puddles, the words that have been “stopped in their tracks” (literally the tracks of analog tape), the sterilized lyricism (in the form of a scientized language), are all very real, material conditions for natives. And yet, they don’t “contest the very possibility of grammar at its source,” rather, they are the sources through which grammar, transcription, syntax have been institutionalized, the laboratories through which theories have been tested and then used as preservative methods. This is the risk of the realization of the interval, of the materialization of fragmentation, breakage, rupture...

And it all begins with a laugh. A laughter “that shattered...all the familiar landmarks of [his] thought--*our* thought...breaking up all the ordered surfaces and all the planes with which we are accustomed to tame the wild profusion of existing things, and continuing long afterwards to disturb and threaten with collapse our age-old distinction between the Same and the Other” (xv). So *it is* a form of tourism, carried along a line of laughter back into *the wild profusion of existing things* and the indistinction of *the Same and the Other*. This distinguishes, perhaps, too clearly between the wild and the tame, the raw and the cooked, thereby opening up this threat of taming by indicating the wild. How do *we* live this laughter in the face of fragmentation? In a way that is not just a critique of Foucault for not being serious enough? Languages have actually been undermined and the fragments disturbingly refer to other realities precisely because those other realities have been effectively destroyed. *We* cannot begin with Foucault’s laughter, but only

with a wail or lament, to pass through, but we *can* come back to it. On the vinyl record, *Songs of the California Indians*, under the label, “Cry Song,” Dan Rose starts out with a lament for the dead, a crying that is also singing. Crying and burning--the way of the Maidu, “they wait, wait until the stars get just right in the sky” (Coyote Man). He then transitions slowly and subtly into a gambling song, lifting his voice from a wail into a repetitive and upbeat chant, ending with laughter. “While Dan sang the first part of the melody tears streamed down his face. Then he perceptibly brightened as the song magically changed into a grass game song” (Coyote Man). Just like the crying song that turns into a gaming song, we must come out of it singing, singing all along, chuckling to ourselves by the end with a wry and dry wit. To return to the order of things and read it, this time, *with* the grain, the grain of the voice to be exact.

Bone Courts

How are we to hear the bones on the table? As mentioned, Gerald Vizenor, in his essay “Bone Courts: the Natural Rights of Tribal Bones,” makes what he describes as a “modest proposal” to establish a Bone Court that would hear the testimony of Native American bones, to let them tell their own stories. Written in 1986, four years before NAGPRA was passed, Vizenor describes the initial response to his suggestion,

I proposed the Bone Court, and the rights of bones to be represented, at the school of American Research in Santa Fe, New Mexico. The response from other resident scholars, archaeologists and anthropologists, was tolerant; the idea invited some humor as critical abatement, but a discourse never matured at the seminars (*Crossbloods* 78).

I propose, belatedly, we take his suggestion seriously. Late in that it anticipated NAGPRA and the UCB and UCOP committees as pseudo-manifestations; late in that the salience of its theoretical underpinnings has perhaps waned; late in that it was already too late then to respond to the disaster in an adequate manner; and late in the moment of this talk. We arrive at his proposal too late as the discursive space has already been filled, always and already filled. And yet, “Tribal bones as narrators could be considered the *real* authors of their time and place on the earth; the representation of their voices in a court would overturn the neocolonial perspectives, the written and invented tribal cultures.” If only this were true. If only the bones could speak, could be the *real* authors of this paper. Perhaps we have a way. Neither true nor false, the story, the one that has stopped, begins again. *Once upon a time* the bones spoke...and became the real authors of their time and place on earth.

This imagined resting stop of research is what Gerald Vizenor has called a “natural disposition,” or a “human communion with the earth.” One that is, for him, not based in “primitivism, naive religionism, or semantic binaries,” but is rather played out in the pragmatics of legal discourse as a postmodern language game. Bones, for instance, are markers that “human rights continue after death,” a thought that pushes the lines demarcating the human, life, and the rights bearing subject beyond their usual territories and into an untenable tension with each other. Bones speak for themselves, perhaps absurdly, and a Bone Court is called upon to listen.

Drawing on the absolute nature of congress' ability to establish courts with plenary power, Vizenor's "modest proposal" rubs up against sovereign power and constitutionality. Obstinate continues to do so; and, in the form of the Court, with its reliance on evidence based discourse, he calls upon the very disaster itself, in the mode of testimony, to listen to the bones speak. We, of course, are not included in that conversation.

Whether they were buried last year or thousands of years ago, these bones have the same standing. There is a persistent ambiguity that would anachronistically bestow rights on subjects who were never subjects to begin with and who possibly preceded such an apparatus by thousands of years. This is what is radical about Vizenor's modest proposal. If rights are extended that far, then the opposite anteriority as absence of rights extends also into each and everyone of us, as a difference within, in a way that refuses Universality, one that rails against such suggestions as these from biological anthropologist and opponent of NAGPRA, Tim White,

The agenda appears to be one of opening the way for people with creationist religious beliefs—some of whom lack the special trust relationship with the federal government that belongs solely to federally recognized tribes--to remove from the public and the scientific community crucial information necessary for the understanding of our shared past.

All Americans have a "cultural relationship" with these culturally unidentifiable collections, and the evidence that they provide concerning the history of humankind. Congress appreciated this when it crafted NAGPRA to strike a balance between the diversity of worldviews possessed by the citizens of the United States. The Proposed Rule abandons this balance, and by doing so, subverts science, the public interest, and the Constitution.

To be the fly in the ointment, or the rock in the shoe, seems to be part of Vizenor's trickster suggestion. But, like the grain of sand through which all the world can be viewed, the irritant here acts as a fulcrum that would continue to leverage difference in the ambivalence of individuation, as each grain continues to reference both its uniqueness and its relationship to the desert, the beach, the hour glass... Is it in the name of all "Americans" or all "humankind" that Professor White is speaking? If there is a "shared past," what are the conditions for such sharing, and are there equal parts? Are these shares mediated by diverse worldviews? And, finally, if the "public" and the "scientific community" both in some way are threatened with the removal of bones from their possession, despite clearly existing in separate spheres and inhabiting different enunciative positions, what kinds of opacities and silences are necessary to produce such transparent translations across spheres? These are all important questions that I won't be able to deal with here, but that I will open up indefinitely in their resonances by turning to an aphorism by Vizenor that indicates the simultaneous impossibility and possibility of last words.

He writes, "In the Bone Court the last rites are never the last words." Particularly in relation to taboos on speaking about the dead that exist in many tribal ways, what can this mean? What kind of language can go on after the last rites? When the last moment has ended, who can continue to speak? Significantly, for Vizenor, this speaking after the end of speech, the telling

after the end of stories, is not a monolog. “Concurrence, and association, is significant in scientific research, but methodologies are mere monologues.” This is a problem of hearing, of how to hear, to listen, as in an intimate conversation with what has been made permanently silent in such a way that this silence registers, the making-silent or having-been-made-silent registers, and the making-speak of this silence also registers. Monologic speech is deaf to these subtle layers, wrapped up in its own tedious and formulaic path in the form of applied methods. This unitary speaking and the silences it refuses to register are clearly conditioned for Vizenor by the continuing violence (and reparations) of colonization.

It requires a dual moment then, both a silencing of speaking about bones which opens up a listening to what has been silenced, through the very silence itself; and a turn to the speaking of bones in their own, absurd and inaudible voices.

Speaking of Bones

This is one of their pretexts: while I was speaking about the egg, I had forgotten about the egg. ‘Speak, speak’, they instructed me. And the egg remains completely protected by so many words. ‘Go on speaking’ is one of their instructions. I am so tired.

--Clarice Lispector, “The Egg and the Chicken”

George Tinker, in an essay entitled “The Stones Shall Cry Out: Consciousness, Rocks, and Indians,” beginning with a story about collecting rocks, describes an encounter he had with another academic at a conference,

I remembered having accompanied an older medicine man on an outing to gather rocks for a special purification ceremony (or sweat lodge, as it is sometimes called in English). “As we walked up an arroyo away from the pick-up,” I reported, “I began to notice some pretty nice rocks right away—just like the ones used regularly in these ceremonies. Why don’t we take these, I asked? The medicine man shook his head, said, ‘No, not those,’ and kept on walking. All the time we were getting further up the arroyo, and I knew who was going to have to carry all those rocks back to the truck. Finally, more than a quarter mile from the truck, the medicine man nodded and pointed to some rocks that looked just like the hundreds we had passed by along the way. ‘These have agreed to go with us,’ he said. ‘They will help us in our prayers.’”

The lone British academic present, a professor of American studies at Oxford, immediately jumped in with the severe criticism, “That’s what is wrong with you people. You are so anthropocentric! You think that everything in the world works the way you do.”

The critique was emotional rather than rational; it was rooted in nearly a week’s worth of frustrated attempts to communicate across cultural barriers as well as in a lifetime of immersion in a culture that thinks of itself as somehow universal and

normative—and thus inherently superior—a position of intellectual fascism, however naïve. As he finished his short tirade, I rose to argue that exactly the opposite is actually the case. “I am sorry Professor W., but that comment cannot go unchallenged. You see, you are the ones who are actually anthropocentric. You believe that everything in the world works differently from yourselves” (107).

In this short exchange, two different senses of anthropocentrism are contrasted. In the first, the Oxford Professor accuses Native Americans (“you people”) of interpreting the world through a narrow lens of sameness, of extending the attributes of the human to all things. In the second, Tinker claims that the Professor was recreating *The Great Divide*, in the name of non-anthropocentrism, but in a way that is a more thorough form of anthropocentrism, seeking an absolute difference of the objective world from the knowing subject. It is no coincidence that this contrast is noted by Tinker to be the culmination point of frustrated communication across cultural differences. It returns to the questions: *Who or what speaks? For whom or what? And, once spoken for, can someone or something ever speak again?*

Rather than siding with one of these perspectives in the form of a conflict (though, I have a side), ‘I’ must suspend my-self between them, lingering in the moment of frustration. Between “you people” and “you are the ones” as two forms of (self- and other) identification and accusation, the voice is also suspended, rendered mute to the naked ear. Such a suspension is warranted by Vizenor’s problem of hearing, as a multi-layered and inflected silence, an imbrication of silences really, that, when opened to the paradoxical rights of bones to speak, is a possibility to remain silent. It is also warranted by the mis/identification of bones, *The Ancient One* being recognized as both caucasoid and tribal, and yet, in the emptiness of the bones, in the ash, meaning is suspended through the insertion of blanks for genetic markers. This suspension cannot be absolute or risk its own naturalization, but must be enacted through the listening procedures discussed by Vizenor, the way this listening inserts silence into utterances. The bones are at rest, have not come to rest, will come to rest again, can never rest. In the medicine man’s statement, the rocks have “agreed” to go with them and they will help in “prayers.” Through Tinker’s text, there’s no way of knowing what kind of language this was, other than the language of rocks.

Clarice Lispector, the Brazilian writer and journalist, works with this relation of silence in writing about things, in such a way that she makes room for an other type of language, if such a language exists. She is careful, and it is in her writing about the egg, a play on the paradox of ‘the egg and the chicken’ as a common desire for an origin, that she manages to show how not to break it with words. In terms of suspension, she writes, “The egg is a suspended thing. It never settles. When it comes to rest, it is not the egg that has come to rest. It is something that remains beneath the egg” (47). Part of the reason that it never comes to rest is that it travels through time and space, in the very moment of perceiving it. The egg remains the same for three thousand years, is seen for three thousand years in a moment, and, yet, it cannot be seen in this moment, as “an egg seen is an egg lost.” Akin to Foucault’s encoded glance, the egg remains the same, though not as an identity, but the instrument that perceives it is forever updated, by identifying. The eye has a history and a genealogy of perceptibility. “Looking is the necessary instrument which once used I shall put aside. I shall remain with the egg.” In this infinite relation between

the eye and the egg, mediated by language, supervisibility, or even invisibility, acts like the silences that call meaning into suspension. The *something that remains beneath the egg* that comes to rest is the identity of the egg, an identification that, if pressed too hard, will crack its shell.

The bones, like the shell, are likewise exterior, in their emptiness. The question, though, isn't what is seen in this case, as three types of visibility have already come into conflict and failed: the morphology, the chemical residue, and the infra-visibility of genetic markings. The ignored question, following Vizenor, is what is heard? Heard in such a way that the shell doesn't crack.

Vizenor is known for deploying the term *survivance*, a French term that derives from the struggles of the Métis in French Canada, meaning "afterlife." Attaching it to the term 'shadow' to refer to lingering traces of stories in the fragments of the real, shadow survivance refers to the afterlife of stories in the form of traces as shadows. And survivance, for him, in legalistic "postmodern language games" in the bone court, depends on hearing the bones, in this site of ambiguity, this betweenness, to disrupt the usual flow of (court) order-words. He writes, "the heard words are traced in silence, the shadows of tribal memories, and the printed words reach over presence and absence to the shadows of trees, water, air, and hear stone, hide and paper, as words have been heard forever in tribal stories" (*Manifest Manners* 70) There's a relay in these words that moves between what is heard, the words, the shadows in the distance, that cross the divide of presence and absence, what is here and what has been lost, *and* what these words themselves hear, the coherence of what he has called "natural reason," the stories one hears, lives, acts out. *Heard words that hear*. A difficult phrase to get your mind around, but what other way can it be? What is heard are perhaps tribal stories in their shadow of silence. What is printed is perhaps both transcription of the spoken word and commentary on it, meaning; and yet there's a reaching over the play of absence and presence implied by the technology of writing to hear a tongue-in-cheek evolution of graph-ing, stone, hide, paper, to hear the material means of making-speak, connected through how words themselves have been heard, how these words themselves hear, forever in tribal stories. The 'heard' is past tense for a reason. Shadows of tribal memories, an after-effect. The printed is in existence in a different way, as a past in the now that is an action accomplished, yet, it is the shadows of things that are sought. Shadow to shadow, from the traced outline of memory to the traced outline of things, between--in suspension--lies survivance.

Unlike seeing, hearing is not an instrument that can be laid aside. The ears cannot so easily be shut--blinking acting as the first cutting motion/montage for the eye. The ear is a different kind of instrument, one that, rather than having opacity mark its limits, has them marked by noise and silence. Meaning is suspended in the ear through what Fred Moten, in discussing the problem of commodity's that speak, in speaking of the speaking of slaves, has called "a radically exterior aurality that disrupts and resists certain formations of identity and interpretation by challenging the reducibility of phonic matter to verbal meaning or conventional musical form" (6). This matter, though, like the shell of the egg, doesn't settle. As phonographic sound, for Moten, it is already a recording, a wail become gambling song merging tears into laughter, "here what is given is that which is out-from-the-outside, a spirit manifest in its material expense or aspiration" (14); sound as inspirited materiality. Meaning is suspended

according to Moten, in relation to slavery, in two ways: a commodity that speaks disrupts the strict separation of subject and object found in the Marxist notions of production and value; and a commodity that shrieks disrupts the expulsion of phonic substance from the signified in Saussurean structuralism; “an irruption of phonic substance that cuts and augments meaning with a phonographic, rematerializing inscription” (14). Replay and reverb of phonic material misses both the linear and the cyclical notions of time implicit in Tinker’s representation of a confrontation over anthropocentrism. This suspension extends to identification, particularly, in terms of writing, to the first identification, “...‘I’ is only one of the words people form with their lips when answering the telephone, a mere attempt to find some more apt expression” (Lispector 51); and “The chickens who are likely to harm the eggs are those who show themselves to be a relentless ‘I’. With them the ‘I’ is so constant that they can no longer pronounce the word ‘egg’.”

Like the egg, the bones lie somewhere between product, animal and thing in certain discourses. In Vizenor’s assertion of their continuing human rights, they disturb these other discourses by parodically reinvesting *The Great Divide* through the form of legal representation and speaking before the forum. These are empty spaces. In the super- or infra- audition of the bones, no eavesdropping is allowed, secrets remain secret, and the only form of representation possible is the making visible of silence in such a way that silence makes room for the speaking of bones. An inspired materiality, Tinker details how such a voice can carry over through fragments, even into assemblages, particularly in the form of *inedible parts*,

A sort of analogous question to that of what happens when a stone breaks is to ask what happens to the spirit of a buffalo when the skull goes in one direction and the hide stays in another place. Is the spiritual presence (power) of our buffalo robe lessened somehow by the absence of the skull from that same living animal, or is the power of our skull lessened by the absence of the robe that was also part of its living physical body? Moreover, do the remaining parts (robe, skull) of these animals maintain consciousness? The answers to these questions insist that the spirit of each buffalo is present with each part of the buffalo wherever it may be in the world—as is its consciousness (116).

Interlude

An Experiment: On Instruction in Diving

For this experiment we will be reanimating the Cartesian Muskrat of solid foundations by playing with a toy. The toy is referred to as a Cartesian Diver²³ (pressure). Anything that is small and holds air with two openings will work: a pen, an eye-dropper, a tube, anything with a mouth and an anus (though, as mentioned, Burroughs felt this to be inefficient when the same hole could be used for two purposes, or perhaps more). Use a large container that can be hermetically sealed. Fill it full of water. Place the diver, with the appropriate amount of water to tune it so that it floats in the middle of the container, in the “closed” system. After the container is sealed, apply a slight amount of pressure. This will cause the diver to drop to the bottom of the container. Release the pressure. This will allow it to rise to the top. It will eventually equilibrate toward the center, as long as it is tuned properly.

...and because of the shit, the Baroque uncertainty, that flowed from Wenobojo’s anus as product, by-product of culture, he encouraged Descartes to dive into the water. He needed land. He needed to quit eating and smelling shit. So, for him, Descartes would dive--he would write. Descartes sat in his little gown, next to his big fire, with a piece of scented wax and a few days to think, and he began to perform writing. He began to perform Doubt. In his little tableau, he began to dive. Understand, the system was already set up: he had the place (his room, his mind) and he had the time (for he had waited until he reached “a mature enough age”—I suppose he had *done* the time, so he *was* tuned properly). He merely needed, according to a program developed by Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, the Collectivity. This is where you and I come in. We are encouraged to **Go Back** and read Descartes. Here. I’ll take you part way: “But such people are insane and I would be thought equally mad if I took anything from them as model for myself” (Descartes, *Meditations*). And, “...there is seldom so much perfection in works composed of many separate parts, upon which different hands had been employed, as in those completed by a single master” (Descartes, *Discourse on Method part II*)

I am suddenly brought back to Descartes’ *Meditations*, which I haven’t read in over eight years, by an uncanny word association. In considering the “imaginative metaphor” that Gerald Vizenor employs to enact “tribal narratives on mixed descent”--*Earthdivers* as creators of the Earth from bottom silt or mud *and* “mixedbloods, or Métis, tribal tricksters and recast cultural heroes, the mournful and whimsical heirs and survivors...”-- I was struck by a memory of my inability, in the particular translation of Descartes that I was reading, to separate the word ‘divers’ from an association with *diving*. The word ‘divers’ is a Middle English and French word that refers to the grouping of a Collective of unspecified people, objects or acts. It is used frequently to describe property, as in *divers parcels of land: more than two but not as much as many*. It is synonymous with the contemporary English word “diverse”, but, with the significant

²³ The Cartesian Diver is sometimes referred to as a ‘Cartesian Devil’. In France, where Descartes is from, it is referred to as a ‘Ludion’. The Ludion (plural), historically, were actors who were brought to Roman festivals, *Ludi Scaenici*, (the performances consisting mostly of farce and pantomime) to dance and play flute in order to drive away bad spells. When language was added, “poetic improvisation inspired by a heavy, dirty style born in Fescennium,” the Ludion were called ‘Histrions’. It was a heavy, dirty, histrionic performance that helped the people.

dropping of the ‘e’, it is subtly different marking both the passage of time and translation in space, and it opened up to the metaphor, which I couldn’t help but see, of Descartes’ mental swimming. It opened to us swimming with him. But, it never quite fit comfortably in his ‘I’.

Where was he swimming to? What did he leave behind? How did he experience his body? In Deleuze and Guattari’s program for constructing what they call a Body without Organs (BwO), drawing on concepts developed by Carlos Castaneda, they distinguish between two sides of any body. On one side is stratification, “It is the organism, and also all that is organized and organizing; but it is also signifiante, and all that is signified or signifying...finally it is the Self (*Moi*), the subject...” (Deleuze, *A Thousand Plateaus* 162). This they refer to as “Tonal,” or the toned body. The other side, the side of de-stratification, is referred to as “Nagual” (referring to a Shamanic notion of other-reality). The Tonal side, “creates the world,” by creating the rules as judgment by an omnipotent God. “Yet the Tonal is only an island.” “The Nagual is also everything”, but done experimentally. It is the second time around. This time, instead of interpreting, one plays with the toy, the *Cartesian Diver*. The program always calls for things to be done twice. The first time is to create the body and the scene, and the second is to set intensities in motion, to populate.

After calling on his (and God’s) evil double in order to complete the dissolution of the doubtful world through performing Doubt (after all, he couldn’t perform it alone), Descartes, at the coldest point of the dive, his body temperature equilibrating to the water, running out of air, was able to grasp a single grain of earth from the bottom, *cogito ergo sum*. He died on the way back up from the bends (with Radiohead playing mournfully in the background, or Mr. Bungle, sarcastically, depending on how you want to take “the bends”). Wenobojo, the Coyote, the Trickster, waited at the top for Descartes. When he saw him he grabbed Descartes’ cold, rigorous body in his hand and “blew on him until he came back to life. Then Wenobojo took the [grain] of sand in the palm of his hand and held it up to the sun to dry. When the [grain] was dry, he threw it onto the water. There was a little island then” (Vizenor, *Earthdivers* xiii). A Cartesian island.

And the animals, coming from the water, from the bottom, tired of being in the water all of that time, went to stay with Wenobojo.

Chapter 3 The Path of Bone Game

Their story begins on ground level, with footsteps.
They are myriad, but do not compose a series.
They cannot be counted because each unit has a
qualitative character: a style of tactile apprehension
and kinesthetic appropriation. Their swarming mass
is an innumerable collection of singularities.
Their intertwined paths give their shape to spaces.
They weave places together.

--Michel de Certeau, "Walking in the City"

You call this a theater? Looks like a union hall...we Indians are always making it do.

--James Luna, "Phantasmagoria"

The Path of the Indian: Night, Dream and The Politics of Walking

Michel de Certeau begins his essay, "The Politics of Silence: The Long March of the Indians," with an excerpt from a letter written by *The Gathering of Indians of the Cauca region in Colombia (Heterologies 226)*. Significantly for him, the letter describes political commitment in the form of Indians walking all night in order to attend this gathering in which no one slept. Regarding this, de Certeau makes the comment, "They are walking towards a new morning," a morning conditioned by no longer being impoverished, leaving their "simultaneously political, social, and mystical crises" behind, a resolve to determine their *own* history, "no less than a reconquest," and the fact *and* consciousness of a peasant *and* an Indian revolution. The conjunction in this last condition, connecting the Indian and the peasant in the ambiguity of a single or simultaneous revolution(s), articulates with the prior conjunction, connecting the (material) fact to (ethnic and class) consciousness. These articulations, both material *and* rhetorical nodes, make the departures and arrivals described in the other conditions possible. Where have the Indians left from and what have they left behind, and where and towards what are they heading on this walk? Behind them poverty and crises; ahead a new history and a reconquest. Somewhere in between they are on a path walking toward a new morning, Indian and peasant, conscious and materially appropriate.

For those who had already arrived at the gathering, the author of the letter explains,

*This is how the majority of us spent the night,
First organizing then warming ourselves,
Some talking, others playing music and singing.
Also, from time to time, we would drink a little coffee to fool our hunger.
Sunday July 15th dawned full of sun,
and we were full of contentment...*

Such a political awakening, for de Certeau, is marked by the passage through the long night and the birth of a new day. Revolution has often been described in exactly such diurnal terms, marking thereby the turns of history in the mode of making-through-overturning, a coming out of the dark into the light. But, in this case, what kind of awakening is this? And from what kind of sleep have these Indians awoken? A sleep that, apparently, includes staying awake all night playing music, singing, and walking. Insomniacs and somnambulists. What kind of sleep--necessary for any awakening to happen--stays awake all night? A temptation exists to call such a sleep *vigilance*, and certainly the political tone of de Certeau's invocation of revolution would make such a term appropriate, but, as Maurice Blanchot reminds us, "vigilance is sleep when night falls. Whoever does not sleep cannot stay awake. Vigilance consists in not always keeping watch, for it seeks awakening as its essence" (*The Space of Literature* 265). To be vigilant, then, is to sleep in order to prepare for the day, which makes night and sleep-as-repose useful for the day's work. Essentially awake already, even Sisyphus stopped his titanic task each night in order to begin again in the morning. Day arises; day is done. Perhaps these Indians just sleep badly. Or simply choose not to sleep at all. To fill the belly with coffee in order to trick hunger is to find *an other* kind of contentment, replacing nourishment with stimulation, and by so doing make the night present. Walking. Not towards a new morning, towards a political awakening, but through the night, with the night, bringing the night with them. "To sleep badly is precisely to be unable to find one's position. The bad sleeper tosses and turns in search of that genuine place which [s/]he knows is unique" (Blanchot 265) The struggle for position which takes place on several planes here takes the form of tossing and turning.

That special place, what de Certeau calls a *locus proprius*, makes such a new morning possible, according to him. The "New World" soil, soaked in blood, "keeps the Indians' secret," no matter what atrocities have occurred on it. A *palimpsest*, the traces of the Indian past lie beneath the colonial markings, writings which act as wounds on both the land and the Indians' bodies. These secret traces remain uncompromised despite perhaps permanent alteration to both land and body, and this for two reasons. The Indian body and the earth are tied together through these very scars, the earth itself being, in de Certeau's highly religious language, the "tablet," a "silent sacrament of maternal forces," the "forefathers' tomb," an "indelible seal," and a "contractual agreement" between members of geographically distinct groups, a ground from which no figure or isolated member can be detached (*Heterologies* 226).²⁴ This unity "born of hardship and resistance to hardship" is, for de Certeau, the collective memory of a social body, where the *tortured* body (a torture that isn't merely direct, but includes economic alienation, cultural domination, and social humiliation as forms of an overall process of day-to-day ethnocide) and the *altered* earth are the scars on the *body proper*. It is from these scars, on the

²⁴ Much can be said about reading this relation between a disfigured body and the damaged earth through the lens of theological concepts. The reliance that Foucault had on Greek, Roman and early Christian practices of the self seems to translate into de Certeau's reliance on practices of memory as an alternative to what he perceives as the historiographic tendencies of the West. It is enough to note here, though, that Indian remains are not and can never be relics, no sacrament is possible for the purposes of spiritual transmogrification, and, in the stories, the earth has never been inscribed and handed down to the people, thereby making transcription, and not translation, the appropriate organizing textual metaphor.

body (both Indian and earth) as memory, that a new historical locus is formed as that-which-has-yet-to-be-written. And yet, this future is only possible because something remains, resists, is permanent. “It enables the resistance to avoid being disseminated in the occupiers’ power grid, to avoid being captured by the dominating, interpretive systems of discourse (or by the simple inversion of those discourses, a tactic which remains prisoner to their logic).” The genuine and unique place is a body proper, a body formed from the amputated and scarred bodies of people and land. And it is “expressed through gestural relations between body and mother earth.”

The second reason is that, “their communities continued to return periodically to the home village, to claim their rights to the land and to maintain, through this collective alliance on a common *soil*, an anchorage in the *particularity* of place” (229). This is a return to repose, as de Certeau interprets it. One walks towards a new morning in a somnambulistic mode that puts night in the service of the day, bringing Indians as peasants into political consciousness through class concerns. One also returns home in order to reaffirm a rightful place in the world. “My person is not simply situated where I sleep; it is this very site, and my sleeping is the fact that now my abode is my being” (Blanchot, *The Space of Literature* 265). This path is located for de Certeau in “a political third way” that slips by the alibi of cultural identification, which rests on a frozen image constructed by ethnology, and the disappearance of ethnic specificity into the generality of relations of production and class. Indian *and* peasant. Fact *and* consciousness. Day *and* sleep. But there are many *ways* that night and day can interact, just as there are many *ways* that one can walk (meant doubly).

Three relations that day has to night: day may maintain a respectful boundary by strictly adhering to separation (the sacred and profane or known and unknown), attempt to banish it through slow, progressive enlightenment and exploitation (colonial violence and scientific reason), or conserve it through assimilation and appropriation (democratic multiculturalism). These map very closely to the three political ways that de Certeau notes are available to the Indian. The fixed image of an ethnographic object is “isolated from society, withdrawn from history, and doomed to repeat itself in a quasimechanical fashion,” and can therefore be understood as marking a strict differential between the political/historical and the natural, the subject and object, which scientifically is upheld by respect and politically by fear. The erasure of ethnic difference through absorption into the general class of the worker seeks to eradicate difference through socioeconomic laws and conflicts imposed by the international market.

The third way, for de Certeau, relies on an Indian difference that has survived due to the rootedness of “Indian ethnic groups” in a particular soil. Specificity, though, is no longer defined by a given, by a past, or by a system of representations, but rather by “a set of procedures”—a way of doing things—exercised within an encompassing economic system which conditions revolutionary alliance. This is, of course, a reduction in dimensions, a conflation of matter and signification into a performed political present. In the articulations between body and land, made by the very wounds of colonial history, the permanent as cultural specificity in the form of a ‘right place’ or ‘body proper’ is performed as a ‘style of action.’ This action is both ritualistic in adhering to the indelible seal and political compact with the earth and requires repeated return visits to the homeland. The permanent, at bottom for de Certeau, is made through return. The day here is the whole day and night, eradicating boundaries and thresholds, and is the accomplished promise of the dialectic. “Vigilant existence does not dissipate in the sleeping

body near which things remain; it withdraws from the remove which is its temptation. It returns from there to the primordial affirmation which is the authority of the body when the body is not separated but fully in agreement with the truth of place” (Blanchot, *The Space of Literature* 265).

He writes “doubtless the political determination of cultural specificity is the result of long historical experience, of a difference that has survived due to the rootedness of the Indian ethnic groups in a particular soil, and of their particular resistance to the seductions of ideology” (*Heterologies* 228). This is a complicated claim. This resistance to ideology seems to stem from the reduction of *rootedness* to performative gestures that continue to enact a permanence of place. And this permanence is specific, but only in so far as each “member” is marked by (externally produced) wounds that are similar to the wounds that mark the ground (a form of mimesis), making figuration impossible through a dispersion into the ground itself. And even these wounds have the possibility of being erased in revitalization campaigns. Yet, underneath it all, something remains, for, as Russell Means notes (quoted by de Certeau) “Indians have long memories.” It would be too easy to say that this third way is a matter of refunctioning the ethnographic image imposed upon Indians for their own political purposes. Doing so is to forget that “the dream seems to bring up in each of us the being of earliest times -- and not only the child, but still further back, the most remote, the mythic, the emptiness and vagueness of the anterior. [S/]he who dreams sleeps, but already [s/]he who dreams is [s/]he who sleeps no longer” (Blanchot, *The Space of Literature* 267). What is another way?

The “Half Indian/Half Mexican”²⁵ performance artist and trickster, James Luna, has started down another path. In his well known, *Artifact Piece*, performed in 1987 at the Museum of Man in Balboa Park, San Diego, near his Luiseño reservation in La Jolla, Luna, wearing only a loin cloth, placed himself in a vitrine on display in the museum with placards explaining his various scars,

Drunk beyond the point of being able to defend himself, he was jumped by people from another reservation. After being knocked down, he was kicked in the face and upper body. Saved by an old man, he awoke with a swollen face covered with dried blood. Thereafter, he made it a point not to be as trusting among relatives and other Indians.

The burns on the fore and upper arm were sustained during days of excessive drinking. Having passed out on a campground table, trying to walk, he fell into a campfire. Not until several days later, when the drinking ceased, was the seriousness and pain of the burn realized.

Having been married less than two years, the sharing of emotional scars

²⁵ The title of an art piece in which James Luna photographed himself facing forward and in profile, as in a mug shot, with half of a mustache and short hair on one side of his face and a clean shave and long hair on the other.

from alcoholic family backgrounds (was) cause for fears of giving, communicating, and mistrust. Skin callous on ring finger remains, along with assorted painful and happy memories.

In an interview, Luna stated, “In *The Artifact Piece* I became the Indian and lied in state as an exhibit along with my personal objects. That hit a nerve and spoke loud both in Indian country, the art world and the frontier of anthropology...The installation took objects that were representational of a modern Indian, which happened to be me, collecting my memorabilia such as my degree, my divorce papers, photos, record albums, cassettes, college mementos” (Luna Interview). Luna had been asked to create a display to be put in the middle of other ethnographic exhibits, mostly of Kumeeyay culture. He remained on/in exhibit for several days, lying in the vitrine from open to close of the museum.

If *Indians have long memories*, as Means states, these memories are clearly punctuated and interrupted, made possible even, by periodic black outs. And if Indians don’t sleep, what kind of state was Luna in in *becoming Indian*? There is of course no answer to this question, although many answers are called forth. It would be tedious to run through all of them, so instead, in stubbornness, this sentence will continue to walk on, up and down strokes, moving to the next sentence, one that may or may not mark an end to the paragraph. Something about form has come back with Luna’s performance to engage with the political path de Certeau’s Indians have been on, walking. How did they walk? How were their bodies on such walks and is the political, in this scenario, dependent upon being ambulatory? Who reaches, who can reach, the new morning? Paths of research. Paths of return. Political paths. Paths of the political. Paths to the political. *But Luna is merely lying down. And clearly he’s not sleeping.* Facts, though, he may have dozed off now and then during the performance, lying there so long and all. Of course, he has stated that lying like that for so many hours was trying and very uncomfortable. He could’ve eased such discomfort with a drink, though, he’s stated, I believe, that he had become sober by that time. He even posed in another performance/photograph called “A.A./Art History.” Was sobriety a condition for art making? He became Indian through the artifact piece. What were his twelve steps? When and how did he become an artist?

Indians and their colonial history have been made through walking: forced marches, relocations, political demonstrations, and ceremonial and political gatherings. These movements echo the stories which also include walking along paths (sometimes with Coyote or with Creator), markings of Creator’s absence in geographical footprints (which also disappear), migrations of peoples (as in N. Scott Momaday’s stories), movements towards big head gatherings, and the traveling of the trader and the shaman. When does the Indian lie down? What is her/his natural disposition? Where and when repose? “It lacks that position [s/]he seeks, which is also repose, where [s/]he would affirm [her/]himself in the stable fixity of [her/]his absence, which would be [her/]his support” (Blanchot, *The Space of Literature* 229).

Sometimes we walk by staying still or by lying down. Maurice Blanchot has described exactly such a detouring path through analyzing the death of Vasili Andreevich Brekhunov in Tolstoy’s “Master and Man,”

Brekhunov, the rich merchant who has always succeeded in life, cannot believe that a man such as he should have to die all of a sudden simply because one evening he gets lost in the Russian snow. "It cannot be." He mounts his horse, abandons the sledge and his servant Nikita, who is already three-fourths frozen. He is decisive and enterprising, as always: he goes ahead. But already this activity is active no longer. He walks at random, and his step goes nowhere. It is the meandering false step which, like a labyrinth, draws him into the space where every move ahead is also a move back. Or he turns in circles, he obeys the fatality of the circle. Having set out at random, so he returns "at random," as far as the sledge, where the scantily clad Nikita, who for his part goes to no such lengths just to die, is sinking into the frigid cold of death (Blanchot, *The Space of Literature* 165).

Like a labyrinth is each step, each step drawing one out of the active and efficacious flow of historical and biographical time and into the space where every move ahead is also a move back. This by turns bifurcating and aimless circling form of walking is absolutely continuous, for Blanchot, with Brekhunov's gesture of lying down upon Nikita, ostensibly to keep him warm. Blanchot makes very interesting use of this gesture of lying down. Connecting it to the night, the *other* night, that is not in service of the day, but, through dream, extends the day beyond itself; in this gesture lies only a waiting and a call that is ultimately realized as the call to return to one's self. Contentment. This could be read as a dangerous gesture, towards a certain kind of passivity, perhaps apathy. But it is because it is a dangerous gesture that it is important. The decisive and enterprising actions of the merchant are the least interesting, as they only approach the impending cold as an obstacle to be overcome. But no decisive confrontation is possible between night and day, life and death. The battle is perpetually missed. Instead, walking is walking aimlessly, and walking in circles is lying down. A gesture that is no gesture. Meaning gets suspended.

"For a long time he slept without dreaming, but just before dawn the visions recommenced" (Tolstoy). Interestingly, Blanchot does not mention Brekhunov's sleep without dreaming. For Blanchot, the gesture of lying down upon Nikita is the very gesture of dying, "in this perspective to die is always to seek to lie down upon Nikita, to stretch oneself out upon the whole world of Nikitas, to embrace all other men and all of time" (Blanchot, *The Space of Literature* 166). Absolute deindividualization through the passive embrace of the stalled out history of "men." If dreaming bumps up against the emptiness and vagueness of the anterior, the immemorial, in such a way that "s/he who dreams sleeps, but already s/he who dreams is s/he who sleeps no longer," then Brekhunov's sleep would be a betrayal, or perhaps an inversion, of the *other* night. Instead the important gesture is the infinitely slow lying down upon Nikita, the essence of the meandering misstep, a dream. But what happens during this dreamless sleep? One could say 'nothing' as it is only with the return of dawn that something happens. Visions return. But something creeps in from that nothing through the visions. A petrified ambiguity based upon the connection between return of visions and the loss of body. Brekhunov's body becomes cold copper, silver and gold.

It seemed to him that he was standing by the box of tapers and that Tikhon's wife was asking for a five kopek taper for the Church fete. He wished to take one out and give it to her, but his hands would not lift, being held tight in his pockets. He wanted to walk round the box but his feet would not move and his new clean goloshes had grown to the stone floor, and he could neither lift them nor get his feet out of the goloshes. Then the taper-box was no longer a box but a bed, and suddenly Vasili Andreevich saw himself lying in his bed at home. He was lying in his bed and could not get up.

And Brekhunov only wakes after being called,

'I'm coming!' he cried joyfully, and that cry awoke him, but woke him up not at all the same person he had been when he fell asleep. He tried to get up but could not, tried to move his arm and could not, to move his leg and also could not, to turn his head and could not. He was surprised but not at all disturbed by this. He understood that this was death, and was not at all disturbed by that either.

Much more dangerous than the expansive embrace of all *mankind* and all time that the gesture of lying down on Nikita represents for Blanchot is this passive acceptance of death, anticipated by the unfathomable emptiness of sleep without dream, without cold, without Nikita. This recognition that, in the sleep without dreams, something of that emptiness (can we even call it emptiness as this sleep isn't an interval in the diurnal rhythm but is outside of day and night?) has carried forward, leaving Brekhunov to be himself no longer, to be someone else. What arises in his body, hinted at through visions, that so drastically changes his identity? Rather than the absolute dispersion of place, the slipping away of position, that dream is for Blanchot, through deindividuation in the immemorial, this physical demobilization and deanimation "plants" the limbs into place, into the bed, into the stone floor.

So what kind of sleep was Luna performing? Perhaps the question is what kind of walking? Having slept alive/dead (as the audience/museum-goers were uncannily struck by frustration of their expectations to not be perceived by the displays of culture in the museum, uncertain as to what the Luna artifact could sense) for several days, the weight of the earth pressed into his skin, limbs, bones, organs, putting them to sleep (a clear, tingling sign that a limb is actually alive). Having thus become Indian, how did he get up? And was he changed for good? Questions of reanimation. That he not only offered up his personal belongings, his *own* (as a modern Indian) but also his personal body, his body proper, to the forces of both politics and nature, as well as identity, art, community and institutions, puts James Luna in the precarious position of gesturing indigenously. What a risk!

De Certeau, in announcing a new day, draws parallel paths between "European and American" political renewal and the political uprisings of Indians, in their "different forms of political return" (231). Speaking before the Congress of Indians held in Paraguay in October

1974, Francisco Servin, a *pai-tavytera* Indian, said it best for him, as de Certeau quotes, “We have the hope that the day will come when they realize that *we are their roots* and that we must grow together like a tree with its branches and flowers.” [my ital] It is the silhouette of that tree, symbolizing revolution based upon liberty and solidarity with the people, that de Certeau believes returns with the passage the Indians made by walking through the night to their own awakening dawn. It is only through preserving and deepening *differences* that such parallel paths are possible. “Each soul must meet the morning sun, the new sweet earth and the Great Silence alone.” Individuation: the other side of Blanchot’s embrace of all men. Discreet, spiritual silences, rhythmically hold these paths parallel, separate and together, so that the Western world can also *rise to the same beat as the Indian awakening* (233). What kind of return is this?

Death and Reanimation: Between the Islet and Deterritorialization

One of the most well-versed in reanimation is the trickster, Coyote, who was there at creation, along with Creator, singing it into being, taking part in the salvage process that made the world. He has died countless times in the stories told across tribes and languages, in book stores, and through the recordings in the archives--stuck on repeat, always coming back to life. Most significantly, Coyote risked his own life in order to bring Death into this world.

Immediately after creation, it is said, he made his intentions clear, “I, Coyote, going along in this world, will ruin it” (Shipley 31). Establishing his authority as “the First Being of olden times,” he claims, “I say let the old people die when they die/Someone who’s dead is not going to wake up...The world is made with Death in it.” Challenging Creator’s monolog and the intention to create a world consistent throughout, without error or the absence that Death introduces, he says, “it’s not going to be just your world,” thereby inserting difference into the Creator’s sameness and subverting possession in the right of creation (32). Creator responds with a threat: “‘Well, now,’ replied Earthmaker,/‘if you talk like that,/you’ll not be in this world for long.’”

Creator advised the beings of the world to kill Coyote, so that he could do no more harm, no more mischief, and everyone could live eternally and in peace without Coyote’s bringing death into the world. But this was not enough. “‘At the same time,’ said Earthmaker./‘All of you go and find every place/where Coyote has pissed or shat!/Don’t any of you miss the places/where he has scratched the dirt’” (34). And they did, seeking out every site marked by Coyote, of which he was both promiscuous and thorough, “He pissed on every kind of thing there was/and scratched up the ground with his hind feet./He went everywhere, even up toward the land of the Spirit Masters” (35). The beings sought out all of these places, destroying them and rubbing them out, even going so far as to gather together all of his “droppings.” Eventually they captured Coyote himself.

Lacking the courage to physically harm Coyote, the beings placed him on an islet in the middle of a very deep and fast moving stream. “‘Here you will die!’ they said. ‘You who are so clever with words--here you will starve to death!’” (36). The verbal mastery of Coyote is here countered with the act of starvation. They waited on the bank of the river for four days to make sure Coyote was dead.

Meanwhile, Coyote was still on the islet.

After awhile, he shat. A gopher head crawled out.
 “What shall I do?” Coyote asked the gopher head.
 “Give me good counsel!”

“Well,” said the gopher head,
 “if you just stay here like you are you will die!”

“Ah! That’s the way you always talk to me,” said Coyote.

Then, when he had strained again,
 a bunch of dry grass crawled out.

“What *am* I to do?” asked Coyote.
 “How shall I survive? Advise me well!”

“Why, you must just turn yourself into mist,”
 said the bunch of grass,
 “and then, when the mist rises
 and floats up off the river at dawn,
 it will carry you along with it
 and bring you to shore.
 When you have called out,
 then, from the midst of the high country,
 the places where you have pissed,
 where you have scratched up the ground—
 even where you have lifted your leg against a clump of grass—
 these places will answer you.”

“Whenever this bunch of dry grass talks to me,
 it always gives me good advice,” exclaimed Coyote.

He stuck the grass back where it came from
 and plugged it up with the gopher head (37-38).

After turning into mist and leaving the islet, Coyote goes on to escape death two more times before Creator and the other beings finally give up, allowing Coyote to have his devices. There is always a second chance, a movement of the imagination, where can be found a *prototype of the collective soul*. It is no accident that the trickster was marooned on an islet, and it is no accident that it was the second time he asked the question, to the second interlocutor, the grass, the rhizome, wherein Coyote receives his second chance at life in the form of mist. Grass, the material of baskets, the hider of bones, the diffuse, gives Coyote his power of dispersion, both through transformation into mist and through the return to Coyote’s own diffuse markings--

territorial pissings and scratchings. In this way, between the islet and the erased territory, Coyote finds a way.

This way, however, marked as it is by the event of Death, an event made possible by Coyote's own repeated escapes from this event, is a way of non-arrival. The Creator is tricked into allowing Death to enter the world, and it is this death that disturbs ownership through divesting the rights of monologic creation. In seeking to interrupt this event, Creator and the other beings locate the site of contestation in territorialized land, as it is through the erasure of Coyote's own territorial markings that they seek to stop Death's arrival. Death as interruption of eternal life and Life as incessant interruption of death's arrival are played out as if in a game over ownership of territory, and this ownership is made through either creation of territory or a secondary marking. The land, marked and unmarked, is made to bear the traces of this masculine altercation, and these traces are either erased and ghostly, as in the dispersed voices of Coyote's rubbed out markings, or they are the footsteps written into the land that mark the path of Creator's passing (mostly in rocks and stream beds).

The arrival of Death is a non-arrival, or perhaps the arrival of non-arrival. In creation, everything has fully arrived, eternal, extending out like points becoming lines on to infinity. And it is only through a killing that occurs before Death has arrived--the killing of Coyote who wills Death's arrival (one that includes a social assemblage of all the other beings in the world: the hunting party)--that the arrival can be maintained and the event of non-arrival can be stopped. To kill before death exists in this world is to produce not just a paradox but to disturb the very foundation of arrival, in the form of creation itself. Coyote, if killed before the arrival of Death, would have gone on dying forever, never released from the starvation feeding off of his clever words. Caught between the tongue and the stomach, he would have been *the one exception*, the sacrifice that would have ensured the continued existence of every other being.

But what happened on that islet? Coyote was given a second chance in response to a second question. Taking the suggestion offered up by grass, the second thing to come out of his anus, he became mist and escaped across the water, calling to and called by the places he had marked, though these markings had been erased. Is this not a new beginning? Does not Coyote re-create the world through transforming into the barely material form of mist, akin to spirit, and splitting time between a world that still bears his mark and one erased and unmarked? Mirroring the forking of the river's path by the islet, a forking of time occurs, allowing Coyote to survive and beat the Creator at his own game. Did Coyote die on that islet?

Gilles Deleuze, in his essay, "Desert Islands," offers a way to answer this question. Concerned with the relation between geography and the imagination, he makes the claim that, like other cases, geography's insight that there are two types of island reinforces what the imagination already knows. Supporting each other, science makes myth more concrete, while myth makes science more vivid (9). In this case, an island can be either a *continental island*, aligned imaginatively with the fragment that has separated from the mainland through "disarticulation, erosion, fracture;" or it can be an *oceanic island*, aligned imaginatively with origination from below the surface of the water. Putting the sea and the earth, as elements, in constant strife, these two different types of island each highlight one of these forces, respectively: "Continental islands serve as a reminder that the sea is on top of the earth, taking

advantage of the slightest sagging in the highest structures; oceanic islands, that the earth is still there, under the sea, gathering its strength to punch through to the surface.”

This double movement is extended into the way that humans imagine islands, themselves drifting towards islands through isolation and rupture, or radically beginning anew, as if from scratch. “In this way, the movement of the imagination of islands takes up the movement of their production...” (10). But the imagination lifts the movements from the terrestrial production of islands, so that “humans can drift toward an island that is nonetheless originary, and they can create on an island that has merely drifted away.” This is a deterritorialization (literally a separation from the earth as terra) of the very movement began by the forces of the earth and the sea, transposing and inverting material relations (literally relations between elements of the material world) into imagination as praxis (a form of re-creation here). The movement begun by elements is extended by humans through the force of imagination, recreating the earth anew.

This re-creation through deterritorialization requires a notion of the island as deserted, unoccupied, in a word: neutral. For Deleuze, this has nothing to do with whether or not an island is *in fact* inhabited. The fact and the reality are two separate states, with the fact of occupation (as cessation of the desertedness) being a matter of ‘appearance,’ while the reality is an ongoing translation of the play of forces, of elements, into the movements of imagination. “In certain conditions which attach them to the very movement of things, humans do not put an end to desertedness, they make it sacred.” The imagination, here, is an image, but only in the sense that it gives the deserted island “a dynamic image of itself” as consciousness of and through the material movements of creation: separation and origination. Humanized imagination, rather than putting a limit to the forces of the earth and sea, or being a mere knowing of something absolutely separate in kind, is a continuation of movements so that, as in a fold, the island, through this imagination, becomes conscious of itself; through the dreaming of humans it understands itself as dehumanized or depopulated. “The island would be only the dream of humans, and humans, the pure consciousness of the island.” And this is sacred.

Humans are reduced to the movements of (non)arrival on the island, drifting and beginning anew. But these are “uncommon humans” that through their movements conflate geography and imagination: “absolutely separate, absolute creators, in short an Idea of humanity, a prototype, a man who would almost be a god, a woman who would be a goddess, a great Amnesiac, a pure Artist, a consciousness of Earth and Ocean, an enormous hurricane, a beautiful witch, a statue from the Easter Islands. There you have a human being who precedes itself” (11). What kind of figure is this, situated at the conjunction of geography and myth, a force of nature, magical, uninterrupted consciousness, and represented by a *primitive* statue that is humanoid and of gigantic proportions? Deleuze is clear that this is no actual human, but rather the “prototype of the collective soul,” as found in literature and ethnographic writings, concomitant to an island that contains “the liveliest of rivers, the most agile fauna, the brightest flora, the most amazing nourishment, the hardiest savages, and the castaway as its most precious fruit...” and is still, nonetheless, deserted.

Michael Taussig has analyzed a photograph by Hiram Bingham of two Indian women, “found” living in Macchu Picchu, in front of the great granite structures of what Bingham named “the Memorial Temple of the Three Windows” (39). He writes, “In their rough woolen clothes with their respectful yet quizzical gaze back at us, these women seem no less rugged and

timeless than the stones of memory themselves, but completely dwarfed by them.” This image situates the Indian women, for Taussig, precisely at the moment when and where Nature meets History, a form of what he calls “day-dreaming”: “The compelling narrations that make nations, no less than worlds like the New World, utilize this day-dreaming capacity to naturalize history as in stones and Indians, and, conversely, to historicize nature as in reading a history into those stones and those Indians” (47). To naturalize history and to historicize nature is a chiasmus that marks an event of contact and its potential usages. In Taussig’s reading of the photograph, this chiasmus is used to buttress national narratives, as well as the careers of anthropologists, at the expense of Indigenous peoples. Deleuze, in his geo-mythography, is seeking a more creative capacity in the neutral space of the deserted island, but does his figuration of the-human-that-precedes-the-human, as an “archetype of the collective soul,” similarly risk naturalization of the indigene--the (non)dweller of the island, in this instance--through the continuous gesture of the earth’s movements into the sacred (non)human imagination? To read a place, such as an island--islands being historically notorious sites of colonial violence and continuing occupation by nation-states in their geographical and economic marginalizations--as being inhabited in fact but deserted in reality is politically a very dangerous reading. It is precisely the type of reading made by European colonials in their contact narratives, seeing the indigenous peoples encountered as both human and nonhuman, and claiming the land as (non)occupied: occupied in that it often required force, if not deceit, to colonize it; and not occupied in the sense given, at the time, to the phrase *terra nullius*.

Deleuze attempts to escape this political reading by claiming that understanding islands as deserted is “philosophically normal” (9). But he also claims that “a negative confirmation” of his theory is to be found in the facts themselves, that is, geographically:

The island, and all the more so the deserted island, is an extremely poor or weak notion from the point of view of geography. This is to its credit. The range of islands has no objective unity, and deserted islands have even less. The deserted island may indeed have extremely poor soil. Deserted, the island may be a desert, but not necessarily. The real desert is uninhabited only insofar as it presents no conditions that by rights would make life possible, whether vegetable, animal, or human. On the contrary, the lack of inhabitants on the deserted island is a pure fact due to circumstance, in other words, the island's surroundings. The island is what the sea surrounds and what we travel around. It is like an egg. An egg of the sea, it is round. It is as though the island had pushed its desert outside. What is deserted is the ocean around it. It is by virtue of circumstance, for other reasons than the principle on which the island depends, that ships pass in the distance and never come ashore. The island is deserted more than it is a desert (11).

So philosophically speaking (what, for Deleuze, amounts to the creation of concepts; see *What is Philosophy?*) the normative island is deserted, and geographically speaking (here, read as factual) the deserted island has little *force*, in any sense of and for any adjective attached to that term. It is desert-ed, meaning passed by and ignored. The forces, including political, economic, and historical, that make geography have certain flows and trajectories, that make it uneven,

cause the writing of the earth, its palimpsestic quality, to be thin at the sites of islands. The sea, as desert, surrounds the island, and “we” travel around it. Only the exceptional, the-human-that-precedes-the-human, drifts towards the deserted island, waterlogged, sun-starved debris, blown there or thrown up on the beach by the tide: drift wood. But what is an island that *presents no conditions that by rights would make life possible*? It is an *islet*, at least in terms of maritime law.

Deleuze seeks to situate the deserted island as a place of non-arrival in two senses: in the philosophical sense, only the exceptional individual, on a detouring path, can reach the island, a reaching that is not an arrival as this individual cannot occupy the island, the island being essentially deserted, and can only continue the gestures already at work there, in a plural way; in the geographical sense, “we” miss the island factually by not inscribing it in “our” territorial flows and trajectories, by curving around it in a way that erases its existence, as our paths are always the shortest routes between points A and B, across a thick palimpsest that is, in another sense, smooth space. “The unity of the deserted island and its inhabitant is thus not actual, only imaginary, like the idea of looking behind the curtain when one is not behind it. More importantly, it is doubtful whether the individual imagination, unaided, could raise itself up to such an admirable identity; it would require the collective imagination, what is most profound in it, i.e. rites and mythology” (11). Rites and mythology have been understood to be the two sides of the sacred. Their disturbance, or separation from each other, are said to produce play, on the side of rites, and literature, on the side of myth.²⁶ In some sense, as Deleuze reads it, literature is the result of competing misinterpretations of myths no longer understood. This would make games the competition of gestures without referents, referents lost when rites no longer directly gestured terrestrial movements.

For Deleuze, “What must be recovered is the mythological life of the deserted island...We have to get back to the movement of the imagination that makes the deserted island a model, a prototype of the collective soul” (13). A fairly typical claim of renewal--as return to the sources of life--what is disappointing here is that the chiasmus produced in geo-mythography, one that opened up the question of politics, is dropped for the privileging of one side over the other: “This is to state once again that the essence of the deserted island is imaginary and not actual, mythological and not geographical. At the same time, its destiny is subject to those human conditions that make mythology possible” (12). The desert island does have a contingent destiny, moving through time, like an egg (Deleuze refers to it as a “cosmic egg”), passing in and out of existence depending upon the state of mythology itself, but its *essence* is decisively (divisively) mythological. This separates it from both gesture as play (in relation to the sacred) and the facts of geography. More importantly, it risks recolonizing indigenous peoples through their effacement in and by conceptual creation.

Returning to the desert island *in fact*, the “islet” is categorized by its ability or inability to sustain life. Article 121 of the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea stipulates that “Rocks which cannot sustain human habitation or economic life of their own shall have no exclusive

²⁶ Emile Benveniste writes, “If the sacred can be defined through the consubstantial unity of myth and rite, we can say that one has play when only half of the sacred operation is completed, translating only the myth into words or only the rite into actions.” Quoted in Giorgio Agamben, *Profanations*, p 77.

economic zone or continental shelf." The exclusive economic zone (EEZ) and the continental shelf are both sea zones that extend the territorial rights of states beyond their terrestrial/coastal boundaries. Like a 200 nautical mile halo (the EEZ is more abstract while the continental shelf refers to a geological structure just below the surface), the neutral deep ocean is encroached upon by the universally territorialized land of states through these aquatic extensions. What this means for the islet, in relation to Deleuze's discussion of the two types of island, is that if the form of land is small enough, dead enough, and far enough away from the territorial halo--in other words, if it has either drifted or punched through the surface far enough away--then it is fundamentally neutral.

The significance of the question of life or death, sustainability or non-sustainability, for the extension of territory can be illustrated by a case of international maritime law, that of Snake Island in the Black Sea. Located between Romania and Ukraine, the island had served as a military base for Ukraine until Romania brought a case in 2004 before the International Court of Justice, claiming that the island was little more than a rock in the sea. If reduced in status to an islet made of rock, this would have dramatically shifted the maritime boundary between the two countries. During the five years the case was under consideration, Ukraine demilitarized the island and began encouraging rural development, a trend that Romania claimed was an attempt to influence the court's decision. Ultimately the court ruled that Snake Island was not a significant enough land mass to affect the maritime delimitation.

Bringing in a discourse other than the geographical, philosophical, or mythological, that of international maritime law, the case of Snake Island, through the concrete and the vivid, allows a rearticulation of facts and stories. It is through the complex question of territory, as related to the sustainability of life in this case, that the islet becomes the common site of national territorial claims and Coyote's escape/death as re-creation. Linking the masculine altercation between Creator and Coyote, vividly realized by territorial pissings and geological footprints, to the patriotic chess match played out in court over the ocean and its riches by Romania and Ukraine, the islet continues to vacillate between living and dead, arrival and non-arrival, absence and presence, and this because of its continued marginal status: just a rock in the sea, a sandbar poking up out of the water, a ring of coral reef delimiting a lagoon, a tidal island made and unmade by the ebb and flow of water, a sea stack reaching up vertically to the air, or, like Coyote's islet, a towhead or fluvial landform in a stream or river. Nothing so grand as the cosmic egg, the "sacred island" "entrusted to man and not the gods," which Deleuze links to the ur-myth of the flood as second beginning: "The ark sets down on the one place on earth that remains uncovered by water, a circular and sacred place, from which the world begins anew. It is an island or a mountain, or both at once: the island is a mountain under water, and the mountain, an island that is still dry" (13). What is lost in Deleuze's undoing of his own chiasmus--geo-mythography--is the humility of the fragment, for the sake of mythic creationism.

But instead of elevating the story to the level of myth, and its subsequent uptake into conceptual creation, thereby effacing the indigene through figuration (what Deleuze elsewhere calls a *conceptual persona*), remaining with/in the chiasmus, by rigorously prolonging the materialization of neutrality as it gets worked out through discourses and their inefficient readings of material "facts"--in the interplay of the concrete and the vivid, offers a way to continue to think the separation of myth and rite through play and literature. This situating

oneself between discourses allows the thinking of the production, destruction, and reproduction of indigenous subjects and peoples. The humble specks of the earth called islets, overwhelmed as they are by the forces of water, remind one that creation is always tentative and fragile.

Deleuze gets it right when he notes:

Clearly, this presupposes that the formation of the world happens in two stages, in two periods of time, birth and re-birth, and that the second is just as necessary and essential as the first, and thus the first is necessarily compromised, born for renewal and already renounced in a catastrophe. It is not that there is a second birth because there has been a catastrophe, but the reverse, there is a catastrophe after the origin because there must be, from the beginning, a second birth (13).

The catastrophe is ongoing. In the case of Coyote it is unclear whether his bringing of Death into the world is the catastrophe or the second beginning after the catastrophe, jumping off from the catastrophe that is creation. His gesture of dying through starvation (based on his clever words) and living through transformation (passing through mist) does continue the gesture of the islet in its ambiguity between non/sustainability. Coyote gets off the islet, but remains on it. He lives and dies, a fluctuating marker of the materialization of the immemorial: “In the ideal of beginning anew there is something that precedes the beginning itself, that takes it up to deepen it and delay it in the passage of time. The desert island is the material of this something immemorial, this something most profound” (14).

It would do well to remember that Snake Island was named by the ancient Greeks *Leucos*, Λευκός, "White Island", and known by the Romans as Alba (in latin: “white” and the root of the word ‘album’ as blank slate). This “White Island” is surrounded by the submerged ruins of temples of Apollo, and the remains of Achilles and Patrocles, after the Trojan War, were brought there and put in a sanctuary. A lighthouse was erected directly over the ruins of a temple dedicated to Achilles, and a 4th century Olbiopolitan decree is still inscribed there which praises someone for defeating and driving out the pirates that lived on the “holy island.” In some cases, white is death. Sometimes white is empty, a blank screen, page or wall yet to be written on, and sometimes it is full, as in the color spectrum, the fullness of all colors.

The Path of Bone Game: Gesture and Repetition

After losing to Coyote, the Creator continued to attempt to introduce stasis into the world, surreptitiously, as in the story when he created a spring that makes people young again (Shipley 61-62). But Coyote, “the Spoiler,” continued to subvert these attempts by pissing on all sites of rejuvenation. The playing out of these traces is echoed by de Certeau’s notion discussed above of the gestural relations between the body and the land, bodies and lands both marked by colonial violences and connected through scars, movements of marching forward and returning home. Blanchot offered a different gesture, the infinite gesture of lying down upon Nikita that interrupts the enterprising activities of the day, in the form of death and the dream, the other night. This sense of return without arrival, cut as it is by the meandering step and labyrinth-like path back to Nikita through the snow, shifts the path of the long march of the indians through the night towards the morning. It shifts instead to an endless night, or a morning entered backwards,

in which the night is carried into the day, as *day dream*. This was the dangerous chiasmus opened up by Taussig in the connection between Nature and History, day dreaming being precisely the activity that makes nations. James Luna, in his staged suicide, in his own other walk that includes lying still, is linked to Tolstoy's story in the form of a sleep without dreams, not a restful sleep as repose necessary for the new day, but a sleep that relies upon an absolute nothingness, a blankness of the anterior, that marks the return to Nikita as an event of non-arrival: white island.

Blanchot's sense of embrace is a gesture, a useless one, for sure, but one that opens up onto "mankind" as a whole, while the sleep without dreaming is a difference with-in that articulates, through becoming death, the body with the external world, or the difference with-out. Between Nikita and the cold, the choice, it seems, is between Universal humanism or becoming (both intransitive verb and substantive). In becoming..., mineral, animal, plant, commodity, and the invisible workings of the body, including the hardness of bones in their constant making and unmaking, blend into each other, rendering them indistinguishable, so that it is not the scar that connects the body to earth, nor the gesture of meaning or articulation of the land and the body through gestural relations, but the dissolution of the body/mind and its indistinction from the land itself through emptiness. It is not the gesture that interrupts walking, then, but the gesture of walking, walking as gesture in its emptiness, that connects to the gesture of land, both in their separate non-arrivals, what Deleuze called destiny: a path.

On another path, the amateur ethnographer and ethnomusicologist, *Coyote Man*, in an ethnographic text/manual that is more like a long leaflet, *Handgame!*, describes his first encounter with the traditional Native American gambling game known as bone game. Following a not-quite-seen path, he is led by his ear and an other light into a night without sleep, a night where he is outdone by the singing, the gestures, the play of light and shadow, song and silence, and the persistence of old people. Echoing the march and the gathering of Indians described by de Certeau, here it is not towards a new morning that Indians walk, but, rather, the amateur ethnographer, in his blending of the voices of science and tradition, through descriptions of singing and the calling of the pattern of bones, heads towards an encounter with the game and with Indians in which the morning is entered backwards.

The following is an adaptation of Coyote Man's text, switching the first person account, typical of self-reflexive accounts by ethnographers who attempt to situate themselves in the participant-observer mode, to the third person, gendered-masculine pronoun. Stabilizing the oft-times neutrally-gendered trickster figure, in this traditional context called *Old Man Coyote*, with a further gendering of the voice through his use of *Coyote Man* as an ethnographic pseudonym (a very problematic form of identification), it is important to remember the encounter as gendered, both in the writing of an ethnographic text and across the fire over which the bone game is played. The Universal masculine pronoun, in its effacement of the feminine, is here reinstated as a reminder that encounter is often experienced in multiple ways, marked by many differences. *He*, the ethnographer, on his path will encounter the space of origin in a primal scene as *a second beginning*, of which Deleuze has written, "Ocean and water embody a principle of segregation such that, on sacred islands, exclusively female communities can come to be, such as the island of Circe or Calypso. After all, the beginning started from God and from a couple, but not the new beginning, the beginning again, which starts from an egg: mythological maternity is often a

parthenogenesis” (Deleuze 14). A difficult materialization of the feminine in a mythical and maternal figure, this idea will be explored later in relation to the bone game itself. It is enough to note here that Coyote, across stories, is also known as a trans-gendered figure, model of the two-spirit person.²⁷

He has come to the Bear Dance.²⁸ He has followed his brother’s path--an ethnomusicologist, his brother forged it with recording devices, a keen ear, curiosity, “a gift and good spirits” (Coyote Man 4) (liquor does loosen lips and lubricate the friction of differences--as every ethnomusicologist worth *his* salt knows). He has sung along the way to ease the dreariness of mountain roads. He has sung songs that were unfamiliar with words he didn’t understand. *What is that sound?* Moonless night, pitch black, punctuated by the stars and galaxies overhead. He can’t see the trail that leads down the hill if he looks. If he doesn’t quite look, he can see a path of light that marks the way. He hears low, thudding drums and high, tight, clacking sounds in the distance. Drawn. Coming nearer, singing comes out of the dark. The fast-paced rhythm of an old indian song soon puts the rhythm, the singing, and the not-quite-seen path together in an uneasy relationship.

Hiding the Bones- in the California Indian gambling game known alternately as Hand Game, Bone Game, Grass Game or, in Maidu, *Tep We* (marked/unmarked), across a fire one of two opposing teams hides two pair of bone playing pieces in their hands (made from the leg bone of a mountain lion, *Pah-koo-nee*). Two of these bones are marked. Two unmarked. They are hiding the pattern from the gaze of the opposing side.

What is this song? he wondered. There, in front of him, beyond a crowd of people, these very old women and men were singing out their hearts, pounding sticks on a log in the dirt. The song was fast, three beats a second. The words, though almost indiscernible, were unforgettable and hypnotic. It was almost impossible not to remember the song after hearing it once. Sometime later when he tried to remember the song, it was lost. Try as he may, he could not recall it.

Singing the Songs- in the Bone Game, the side hiding the bones sings songs of power to tease and distract the guessing team. These songs come from animals, trees, rocks, streams, anything that might whisper

²⁷ Gerald Vizenor, “I argued in my essay that the ‘trickster is androgynous, a comic healer and liberator in literature; the whole figuration that ties the unconscious to social experience. The trickster sign is communal, an erotic shimmer in oral traditions; the narrative voices are holotropes in a discourse” (“Ruins...” 19).

²⁸ A spring ceremony to honor Bear and Rattle Snake and to renew.

their song to you, giving you the power to hide.

What is happening here? he thought. It was perhaps two o'clock in the morning, but this strange game kept going on. One team would sing a song, beat their drums, clap their clapper sticks, weaving back and forth where they sat. These singers would sometimes lean way over to wave scarves in the faces of the opposing team, as if to taunt them. Each side sat behind a big log, and the singers used the log as a pounding board to accentuate the song's rhythm. He soon became accustomed to these singers and their songs. As the sharp intensity of the clacking of clapper sticks and rapping on logs began to be less jarring, *he believed* he began to see deeper into the game.

Calling the Bones-- the performance of the side that is hiding, the language of the body, past experiences, a lifetime of developing intuitions, as well as hidden or secret deformed charms all help in calling the pattern of the bones. One does not just look, one experiences, listens for the call of the bones, which speak through the hiding, a different type of seeing.

What was happening here? The game went back and forth through the night. Some of these old people were probably ninety years old, but here they were, four o'clock in the morning and still going strong. As the dawn's light streamed through the trees the games continued. *How can these old people keep it up?* he wondered. Soon, as the sun warmed the earth, and the chill of the night dissipated, he could take no more. With the sound of singing and drums beating in his brain he slipped away and crept asleep beneath an old oak tree behind the round house. *These old folks are too much for me*, he thought as he drifted off to sleep. He dreamt of waterfalls and wild animals.

Passing the Sticks--beginning in neutrality, owned by neither team, one by one the sticks are cooked as they pass over the fire. Counting the gesture of each wrong guess, the game only ends when one side has won them all. Sometimes these games last for several days with the sticks passing almost endlessly back and forth across the fire. Sometimes they end quickly with a few bad guesses.

In this scene described by Coyote Man, indians sing their way past the threshold of the day; in gambling songs, ninety years old, they sing themselves right past the horizontal and vertical moment when night and day, earth and sky, all four corners, four winds, together meet. The sun rises or sets. It makes no difference. Coyote Man shows, however, that there are other types of light than that of the day, other temporalities than the monotony of the diurnal,

something better, even, than the threshold. Why don't indians sleep? Because indians don't dream (dreams are always more than dreams in Indian Country).

The Maidu bone game is punctuated by clapper sticks, hollowed out pieces of wood split to make a clacking noise when struck on the palm, mirroring the hollowed out mountain lion bone playing pieces hidden in the hands of the players. And sometimes drums. The ones that called the ethnographer into the primitive scene, along a path that he could only see if he didn't quite look; the ones that drove him behind the round house into a dream of waterfalls and wild animals; the answer to "what is that sound?" Drums in the distance. In the-distance-itself. A nowhere of drums. Drums as distance. Between these two moments, origination through a primal drum beat (ear) and dreams of wildness (eye)--two missteps--Coyote Man hit upon a path by not seeing or hearing lucidly. With his bleary eyed exhaustion and ringing ears he found a path unrecognized: indians don't sleep. In their incessant singing and teasing, he is outdone. To the question "who walks all night?" must be responded 'indians and anthropologists' along woven lines, returning and turning around each other, a stitch. They walk together in the ambiguity of vigilance or dream (Who stays awake? Who dreams? Who enters sleep without sleeping?): between is the void. Between is the scene. Yet, finally, he sleeps, and it is his words about them that survive the encounter.

In this account of an encounter between cultures, the scene is structured by the ethnographer's arrival in the middle of the night at a ceremony, one that includes gambling all night before the sunrise ceremony begins. Carried forward by the unknown, a series of questions leads the ear and the eye: *What is that sound? What is this song? What is happening here? What was happening here?* The shifts in prepositions and verb tenses chart a slow movement of coming into (some sort of) consciousness, marked by arrival (of some sort). Importantly, even upon arrival, the enigma remains. What is *that* sound, over there? What is *this* song, here before me? What *is* happening here, in this scene in which I just arrive? What *was* happening here, where I am at, still confounded, perhaps it has been going on all along and will continue? The final question, *How can these old people keep it up?*, leads to the one assertion made by the internal voice of the narrator, *These old folks are too much for me*, causing him to crawl off behind the round house to get much needed rest.

This drawing of an outsider into the game *plays* on the form of an introduction, particularly as an introductory manual; the narrative of the encounter destabilizes the usual, phenomenologically-grounded relationship between the ear and the eye (horizon) of the narrator. The reader, following the path of Coyote Man, in this way is also destabilized, an important pedagogical technique for reorganizing the senses in order to be prepared to play the game. The cliché of *beginners luck* is here rigorously acted out on a path that participates in and is structured by the unknown, through anticipation. As a beginner, the first encounter has all the moments for understanding the game *without knowing it*: to approach the song-that-hides with an ear-that-questions is to hear with eyes guided by moonlight and a foreign song; to see the pattern of the bones without quite seeing is to hear with the dark and the rhythm; and to be open, infinitely open, to losing the game is to be outdone as a form of winning. A song that blinds (even memory); gestures that stop up the ears so they can't hear clearly. Beginners luck is dangerous when playing under these conditions, and requires prepared eyes and ears. This danger is made clear when one goes out *looking for luck*.

Everyone must find their own Luck, they said. Keep trying different things, deformed things, freaks, until you find something that helps you. Some people never find their Luck. It hides when they look for it...This is one strong plant! His root's a long slender fellow. If he gets cut, white blood oozes out of him. When you want to use that plant, talk to him, talk to him a long time, saying, 'Old people did it this way and so do we. We want to talk with you. We want to use you in the Handgame. We want you to show us which way to guess.' After talking to him, dig him up with a sharp stick. DON'T TOUCH HIM! Don't break the root. Don't make the root bleed either. If you break the root, put him back in the mountain, carefully tamp the sand around him, tell him you are sorry you hurt him, and leave. DON'T TOUCH HIM! When you've got him up, use sticks to put him in a pouch filled with leaves of Rattlesnake Medicine (*sanicula*). Keep the medicine wrapped around him to keep him warm. Carry that root only at certain times of the day. *Use him right or he will kill you!* (Coyote Man 39).

It's important to feed the Luck, to speak to it. The Luck will disappear if ignored; it will run away. Or it might poison you. But if you treat the luck right, "Maybe a little voice will talk to you. Or maybe you can look right through the other fellow's hand and *see* the marked bone." Lucky eyes and ears are needed to play the game.

This notion of beginner is also important for the significance of 'amateur' status in terms of ethnographic representation. Between a book and a pamphlet, the text *Handgame!* is part of a series of ethnographic texts (and one fictional novel) by Coyote Man, some of them written in collaboration with his brother, Brother William. The brothers, Tom and Bill Rathbun, have been working with, living amongst, and playing with the Maidu Indians of Northern California since the 70s. The "going over the hill" quality is interesting, as Coyote Man, untrained in the field as an ethnographer, often does not distinguish his voice from that of his 'informants,' blurring the genre of the text: collected archive (of stories, songs, and practices), practical manual, historical or journalistic report, ethnographic narrative, and 'theoretical' commentary. As an amateur ethnographic text, published by a local press (Yerba Buena Press in Berkeley, CA) with a niche market, the usual academic requirements and rules for citation, argument, evidence, and formatting, in other words the traditional forms of scholarly research, are simply not abided by. Again, with the form of this text echoing the pedagogically performative narrative, there's an understanding without knowing, without being coded into the various institutionalized modes of the known, even if these particular forms of identification-with and representation-of are a bit risky. The de-hierarchization of the text is further complicated by the fact that the primary readership is Native Americans, the book/pamphlet being sold on craft tables at Native American events, including ceremonies.

Baumann and Briggs in *Voices of Modernity* (232), for instance, analyze the origin of the tension between literature and ethnography in the work of Henry Rowe Schoolcraft. In particular, the "oxymoron" of oral literature is justified through a transcriptive approach, where the emphasis is on "freshness, immediacy, directness, preservation, adherence to an original, while explicitly declaiming the potential distancing effect of textual "alterations.'" Of this they

write, “This is clearly purifying rhetoric, an effort to render his editorial intervention transparent, to erase the hybridizing effects of his own labors in recording the Ojibwe oral texts and preparing them for publication in print and in English.” It is precisely Schoolcraft’s “effort to minimize the intertextual gap between the texts he has presented and the ‘oral tradition of the Chippewas,’ that marks this as a transcriptive process. Clifford and Marcuse’s *Writing Culture* will return to this tension but in an effort to mark it as visible, through an act of textual recovery through de-transcription.

There are two narratives given about the bone game. One is that, of all the traditional Native gambling games, it is the one that best survived the catastrophe wrought by European influence (ethnocide) and active elimination (genocide), which is a narrative of continuity (Gendar 54). The other is that gambling with bones gave way to cards for a number of years, slowly resurfacing at cultural events. One year given for this reappearance is 1939 (55). Interestingly, in this account, it was the abandonment of the game by men that allowed the resurgence to occur: “In 1937, Foster observed that Yuki women had just begun to take up hand game, which in Yuki tradition had been played only by men, ‘when it was finally abandoned.’” There are a number of readings possible for this transition. It could be pointed out that gambling in many cultures is considered a masculine activity, and therefore ‘serious business,’ or a playing with serious matters, while its degraded form as entertainment, post-contact, is left to women and children.²⁹ A critical problem for gender, this has been taken up in another way in postcolonial and feminist theories regarding the transition to domestic labor as a primary source of income in many countries in the global south and its effects on traditional gender relations. A more positive reading is that the role of women in Native cultures is often the keeper of traditions, one dynamic enough to include the recovery of abandoned male-centered practices. This maintains the perceived balance in many Native cultures between the separate gendered spheres, a boundary that is still often rigorously policed, perhaps more so in the context of insecurities regarding cultural revitalization practices and identity politics. There is also Deleuze’s reading of second beginnings as a form of mythic, maternal parthenogenesis. Provocative in that it syncs up the gambling of women with the rhythm of re-creation through the interval of the catastrophe, but the emphasis on the mythic problematically effaces the indigene, as discussed, and the co-optation of women’s reproductive organs as figures, mythically sutured to the asexual reproduction of other beings, performs a similar erasure through the naturalization (one wants to say hyper-naturalization) of maternity.

But, in relation to the game itself, it is said, “In some traditions, the plain bones are considered female, the marked ones male. In some traditions this is reversed, and in some there is no male/female designation, or at least none was ever recorded” (56). This becomes interesting when thinking about the negotiations between players at Big Head (intertribal) gatherings. The vacillation that must have occurred in deciding whether to designate the bones as male or female (marked or unmarked)--an anthropomorphic tendency that is nearly universal, as made evident by the gendering of words in many languages--and the possibility of seeing the bone playing pieces more abstractly, as white and black, patterns caught in a rhythm of sight and

²⁹ Coyote Man dedicates a section, called “Kids Play,” to a narrative about losing a game to children, with the upbeat message that “ancestral tradition” is kept alive by new generations.

sound, asks for a reading that considers the role of gender *within* the rules of the game to understand this contingent fact of *who plays* (who is allowed to play). It would be difficult, if not impossible, to escape the gendering mark, but to understand that mark as involved in a pattern, one that moves to the rhythm of percussion and song, is to open up the playful and contingent possibility of calling the pattern in a different way, of seeing and hearing differently. In such a way of playing, “Some versions of the game include the possibility of making a false guess for the purpose of gleaning clues” (Gendar 54).

Like Luck, with its distortion of the rules of reality, gender is dangerous. To paraphrase Judith Butler, it *troubles*. As made painfully apparent by the many publicized cases of ‘gay bashing,’ as well as the unpublicized cases and more subtle violences in the everyday lives of people with non-normative sexual identities and practices, it can even kill.³⁰ “Is the breakdown of gendered binaries, for instance, so frightening, that it must be held to be definitionally impossible and heuristically precluded from any effort to think gender?” (Butler viii). The unthinkable here being the impulse for a knee-jerk reaction of violence. But, again, one cannot simply make the historical categories and forms of recognition (the markings) that constitute gendering vanish. The conditions of being a subject dictate otherwise. Everyone comes into gender (as a system) as an amateur, unpracticed and untrained, and are disciplined over time, sometimes through force, sometimes through coercion, and sometimes through love or desire, to adopt the categories waiting for them, perhaps even to thrive (often at the expense of others). This means that gender, of course, precedes the subject, and, like language, can be understood to stabilize itself according to its own differential, meaning-making matrix, without being directly associated with the agency of subjects. It subjects while being the condition of subjecthood. When does one *go out looking* for gender?

Butler also troubles the relationship between sexuality and gender, claiming that, in order to escape (or perhaps simply survive) a heteronormativizing system, it is not enough to render gender identities ambiguous. As the perceived “identity” side of the identity/practice relation, sometimes gender can be shifted in order to maintain a normative practice. “Thus, no correlation can be drawn, for instance, between drag or transgender and sexual practice, and the distribution of hetero-, bi-, and homo- inclinations cannot be predictably mapped onto the travels of gender bending or changing” (xiv-xv). Butler’s response to this difficulty is instructive, as she turns to performativity as a way to understand gender and sexuality, in their co-constitution, and to intervene in the usual understandings of this relationship, as well as in the heteronormative procedures at work. To the question posed above, *when does one go out looking for gender?*, an answer can be found: one looks with-*in* one’s self metaleptically. As a trope of a trope, metalepsis establishes an internal essence drawn from what one assumes is external to the self, thereby producing the gender that one already anticipates. It is through a discursively produced truth-of-the-self, a truth that one lies in wait for, that a confusion of the internal and external occurs (therefore the use of metalepsis). Like a second degree metonymy, the anticipation of being gendered, of participating in all the life ways associated with such an identification, allows

³⁰ Beyoncé (Fred) Martinez, a *nádleehí* or two-spirit person--understood to be a special gift in Navajo culture--is a well-known case in “Indian Country” of such violent risk. “Male-bodied” with a “feminine spirit,” on June 16, 2001, s/he was brutally murdered at 16.

the external force of gendering to intervene in and produce an assumed internal essence: a subjected subject.

This going-out as going-in is made possible by the other aspect of performativity that Butler highlights, its ritualistic gesture or repetitive form, naturalized in a material body understood to be “a culturally sustained temporal duration” (xv). Gender is constituted in each moment as dependent upon a prior anticipatory moment of waiting, a perpetual renewal that is formally a repetition and gesturally a ritual. It is the affective longing to hear the voice of power (identification or interpellation) and to see the truth laid bare (recognition) that sustains and is sustained by the ritualistic enactment of gendered bodily behavior, marking the most active or hyper-gendered behavior with a paradoxical and nearly religious awe. A series of internalizing gestures, it pulls the subject forward like knots on a string run through the palm of the hand. Returning to the question of *who plays?*, the ambiguity produced in the bone game’s survival/resurgence is marked by the interarticulation of gender and tradition. Tradition, in this case, is simply the form and gesture of repetition/ritual. If a tradition “survives,” it is because it is (or participates in) tradition, survival being the goal and mode of tradition itself. Gender comes into the game as both a continuation, in the form of tradition, and an interruption of tradition, as well as an interruption of interruption. This would make tradition, in its vacillation of continuity and interruption, made possible by ritual and repetition, a gendered, radical potential of survival as interruption itself. The bones are marked and unmarked, male and female, gendered and non-gendered, and require a conversation across the fire regarding the playing out of these gendered relations, a conversation kept alive through its interruption and inclusion of different voices.

Some people say the louder the song the more luck it brings. If the players grow discouraged and sing with dejected little voices, their luck will leave them and they will lose. The players on the other side will vigorously chant and run them down. But then again...sometimes just a few old women singing in insistent little voices lead a song, and still no one can guess them! (Coyote Man and Brother William 15).

A teasing, tricky hermeneutic is necessary to play the game well. This requires a critical reorganization of the senses. No surprise considering the characteristics of the game. “There are variations without number in the way hand game can be played, and one of its many virtues is that it is independent of language. The words and gestures for each possible guess are easily learned, and the words of the songs are almost always vocables--words without literal meaning. Played at intervillage and intertribal celebrations, constantly subject to new influences, hand game has always crossed cultural and geographic boundaries, but its essence remains intact” (Gendar 55). Meaning is nowhere to be found. The voice is only music. It may be secretly empowered by Luck; it wills opacity. “When blind people play, the ‘siki’ba’ [right or left oriented] guesses are qualified by adding one of the cardinal directions according to the positions [i.e. east-west or north-south] in which the players are seated” (56). But there are always other ways of seeing, of hearing. The hand holds the bone playing pieces, hiding the pattern of marked and un-marked, but the hand is also made of bones, just as the playing pieces once held up flesh: *mountain lion leg bone*.

The bone game acts as site, ritual and scene of a continuing challenge across a fire. Two teams engage in performances of singing, hiding, gesturing, guessing, taunting, and often times, cheating, long into the night and early morning. In the flickering light of a center that displaces the night and leaves only ashes, the scene itself contains all of the senses. To hear the voices punctuated by clapper sticks; to see either the opposing side's stillness and silence or their singing and hiding gestures; to smell the smoke from the fire which differs depending on the type of wood burned; to feel the smooth or rough texture of the bones in the palm; to taste bitter, thick coffee--to stay awake. Heterogeneous: these senses are used, unnoticed, gathered, sometimes hierarchized or fragmented through the prestidigitation of gaming as ritual. The fire allows this game to take place by providing warmth, light and shadow; all integral to a game of conflict between sight and sound, seeing and singing. It is ultimately also the darkness it keeps at bay through the flickering, and the singing is the silence of the hidden pattern through taunting, which one must be attentive to when using shadows to listen. Flickering images. This alliance of darkness and silence help either the guessers or the hiders, depending on the patterns, the song, the Luck used, and the rhythm. Over these gestures lies the conflict of images. The game as scene of risk shows the fire-center as a potential site of resistance, belonging to neither side:

...not in reinforcing the authority of a national patrimony, or of an essentialist identity (a mere recovery of the authentic past is in any case an "inauthentic" and unrealistic goal), but in offering an "empty" center, non-aligned, always-and-not-yet-occupied space where the tension between past and present is politicized, hence neither negative nor simply positive (Trinh 204-5).

Between death and play, past and present, artifact and culture, lie, for example, the ephemera of *Maidu-burning-images* as effigies, made for funereal burnings. The images' ashes are indistinguishable from the remains of the wood that are found in the game's central fire the morning after playing/mourning.³¹ In ashes, from center to center, serious and play are brought together through formless form, the materialization of risk and challenge. In this always-and-not-yet-occupied space of the fire can be found a site for the politicization of the tension between immemorial past and an ambiguous present in the tradition and play of this game.

The cycle of hiding the pattern in the hands or grass, singing the songs that taunt or distract, calling the bones with sight or intuition; the back and forth rhythm and passing of the counting sticks across the fire; the gestures of hands, bodies, voices, looks and hidden Luck, all together create a work of imagination. The center holds these pieces open in their assemblage. In this hiding through marking, singing songs that empower hiding, and listening to what speaks

³¹ Ash or cinder is the best figure for showing transformation caught in the difficulty of naming, as it is the act of metamorphosis frozen in physical form: image of image. A form of no form. Between worlds, it is therefore neither metaphor, nor proper name. Derrida, in his book, *Cinder*, describes the term as an "immemorial image" that had decomposed from within, a cinder of 'cinder'. He writes, "the cinder is no longer here. Was it ever?" In its consumed form in both word as eviscerated metaphor and physical trace of a burning, it is akin to what I am calling a "figure", which, of course, is inappropriate. It is also, naturally, trace. It might also relate to Blanchot's cadaver, discussed later (but much too obviously), in relation to Indian remains.

through such hiding in order to call the bones, lies naming in a different way. This is the work of and on images. Done in a way that takes into account the simultaneous emptiness and fullness of ashes (which is why they can never be a sign, to indicate or mean something, and still remain simply ash), this shows the games' radical potential for re-imagining the materials with which work is done. Flashes. Images. The counting sticks are cooked across the fire, not ending up in it like the transformed wood, but forever moving between the raw and the accountable. Two kinds of transformation are possible, which points to a multiplicity of movements and gestures and how remains can be imagined.

...the singing goes on and on (Gendar 62).

Chapter 4 Repatriation of Research

Poetry has a form, the novel has a form; research, the research in which the movement of all research is in play, seems unaware that it does not have a form, or, worse still, refuses to question the form that it borrows from tradition.

--Maurice Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*

There is no easy or natural relationship between activism and research.

--Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies*

Part 1: Research

This chapter examines the continuing role of research in the context of indigenous peoples. It is not a technical writing about research methodologies, written for those who speak such a language. Instead, this chapter seeks to follow Linda Tuhiwai Smith in situating “research in much larger historical, political and cultural contexts,” and in examining, “its critical nature within those dynamics” (*Decolonizing Methodologies* 6). Like the “other writing” discussed and attempted in Chapter 1, here I am interested in an *other research*, one that works within the shifting dynamics of researching, un-researching and re-researching. As Smith notes, this isn’t simply a matter of anti-research. Even in the case of indigenous peoples where she writes famously, “From the vantage point of the colonized, a position from which I write, and choose to privilege, the term ‘research’ is inextricably linked to European imperialism and colonialism. The word itself, ‘research’, is probably one of the dirtiest words in the indigenous world’s vocabulary,” the positioning required is complex (1). Educated activists, for instance, who work with/in such communities, will often explicitly deny any relation to the term ‘research’, referring to themselves as “project workers, community activists or consultants, anything by ‘researchers’” (17). And yet, “They search and record, they select and interpret, they organize and re-present, they make claims on the basis of what they assemble. This is research.” This isn’t an accusation of ideological naivety, but rather points to the difficult relationship of encounter/contact, the ongoing relationship between indigenous peoples and Eurocentric institutions of knowledge-production, as it gets mediated by research, a situation that Smith refers to as ‘struggle’.

Struggle in the Margins

To resist is to retrench in the margins, retrieve ‘what we were and remake ourselves.’ The past, our stories local and global, the present, our

communities, cultures, languages and social practices--all may be spaces of marginalization, but they have also become spaces of resistance and hope.

--Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies*

Struggle often takes place in the margins. ‘Site of oppression and site of resistance’, Smith highlights the difficulty and importance of ‘choosing’ such a place from/in which to work. This choice isn’t just a matter of writing about marginalized peoples, a form of research that Smith is critiquing, but about working as a form of identification-with, while functioning in a critical manner. She cites bell hooks as an influence, who writes explicitly about this choice; hooks says, “To speak about that location from which work emerges, I choose familiar politicized language, old codes, words like ‘struggle, marginality, resistance’. I choose these words knowing that they are no longer popular or ‘cool’--hold onto them and the political legacies they evoke and affirm, even as I work to change what I say, to give them renewed and different meaning” (hooks 209). Taking up what is old hat, dusting it off, reworking it, is certainly a choice in relation to self-positioning, but it is a choice that is derived from necessity, as it is often the *familiar politicized language* and *old codes* that settle in the margins, the creases, as sediment. Recognition of the need to work with colonial languages, *a broken language* for the dispossessed, and the subsequent choice to do exactly this in a self-conscious manner is to take a textual position of ambivalence, and such a position, in such a space of encounter/contact, is, in Smith’s words, “risky business” (199).

In this way, struggle can be a tool that connects social activism and research, giving oppressed groups the means to make their own strategies and tactics with the materials at hand. But, Smith reminds, “struggle can also be a blunt tool,” and “as a blunt tool it has often privileged patriarchy and sexism in indigenous activism groups...” In a Native American, or Pan-Indian, context this was made abundantly clear by the Red Power Movement, particularly AIM, with its strong image of a warrior ethic. Playing on the images of resistance produced during American-Indian wars, and taking influence from an equally masculine and violent semiotic in the form of the Black Panther Party, AIM activists, constituted primarily of urban Native Americans, combined shamanistic spirituality and the ferocity of the warrior (metonymically indicated by the bone choker) into a hyper-masculine figure intended to represent politically all Native Americans. This was a form of rigid identification in the margins. Within the academy, hooks describes another scene of blunt struggle within the center: “They [white radical feminists who occupy the center] say that the discourse on marginality, on difference has moved beyond a discussion of ‘us and them’. They do not speak of how this movement has taken place. This is a response from the radical space of my marginality. It is a space of resistance. It is a space I choose” (hooks 208). Here hooks shows another movement, one where marginality is displaced for the sake of sophisticated discourse, effectively co-opting the tools developed by the struggle and by those who struggle, to make available for knowledge-production at the center. The answer for both hooks and Smith to this dilemma is to *choose the difficult position* of the ‘activist researcher’, the ‘organic intellectual’, who can see “both from

the outside in and from the inside out,” to focus attention “on the center as well as on the margin” (hooks 206). Of this struggle between spaces, the self-situating between the personal and the political also occurs for Smith, in what “Patricia Hill Collins refers to” as “the outsider within’ positioning of research.” Depending on the context this can be a very disorienting experience: “Sometimes when in the community (‘in the field’) or when sitting in on research meetings it can feel like inside-out/outside-in research” (Smith 5). It also has radical potential.

Trinh T. Minh-ha has developed this difficult self-positioning-in-struggle further in her essay, “Outside In Inside Out” (*When the Moon Waxes Red*). Using as a point of departure the context of anthropological representations of the Other and ethnographic filmmaking practices, she writes, “To raise the question of representing the Other is...to reopen endlessly the fundamental issue of science and art; documentary and fiction; universal and personal; objectivity and subjectivity; masculine and feminine; outsider and insider” (65). The already difficult position of the activist researcher is displaced even further here by the inclusion of the frame or lens of the camera, one that, for Trinh, destabilizes the above boundaries through the emphasis on both making and representation. The seemingly smooth lens and stable frame are made up of tiny hair-line cracks and destabilizations, which do not disturb the act of framing or the separation by the lens, but merely point incessantly back to the act of framing. In so doing, this inclusion of framing within the frame radically questions the criteria of truth and authenticity that underlies the desire to represent others. So many lines, boundaries, articulations, make up what Smith (drawing on Chandra Mohanty’s work) calls a *cartography of struggle* where, “Along such intersecting lines are ideas, categories or tensions that often connect with each other in different ways. They are not necessarily oppositions or dualisms. They create and are created by conditions that are inherently unstable, arbitrary or uncontrollable” (201). From frame/lens to mapping, two different spaces are connected through a sense of fragmentation, the space of marginalization and the space of creation.

Smith, in framing a difference for indigenous peoples from the idea of resistance as struggle in/from the margins, points to the roles of space and territory. This has significant consequences for how the activist and researcher are both positioned. Particularly in her homeland, *Aotearoa* (New Zealand), *Aotearoa* is considered “‘our place’, all of it,” where, “there is little difference, except in the mind, between, for example, a *Te Kohanga Reo* where Maori are the majority but the state is there, and a University, where Maori are the minority and the state is there” (202). Rather than seeing this as a strict claim of ownership and belonging, it’s important to see the way that she simultaneously displaces the notion of the minor and the major by showing the inherent difficulty in understanding one without the other, while also showing that, from a bi-national perspective, as exists in *Aotearoa*/New Zealand, the minor and the major

blend into each other, confusing the boundaries.³² This overlaying of spaces is articulated by the various fissures described as margins. It is in this way that “Whereas we can conceive of space geographically and politically, it is important to claim those spaces that are still taken for granted as being possessed by the West. Such spaces are intellectual, theoretical and imaginative.” Layers of struggle, the mapping of ‘our place’ onto ‘the state’, connected as it is by margins that open up to major land claims, is further connected to representational spaces that spring from both centers of higher learning and from communities, a connection also made possible by the movements between boundaries. These movements are available, for Smith, because of “*Kaupapa Maori* research,” which, “refers to Maori struggles to claim research as a space within which Maori can also operate.” A space that, like the margin, can occur anywhere. In this sense, as Trinh discusses, differences are not only between insider and outsider, but exist within each—insider and outsider. “Violations of boundaries have always led to displacement, for the in-between zones are the shifting grounds on which the (doubly) exiled walk. Not you/Like you” (Trinh, *When the Moon Waxes Red* 70).

Walking in the Museum: The Poetics of Detachment

In this vein, what happens when the ethnographic camera is brought into the anthropology museum, two forms of representation brought into contact that have been critiqued for their assumed fixation of the image of a people through the criterion of authenticity? What happens when such images are overtly superimposed? Do the cracks and fissures become more apparent? These were questions that carried me into a DV research project at the Valene L. Smith Museum of Anthropology at CSU, Chico.

My mother and I arrive with my DV camera. The exhibition was organized by an anthropologist that is a close friend of her’s, my mom being one of the main informants, even providing many of the objects on display. The subject(s) of the display are the Northern California Indian tribe(s) called *Maidu* (the people). The museum is a small space and there is a large placard floating above the display cases with the text, “We Are Still Here!” This, of course, elicits/illicits laughter from me. My mother asks the attendant (a student presumably) if it is alright for me to film. She explains to her that it is for a class. It is. The implication being, probably, that it is an informational project. It is not. At least I don’t think it will be. I’m taking a grad seminar on experimental video/film. I am going to try and not be solipsistic with this video/text.

³² Clearly there is no such thing as a simple place (difficult to think what this might be) as every space is overlain by multiple systems, policies and discourses of place-making. In California, for example, loans are made available through HUD to Native Americans to buy houses. These loans are guaranteed by first the tribe, and then BIA, who will take over the house and loan if a forfeiture occurs, thereby lowering interest rates and making down-payments unnecessary. But this only applies to housing on “Indian land.” For the context of this law, the entire state of California was subsequently defined as “Indian land.” This is a limited frame but an important one for securing loans for housing for Native Americans who might not be able to otherwise.

As I am perusing the objects on display, reading the accompanying texts, my mom tells me that one of the informative stories was written by her. I also note that in a large display case with many things of daily use, grinding stones, arrows, dolls, jewelry, there is a comb that is marked as a replica. Of the many baskets on display most are recently made. My mom directs me towards a listening station which she thinks I will be interested in. Placing on the headphones, I hear a fuzzy recording of a man's voice saying words in English and then an old Woman's voice translating the words into Maidu. The words are all post-contact: bullets, butter, gun, horse, etc. At times the Woman forgets the Maidu equivalent and he reminds her. In a small corner in the back where they have put the art work of recent Native artists I find a very interesting display. It is of toy figurines and toy bow and arrows as well as popular media images of Indians, like Tonto, the Lone Ranger's sidekick. Here I interview my mom about her dad who collected objects like this and had a display case in his house, which I remember vividly from when I was a child. Next I interview her in a re-creation of a boarding school classroom, the kind where my grandfather, like most Indian children in California, was forced to go after being taken from his family. My mom is a preschool teacher at a local charter school for Native Americans and seemed comfortable in this setting. I record all of this.

A final display is of photographs with descriptions and a title "Native Americans of the Future." In this display I find a picture of myself, wearing cap and gown, graduating from Chico State. The text explains that I graduated with my degree in Philosophy and am now attending graduate school at UC Berkeley, the location of the grad seminar for which I am making this video. I am, of course, both amused and embarrassed by this.³³

Like bringing the eye of the beast into its belly, two colonial instruments of representational power and discursive production are brought into contact. The space of the image and the architectural space of the museum are superimposed. In this superimposition 'the field' meets the exhibition. Through the camera's recording of display--including audio and visual displays in the exhibition itself--a strange inversion of the external and internal occurs. The articulations lie between the fragments of objects in the museum and the selection of images to be edited together, echoing the space of marginality as it relates to the fissured lens and frame discussed above in relation to Trinh's concept of "Outside In Inside Out." Differences between; differences within. External differences; internal differences.

Such montagic practices are possible because of cutting. In her essay, "Objects of Ethnography," Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett describes what she calls a *poetics of detachment* (*Destination Culture* 18). By the reference to poetry she is indicating an aesthetic experience

³³ This text is excerpted from a "Writing the Field" assignment written for a graduate seminar on "Performance Theory" with Shannon Jackson in 2007. The DV project was made for a graduate seminar on experimental video with Jeffery Skoller, also in 2007.

one receives from objects that have been excised ‘surgically’ from their environment and placed in a context of display for appreciation, like in a museum, for instance. “Detachment refers not only to the physical act of producing fragments but also to the detached attitude that makes that fragmentation and its appreciation possible.” The detached attitude is the condition for an aesthetic experience which requires, according to Immanuel Kant in his analysis of the *Judgement of Taste* in his third critique, disinterest: if the experience serves a purpose, if we have interest, than it is not aesthetic, but merely pleasurable. Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, for her part, compares the ethnographic object to a ruin, which “offered the *pleasure* of longing for the irretrievable object of one’s fantasy,” a longing distinctively distant. And yet, hooks tells us, “We know struggle to be that which pleasures, delights, and fulfills desire,” struggle being understood generally in its immediacy (hooks 206). Perusing, meandering, strolling with dis/interest is the pace required by the museum. Is such a form of walking distant or immediate? There’s certainly pleasure involved. The camera has the ability to move this way as well, especially when freed from the constraints of action, story, information and plot. The camera can drift, perhaps hand-held, carried by a distracted interest or disinterest. The unique signature of some cinematographers can act as a gesture in this way.

But the above scene, in its textual transcription/description, displays a little too much of the interior voice of the narrator, something that newer, “more correct” (perhaps more writerly) forms of dialogic ethnography demand. But what sort of interiority is this? Uncertainty, dis/interest, amusement, and embarrassment. What are the conditions that led to such interiorizing? Uncertainty over the status of image-making; a passive and detached interest in the objects on display, as evinced by the role of the mother as museum docent; the externalization of identity through the strong assertion of the “We” of the placard, the Maidu-ness of the objects, the family historical connections, and, significantly, the projection of Indian-ness into the future through an image of educational self-advancement. It is precisely the imposition of identity as an internalizing agent that is passively resisted, deflected, obliquely registered.

Shifting the question of identity to a linguistic domain, as it gets mediated by anthropological display, ethnographic filmmaking, DV media, familial and kinship relations, and textual representation, I’d like to ask: Am I Indian? Or: Am I an Indian? There’s a subtle difference in these questions, as the first places ‘Indian’ in the position of an adverb, so that it qualifies being, in this case. The second places the term in the position of an object. The difference is between being-in-a-certain-way and being-a-certain-thing. To answer positively or negatively requires one to think about being, first and foremost, and about the ‘I’ that is the subject, secondly. Yes, of course, I am (being) in a certain way. Yes, I am definitely this certain thing. No, it’s not possible that I am this way. No, I am not that. But the subtle difference in the questions opens up the possibility to respond to them differently. While I feel uncomfortable strongly claiming to be Indian in the manner of being a known object or identity, I am nonetheless Indian in a way. Though this is not my way to be, I am recognized as an Indian. This is a simple grammatical bifurcation, but one that strikes at the heart of identity. The ‘I’ is left wandering between being-in-a-certain-way and being-a-certain-thing, as the two cannot be made to stabilize, or, if made stable, the threat of destabilization constantly lurks in the heart of being (being-as and/or being-an). This leaves the subject with an indeterminate content. Is this interesting? Have I pulled you in, or distanced you? What is the appropriate tone through which

to represent? Particularly to represent my-self? “To authenticate a work, it becomes therefore most important to prove or make evident how this Other has participated in the making of his/her own image” (Trinh, *When the Moon Waxes Red* 67). And, yet, “Otherness becomes empowering critical difference when it is not given, but re-created” (71). This is a very thin and broken line, bounded by slippery slopes on all sides. As Trinh notes here, to walk as an insider-outsider is to walk in a very troublesome terrain.

The moment the insider steps out from the inside, she is no longer a mere insider (and vice versa). She necessarily looks in from the outside while also looking out from the inside. Like the outsider, she steps back and records what never occurs to her the insider as being worth or in need of recording. But unlike the outsider, she also resorts to non-explicative, non-totalizing strategies that suspend meaning and resist closure. (This is often viewed by outsiders as strategies of partial concealment and disclosure aimed at preserving secrets that should only be imparted to initiates) (74).

Research as Space of Encounter

A nineteenth-century prophecy by a Maori leader predicted that the struggle of Maori people against colonialism would go on forever and therefore the need to resist will be without end.

--Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies*

In this troublesome terrain, research acts as the continuing site of encounter between the colonized and the colonizers. The term ‘research’ itself, as mentioned, is a contested term, one that leaves a bad taste in the mouths of many indigenous peoples. Smith notes that, “...most indigenous peoples and their communities do not differentiate scientific or ‘proper’ research from the forms of amateur collecting, journalistic approaches, film making or other ways of ‘taking’ indigenous knowledge that have occurred so casually over the centuries...” (2). Any form of gathering information has seemed *ad hoc* and potentially damaging to those who historically have been on the receiving end of the negative effects of knowledge production. And yet, “Searching for solutions is very much part of a struggle to survive; it is represented within our own ‘traditions’ for example, through creation stories, values, and practices. The concept of ‘searching’ is embedded in our world views” (202). Struggling to survive is the condition for those in the economic, geo-political, gendered, embodied and cultural margins. These are socio-historical conditions, but Smith connects them to “tradition” through stories, values and practices. It is through searching that tradition becomes something to be struggled over and committed to in a way that is not inherently conservative. Part of the call to decolonize the academy is to find ways of writing, speaking and doing research that participate, “within our own alternative, oppositional ways of knowing,” a form of resistance that many indigenous activists and researchers refer to as “indigenizing.” Smith acknowledges that these “alternative” ways don’t necessarily sync up with current socio-economic realities, as the concerns of many

indigenous peoples are not the concerns of the dominant society. But, “the fact that we adhere to, that we can imagine a connection suggests a resistance to being classified according to the definition of a dominant group.” The very fact that research is neither neutral nor a distant academic exercise but has something at stake within the lives of peoples set in real political and social conditions indicates that the indigenous researcher’s position puts the ambiguity of the activity of research into motion.

It is unclear, though, in this ambiguous space of struggle, how far the notion of oppositional thinking goes. As important as it is to maintain certain strategic differences, as in the bi-nationalism of *Aotearoa*/New Zealand, oppositional thinking can quickly stabilize into fixed opposites, producing discourses that retain the relation as it is. Finding the points of opposition and, rather than taking a simple stance, the strategy would be to remain in the tension, realization and derealization, in order to open up the struggle again to radical possibilities, ones that respect the infinite expression of the infinite-in-the-finite. This is the interval, an impossible place of being no-where. There are many “activist scholars,” “organic intellectuals” and “indigenous intellectuals,” for instance, who claim to be working from/with/in the margins. But often it boils down to *using* the academy to do activist work, a practice that ends up upholding the criterion of truth and its devices (on the side of scholarship) and identity and its closures (on the side of activism). This is a positioning that is different from working *between*.

How is “research” produced in indigenizing discourse? As an object to be investigated and critiqued in-itself; as a tool to be reappropriated, refashioned and reused; as a relational site of intercultural encounter; as a situating in a place of struggle, in the margins (sometimes self-situating and sometimes being situated). An object, tool, and site of encounter and struggle, research risks being collapsed into its own form of regulated inquiry, thereby reducing its radical formal potential in its open-endedness. If, as the epigraph by Blanchot above states, research borrows its form from tradition, it is the form of tradition that is being questioned by Smith’s claims to indigenous decolonization. And this because of the problem identified by Blanchot, that, in Western culture, research hasn’t taken its own form as a stake. This has led to severe consequences for many peoples, and puts two notions of tradition at odds with each other. In the colonial context, Smith writes,

Research is one of the ways in which the underlying code of imperialism and colonialism is both regulated and realized. It is regulated through the formal rules of individual scholarly disciplines and scientific paradigms, and the institutions that support them (including the state). It is realized in the myriad of representations and ideological constructions of the Other in scholarly and ‘popular’ works, and in the principles which help to select and recontextualize those constructions in such things as the media, official histories and school curricula (8).

This form of tradition, she argues (borrowing from Ashis Nandy), structures and manages colonial encounters. This is because research functions as a code that determines what is possible and impossible, realizing a relationship of dissymmetry. “In a very real sense research has been an encounter between the West and the Other. Much more is known about one side of

those encounters than is known about the other side. This book reports to some extent on views that are held and articulated by ‘the other sides.’” There is an ambiguity in the term “known” here. Which side has more known about it? The side that historically has been objectified through research or the side that objectively reveals itself through its own writing?³⁴ Like tradition, another form of encounter is possible when the question of the form of research is allowed to pervade the act itself. But before taking this further, it would be good to look at the question of what is known, or what can be known in the site of struggle.

One of the primary sites of inquiry for many committed indigenous researchers, to counteract the forms of managed colonial research agendas, is the reproduction of indigenous knowledge. “The issue of indigenous knowledge is pivotal for the work of activists and researchers at this moment, because it is the term or concept that currently embodies most of what remains of indigenous cultures” (220). But there’s an issue of indigenous content here that is problematic. If the lion’s share of what remains of indigenous cultures is some sort of content, in what form does it reside? The fact that “indigenous knowledge” is the “term or concept” that “embodies” this portion of the remainder, indicates that knowledge itself is a body. The phrase ‘body of knowledge’ is understood, but embodiment is more active and concrete than the somewhat metaphorical sense of “body of knowledge.” One may have a body of knowledge that remains latent or unused, but if one embodies knowledge, this implies something that is very manifest and actively sustained. But *how* does indigenous knowledge embody what is left? As a “term or concept.” As a term, ‘indigenous knowledge’ is placed in a semiotic economy, with the interpretation open that the signifier, ‘indigenous knowledge’, is what embodies the signified, in this case most of what is left of indigenous cultures. This interpretation puts the relationship clearly in the logic of communication and transmission critiqued by Jacques Derrida in “Signature, Event, Context.” Indigenous knowledge would simply be the vehicle through which most of the remainder of indigenous cultures is transmitted, conceivably from generation to generation, via the work of researchers and activists who make this passage possible. This type of conception was what led to the impetus of salvage ethnography and is subject to the etiolation and/or disappearance that sustains a logic of presence.

As a concept, ‘indigenous knowledge’ could refer to the signified, but to say that the signified embodies something doesn’t strictly fit into the economy of the sign. For a concept to embody something, it also couldn’t be a generalization, an a priori condition, or an Idea. So what is indigenous knowledge and how can it embody most of what remains of indigenous cultures? Embodiment implies an active materialization. In theater it is an exercise that seeks to repair the imaginary rift between body and mind. In patent law it is the specific implementation of a described invention. Both of these senses are oddly appropriate as the theatrical sense indicates that indigenous knowledge cannot be either a container or a content, but must partake in the difficult tension of embodied knowledge, when it is understood that much of the body and much of knowledge remain outside of the clear view of “knowing.” In terms of patent law, the question of the invention of tradition is raised in relation to the problem of ownership. The embodiment of an invention is an ambiguous proposal in that it quickly dissipates into the

³⁴ Both Edward Said and Frantz Fanon have discussed the nature of representation as being an objective form of evidence of those who represent, not those represented.

tedium of detailing all the possible permutations that discredit the rights of creation. Such a detailing of potential embodiment is non-totalizable. Embodiment, then, is both an opaque practice of mending rifts and a practice that is non-totalizable. This reading of Smith's quote may seem to stretch the letter a bit, but, in the paragraph directly following the one containing the quote, she addresses, as an issue of indigenous knowledge, biotechnology and the patenting of human life forms, indicating that indigenous bodies and their cell lines, threatened by commodification, are part of this 'most of what remains of indigenous cultures'. In this sense, indigenous knowledge and indigenous bodies are directly interwoven in the concept of code as embodied information. A biopolitically threatened remainder, the most of what is left of culture is divided in identification through terminology depending upon the discursive context. "The literature uses the word 'populations' rather than peoples and there is a distinction in international law between these two terms. As a marginalized population Maori are basically just another group or set of individuals and communities. As peoples Maori have claims to self-determination. There is a risk, in fragmenting small groups of Maori into categories of marginalization and vulnerability, of losing sight of the overall picture of Maori as an indigenous and marginalized people in New Zealand. The risk becomes especially important in discussions around the role of the Treaty of Waitangi in protecting Maori rights to develop as Maori and also to be treated as equal citizens" (209). This, then, is not the same call to salvage what is left for preservation and posterity and requires a closer look at the position of the researcher in relation to the activity of research.

In his Chapter, "Thought and the Exigency of Discontinuity," Maurice Blanchot traces a rough genealogy of research in the Western tradition (though he continually blurs the boundaries with Orientalist-esque references to Chinese and Indian texts), noting the ways that research at times lined up neatly with the demands of the University, and other times when research could not be adapted to the demands of academic speech. He offers in summation four possible reductions available to the researcher: (1) teacher; (2) scientist (with knowledge always being bound to collective forms of specialized research, in which he places: psychoanalysis, as a science of non-knowing; the social sciences; and basic scientific research); (3) activist researcher (in which research is combined with the affirmation of political action: praxis); (4) and writer (*The Infinite Conversation* 5). Dismissing the simplification that all of these ways of being are in fact always related, it is important to note that generally one aspect is highlighted. Smith, for instance, is clearly concerned with the third, the role of the activist researcher, though she takes into consideration how this positioning works in relation to the other three possibilities, "...getting the story right and telling the story well are tasks that indigenous activists and researchers must both perform. There are few people on the ground and one person must perform many roles--activist, researcher, family member, community leader--plus their day job" (226). Blanchot focuses on the relationship between thought and teaching, as it gets worked out in the mode of speaking: "...teaching is speaking, and the speech of teaching corresponds to an original structure, that of the master/disciple relation" (5). This is important for several reasons, but first and foremost it ensures that the movement of research is not an individual movement (the 'solitary researcher', an image that fallaciously corresponds to the fourth possibility, the writer), but places research itself somewhere in the middle of this relationship of speech.

In relation to Smith's project of decolonizing the academy, Blanchot's focus is significant in that Smith, herself, speaks from the position of an educator, "My own academic background is in education...The organization of school knowledge, the hidden curriculum and the representation of difference in texts and school practices all contain discourses which have serious implications for indigenous students as well as for other minority ethnic groups" (11-12). From an indigenous perspective, as is well known, the pedagogical relationship is one of deferential and deep attention to "Nature," a term that doesn't really fit, as it is more a relation to 'other beings'. Blanchot's version of this is poetry, in which one listens to the language of things, a language that take the form of a question, or has a face-to-face moment with what is both outside one's self and within one's self, as in Sisyphus' daily encounter with a rock, "All the truth of Sisyphus is bound to his rock; a beautiful image of the 'elementary' that is within him and outside him, the affirmation of a self that accepts being entirely outside itself, delivered over boldly and entrusted to the strangeness of the outside" (*The Infinite Conversation* 175). The "master" in this case "is the about-face of the rock."

The position of the master, for Blanchot, "represents a region of space and time that is absolutely other" (5). Like the line between two points, the speech that passes between is perpetually interrupted, never delivering the message sent, and this because the space in between is marked by "curvature." The difference between student and master in this relation of speech is different than between master and student, a distortion that "excludes any direct relation, and even the reversibility of relations," and, "will hereafter be the measure of every other distance and every other time." This interrelational space, for Blanchot, is what structures the encounter with the other, and this other is not recuperable into the sense of a big 'O' Other, that would be deeply human, or, at least, determine the bounds of the human, or divine. Rather, this other is a small 'o' other that is closer to the small 'b' beings that make up an indigenous "ontology" of plurality, never strictly delimiting what is allowed to be a being. This also means that the master is merely the position of the other and excludes any direct confrontation or relation of opposition with the student (who is not a slave), a curvature that leads to an infinite detour in speech and research.

Such incommensurability is, of course, not unknown in indigenous contexts. It is the explanation that has often been given for the conquest of the Americas by European colonizers.³⁵ But this use is directly confrontational and in a way that, like Smith's explanation of research managing the colonial encounter, privileges one side over the other. Here the distance between positions is also different depending upon which position one holds, but in a way that is fixed because the position of the master is occupied by the one who would know. The master seeks to know the Other. The incommensurability, then, is merely an abyss that has no other purpose than to be filled by the master's desire to know, a desire that leads to the management and codification through research in the colonial encounter, as discussed by Smith. And even as this encounter is also infinite, it is only so to the extent that the master is in the position to perpetually produce the Other in order to maintain the stability of the assimilation of knowing. Teaching, here, is an aggressive, voracious form of inquiry that produces the space of desire in order to continue

³⁵ See Tzvetan Todorov, *The Conquest of America: The Question of the Other*, 1992

coming to know, and to do so in a way that makes those known into an almost-the-same-as the master, marking the need to produce other Others.

Blanchot's version of the master, though, is not occupied. The master is the other, empty position, and research proceeds by attending to the interrelational space between the researcher and the infinitely unknown that is the other. This is a very different sense of encounter. "The master is destined, then, not to smooth out the field of relations but to upset it, not to facilitate the paths of knowledge, but above all to render them not only more difficult, but truly impracticable--something that the oriental tradition of the master shows rather well" (6). If research, when it takes itself as a stake, has the form of speech, what kind of speaking is this? It can be a talking back, but a back that responds not to an assumed centralized power, but to an empty position that is marked by a relation of infinity: interrelation. This also means that the unknown is neither subject nor object, and resistantly so, so that one never gets closer nor further away from what is sought, as what is sought is the teacher. In such an interrelation, one cannot use a language of assertion and answer, nor a linear language of simple development, but must use a language where language itself is at stake. This form of discontinuity in the language of research leads to the question: "How can one speak so that speech is essentially plural?" (8). This is, of course, a very difficult question to answer.

One answer that Blanchot gives is the empty speech of the chief, as described by Pierre Clastres in his ethnological text, *The Archeology of Violence*. Blanchot writes,

Among certain "primitive" peoples (those whose societies know no State), the chief must prove his dominion over words: silence is forbidden to him. Yet it is not required that anyone listen to him. Indeed, no one pays attention to the chief's word, or rather all feign inattention; and he, in fact, says nothing, but repeats the celebration of the traditional norms of life. To what requirements of primitive society does this empty language, which emanates from the apparent locus of power, answer? The discourse of the chief is empty precisely because he is separated from power--it is the society itself which is the locus of power. The chief must move in the element of the word, which is to say, at the opposite pole from violence. The chief's obligation to speak--that constant flow of empty speech (not empty, but traditional, sheer transmission [form]), which he owes to the tribe--is the infinite debt which effectively rules out speaking man's ever becoming a man of power" (*Writing of the Disaster* 9).

Tradition, form, emptiness. What is the position here? Is the researcher the one in the throes of the master's voice, who remains infinitely unknown, or in feigned ignorance of the speaking of the chief, who remains in debt? Two movements of infinity: the interrelation of disciple to master, as searching, and the deflection of listening from the mouth of the chief what is owed: tradition and interruption. But the encounter in the above account is between the ethnologist and the Indians. And his figuration of empty speaking will go on to become theory in the hands of great theorists. In the context of indigenous peoples, the relation to other beings is already a pedagogical one, so one of infinity, just as the relation of "contact" between colonizer and

colonized is one of interrelational space. Two versions that intersect in the encounter between anthropology and theory.

Research oscillates playing both sides. But research is itself a form of return, the word going back along etymological lines to a turning, the path back a re-turn, or to turn again, and again (25). “The circle, uncurled along a straight line rigorously prolonged, reforms a circle eternally bereft of a center” (*Writing of the Disaster* 2). Following the rhythm of this line that disturbs all other lines, research as turning again in the form of indigenizing, historicizes in order to turn back time against itself, to “research back”; moving both with and along the same path, it effaces the path. How does one hold open the ambiguity to the point where return no longer seeks meaning, freeing itself from constraints without achieving freedom? “One who goes astray moves steadily ahead and stays at the same point; [s/]he exhausts [her/]himself while under way, not advancing, not stopping” (Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation* 26). Etymology, of course, faces the risk of closing words back up into themselves, into a shell, while at the same time opening them up to play. Never a true history (if such a thing exists), this path back is a form of suspension, of simultaneously showing the movements that a term has made within the paradox of a meaning held together by difference and the immobility of that word which is forever broken loose from its referent. Wavering. No true freedom and no true subjugation. Being held tight and flowing loose. Maurice Blanchot has called such a dis-position *disaster*, the dis-aster, the bad or distancing star, that causes a wandering *even in fate*. A hole in the sky more black than a starless night. Absent. More light than light. “Thus it happens that, in speaking, we depart from all direction and all path, as though we had crossed the line,” and yet, “speech has its own way, it provides a path” (27). In a research that follows such an effacing path, lit up without any light, the unknown that is at stake is neither a subject nor an object. It is not the totality of all that is not known, as in science, that is sought, nor is it the mystery of who speaks, who searches, that is important. In such an aimless searching, the difficulty of encounter, who writes?

Researching Back

So how does one ‘research back’, given these conditions? Currently, it has been said that we are in the aftermath of *The Decade of the World’s Indigenous Peoples (1994-2004)* (Denzin 3). Some have given this decade an historical origin:

The pan-Indian perspective that arose in the struggles of the 1960s and 1970s (in the United States) increasingly took on distinctly transnational, transoceanic, and transhemispheric dimensions with the (contested) appearance of ‘indigenous’ as a category for organizing political and intellectual intervention in the wake of the United Nations’ 1993 ‘Year of Indigenous Peoples’ and the 2007 ‘Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples’ (a declaration opposed, it should be noted, by Canada, New Zealand, and the United States) (Byrd).

Or, again, “‘Indigenous peoples’ is a relatively recent term which emerged in the 1970s out of the struggle primarily of the American Indian Movement (AIM), and the Canadian Indian Brotherhood” (Smith 7). From being nominated ‘native’ to nominating one’s self as

‘indigenous’, we are told that the after-effect has produced a further turning, towards critically reassessing methods of research as defining indigenous political stakes, a re-course. A new decade has been announced! *The Decade of Critical Indigenous Inquiry*, and it is said, “Such inquiry should meet multiple criteria. It should be ethical, performative, healing, transformative, decolonizing, and participatory. It must be committed to dialogue, community, self-determination, and cultural autonomy. It must meet people’s perceived needs. It must resist efforts to confine inquiry to a single paradigm or interpretative strategy. It must be unruly, disruptive, critical, and dedicated to the goals of justice and equality” (Denzin 2).

This turn has taken the form of an active verb in the continuous mode: *indigenizing*. In choosing such an activity to highlight, there is acknowledgement of the inherent appropriability of another activity, that of research. Decolonizing methodologies would, in this account, be the active appropriation and re-tooling of a movement, the movement of meaning-making. Pronouncements made over the heads of natives are now being reworked into forms more amenable to indigenous peoples.³⁶ And, of course, the object produced by this movement (gathered if you will), the research, is put into play via discourse. One can no longer simply refer to “meaning” without taking into account its implementation. Between native and indigenous: re-research. Again, “the word itself...probably one of the dirtiest words in the indigenous world’s vocabulary...”

Picking up what is “probably” the dirtiest word, sucking off the filth and putting it right back to use in the same mouth. This is a project to get on board with! To make a word-sucking machine that both cleans and uses the filthy words in the same orifice (departure and arrival from the same point, or possibly a lack of distinction between the movement and the medium) is to raise the question of circulation in relation to return. To think again of origins, the language of the past hollowing itself out. The language in which the origin (non-historical past) speaks ‘indicates’ the future: like “the index finger with the nail torn out” (Blanchot, *The Writing of the Disaster* 37). Linked to post-colonial and anti-colonial forms of literature and analysis, Linda Tuhiwai Smith defines this research agenda as “...‘researching back’, in the same tradition as ‘writing back’ or ‘talking back’...” (8). Decolonizing practices can take many forms, at least as many forms as specific instances of colonization and probably more, and the practices she mentions, writing and talking back, open up interesting differences that hinge on the grammatical conjunction ‘or’ as presenting an alternative (writing *or* talking, where the implied meta-alternative, ‘inclusive *or* exclusive’, remains ambiguous). The call to write back has been linked to a postcolonial critique of the colonial canon, with Rushdie’s famous phrase³⁷ marking a movement from colonized margin to colonial center, circulation and return, while its uptake has taken on the form of a politics of reading, one which makes colonial texts available for re-writing

³⁶ This split has also been understood as the separation between third and fourth worlds, with the fourth world of indigenous subjects being more closely tied to biopolitical projects of survival and preservation and the third world natives being more associated with postcolonial politics of resistance. This division is important in some senses, as it marks the continuing split that Indigenous intellectuals from settler states note as separating their political claims from the claims of postcoloniality, the continuing presence of the settler. But it also functions as a way to partition, to separate the fields and interrupt dialog.

³⁷ “The empire writes back to the center.”

and subversion. Many different forms of analysis have been put to work on this project, and the debates within the field are intense and very complex. The familial and disciplinary relationships they maintain aside, *there is a constant*: the imperative to render colonial texts (and archives) vulnerable through active reading practices that lead to writing-otherwise. Writing with/in vulnerability. The reading eye can wound the text. What kind of a reader is this? What kind of writer? These questions become especially problematic when the force of discursive constitution is taken into consideration as mediated through colonial processes of representation.

So how does ‘writing back’ work in relation to these projects? “Every issue has been approached by indigenous peoples with a view to *rewriting and righing* our position in history. Indigenous peoples want to tell our own stories, write our own versions, in our ways, for our own purposes...to give testimony to and restore a spirit, to bring back into existence a world fragmented and dying” (Smith 31). Re-writing for Smith is about re-positioning within history through testifying to and restoring a lost spirit. Which spirit? How do we know it? Through its loss and exclusion from history. ‘To tell’. ‘To write’. Infinitives. ‘Our own’. ‘Our ways’. ‘Our purposes’. Possessives. To bring right back. Re-righting is about recovering lost politico-legal rights (dis-enfranchised), repairing or righting wrongs (dis-possessed), and returning to an upright position (dis-turbed). The spirit lies somewhere in these movements: the re and the dis. The desire of indigenous peoples for the infinitive suspends possession within the spirit of loss itself. *We want to write our own...*

(On the ‘re-’ and the ‘dis-’: response to the ‘dis-’ has been politicized as a ‘re-’, but what is the rhythm here? You take; we take back. You take; you give back. We give; we take back. We give; you give back. By what paths do these movements take place? Are they circular? Linear? Broken? Crossing? Forked? Winding? Strewn with debris? Overrun? Kempt? Wide or narrow? Framed by sagebrush like rabbit paths through the high desert? And how and when do these paths cross, if at all?)

Postcolonial and feminist critiques have shown the dangers of being-written. History has long participated in this project of writing others, of constituting a “correct” and “truthful” narrative of progress at the expense of those dialectically superseded by history. Historiography and ethnography, for instance, in the past, partook of the separation whereby politics and culture were kept distinct through the use of different disciplines to reveal different kinds of truth. It is through such structural oppositions and their co-determinations that writing (the graph) risks the death of the other through an active process of representation. This has been shown. But the desire to be re-positioned in history assumes a splitting between History in its exclusionary narrative and a more expansive sense of history. It is in this shadow of History where much of the work in genealogical historicizing and micropolitics takes place. But what does it mean *to bring back into existence a world fragmented and dying*? This doesn’t seem to be the same call to reinsert blood again into the dry archive, to find the authentic voice of the native, a project Gayatri Spivak critiqued the Subaltern Studies Group for attempting.³⁸ What has disappeared in the statement, if read literally, is a world fragmented and dying. Based on context there’s pressure to read this as saying that the moribund world needs to be restored in a holistic sense. Margaret Kovach reads the indigenizing project in precisely these terms, even calling for a return

³⁸ See Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, “Can the Subaltern Speak?” et al.

to orality.³⁹ But that wouldn't be reading this phrase by the letter. At other points Smith does make claims that sound like a return to wholeness, but here the disappearance is of *a world fragmented and dying*. The material remains of the colonial enterprise, the referential world that indigenous sign systems refer to, in its entropic existence, is the one that has disappeared. It has been replaced by life. Through discourses of life.

One of the ways this process of recovery has been figured and understood is through the idea of *bricolage*. This practice begins, though, in a structural distinction between savage and civilized minds, between bricolage and engineering (Levi-Strauss). The *savage* is said to work with the materials presented, making the best of the situation, ingeniously putting materials to use that weren't intended for those purposes. This presents a highly creative but essentially closed universe, limited to what is presented or the found object's narrow possibilities. The (Western) engineer, on the other hand, works from abstract rules and principles, putting materials to use that are, economically (and maybe ontologically), made for these purposes. This is supposed to be an open universe, as only through such abstraction can real change occur. The materials themselves point back to their production as well as anticipating their place in the malleable structure. The poststructural reevaluation of this distinction, based at least partially in the surrealist notion of an *objective hazard*, a fortuitous confluence or conjunction that occurs in the world or mind, the circumstances of which cannot fully explain the significance, however, lead to a reversal of paths: the opening of the bricoleur's universe so that a certain pastiche or Riemannian mode of connecting and juxtaposing was privileged.⁴⁰ The structural mode of engineering showed itself to be closed into a synchronic field, limiting it to a very narrow and questionable diachronic evolution, while bricolage allowed for these straightforward relations of time, space and structure to be ripped apart into a series of disjointed and non-matching pieces of cloth, sewn together like an unending quilt. Difference as text or writing, as discussed in chapter 1, is often understood in this way.

That society, culture, objects, experiences are now thoroughly understood as texts, as written, as part of an economy of inscription is a foregone conclusion it seems. To see how extensively rendered this compositional strategy has become, and to trace its relation to the concept of bricolage, it suffices to look at Michel de Certeau's recuperative attempts for the agency of the everyday reader/consumer in this situation. He writes, "The generalization of writing has in fact brought about the replacement of custom by abstract law, the substitution of

³⁹ The exigency of qualities "holistically integrated", of "holistic knowledge" as specifically indigenous, along with the recommendation that the book be read "as a whole" firmly places Kovach's strategy on the side of density and unity. Maurice Blanchot has shown that there are two possible responses when the form of research is questioned, one being a tendency towards unity, the other a tendency towards fragmentation. The "fragments" that do appear in Kovach's text, of which her biographical framing of the text in a self-reflexive mode of positioning testifies to, are indications of a greater unity, so that they are represented as metonymic figures of holism.

⁴⁰ Derrida's great reversal in which writing is made paradoxically prior to both the concept and the voice can be thought of in this way as well. Indeed, Levi-Strauss' usage of Saussure's "Image" as iterative and structurally reliant for the whole's coherence on the placement of each individual, but infinitely replaceable, part comes straight out of a certain notion of "primitive" cognition and problem solving. Levi-Strauss *The Savage Mind* p. 13 and *Myth* p. 5 and 35, Boas p. 18

the State for traditional authorities, and the disintegration of the group to the advantage of the individual” (*Heterologies* 169). In such a substitutional logic, what figure is produced in the act or as the emblem of the (unfortunately) excluded? Custom, traditional authorities, the group. He goes on to say, “This transformation took place under the sign of a “cross-breeding” of two distinct elements, the written and the oral.” In a psycho-linguistics mode, he locates these two distinct elements in the parallel, or possibly intersecting, activities of “reading meaning” and “deciphering letters.” At the heart of learning language lies a bifurcation that allows him to privilege one mode over the other, to give a precedence. “From the child to the scientist, reading is preceded and made possible by oral communication, which constitutes the multifarious “authority” that texts almost never cite.” Again, exclusion. This time the multifarious authority (as opposed to the unified?) replaced is oral tradition: cultural memory in the form of stories. Even putting aside de Certeau’s blatant neo-primitivism in his privileging of “nomadic” consumers,⁴¹ “poaching their way across fields they did not write,” the logic behind his analysis of the shift in emphasis in critical strategies to the textual shows a latent figure of the indigene at work in the pre-textual moment. This in the form of the excluded customary, traditional, tribal and orally (de)centered child, who will grow up one day into the scientist. The native/ anthropologist relationship “cross-bred” into the act of reading.

Is this another primal scene, or scenography of ontological composition, as Irigaray may call it? One thing that can be known for certain is that it doesn’t *take place*. Both in de Certeau’s analysis of the tactical/strategic relationship and in his claim that “reading has no place” can be understood a disintegration of location for the sake of temporal “freedom”. Explicitly he states that one of the models he has in mind for understanding reading in this way is Levi-Strauss’ *bricolage*.⁴² And in relation to tactics he writes, “No delimitation of an exteriority, then, provides it with the condition necessary for autonomy. The space of a tactic is the space of the other. Thus it must play on and with a terrain imposed on it and organized by the law of a foreign power. It does not have the means to keep to itself, at a distance, in a position of withdrawal, foresight, and self-collection: it is a maneuver ‘within the enemy’s field of vision,’ as Billow put it, and within enemy territory” (38). In the bricolage mode of detaching meanings from “their (lost or accessory) origin,” and as being tactically within “an enemy’s territory,” the reader as poacher has recourse only to the oral traditions that lie below and before the textual and discursive constraints of recognition and grid of power to project into the future a dispersed form of freedom. This is a methodical reduction of space as power, so that a privileging of time in the form of response to a context, to a “now”, furthers, in the intellectual realm, the uprooting and containment of indigenous peoples as being purely temporally constructed. Space and place

⁴¹ A term that both de Certeau and Deleuze develop from Blanchot’s distinction between the “nomadic” Jew and the “planted” Pagan, “The exigency of uprooting; the affirmation of nomadic truth. In this Judaism stands in contrast to paganism (all paganism). To be pagan is to be fixed, to plant oneself in the earth, as it were, to establish oneself through a pact with the permanence that authorizes sojourn and is certified by certainty in the land” *The Infinite Conversation* 125. Deleuze uses this sense of nomadism to discuss deterritorialization in any form, connecting the stateless Indian to the stateless Jew, effacing Blanchot’s sense of Pagan. de Certeau, as discussed in the third chapter, attempts to reconcile this contrast in the figure of the return of the walking Indian.

⁴² Another model he offers is the gay science of “medieval poets and romancers.”

become anathema to indigenous figures. The usual dichotomy of mobile/sedimentary that organizes so much of diasporic, postcolonial, textual, and theoretical critique seems a bad fit in relation to the temporally and geographically paradoxical situations of indigenous peoples, as being prisoners of Nation-building activities, both uprooted from a place, one that is always assumed to be, and romanticized as, pre-ownership; and drawing significant political power from the exceptional spaces of reservations and rancherías. As de Certeau's analysis shows, this fundamentally rests on the genetic dichotomy of speaking/writing. "If one calls bricolage the necessity of borrowing one's concept from the text of a heritage which is more or less coherent or ruined, it must be said that every discourse is bricoleur" (Derrida, "Structure, Sign, and Play")

To research (intransitive): to begin in night, to grope, entire being alight with nerves, attentive, for encounter, outside the ear grows, there's no other choice, no inside for refuge, no eye (too light sensitive: it shrieks or sleeps), no thing, neither afraid nor confident, secure nor insecure, the body an ear, to be for encounter, the ear a body, near, foreign...

Part 2: Repatriation

Repatriation as Interrelational Space: The Poetics of Non-Arrival

A difficult case, am I a circus rider on two horses?

Alas, I am no rider, but lie prostrate on the ground.

--Franz Kafka, (quoted in Judith Butler's "Who Owns Kafka?")

Repatriation, as the *élan* of indigeneity, is a movement, both in the political and physical sense. If there's an articulation of the activist and the researcher, in the way that Smith describes, it would be through this ambivalence in the referent of the term 'movement.' Both include bodies and their movements in space, in some way. One way that is particularly compelling is in walking. Walking requires a body to be engaged with space, at a differential pace, experientially involved with the environment, and opens up the difficulty of departure and arrival. Repatriation also problematically links ownership of heritage to the continuing investments of nation-states. One striking example was the controversy over the remains of Franz Kafka's body of work regarding where he/it belonged. In the essay, "Who Owns Kafka?," Judith Butler analyzes this legal situation regarding the stewardship of several boxes of Franz Kafka's unpublished original writings, in relation to the question of non-arrival that is a constant theme in Kafka's work. The boxes were left by Kafka to his editor, Max Brod, with the explicit instruction to destroy them upon Kafka's death, an instruction that Brod clearly ignored. Brod went on to publish a few of the manuscripts, but kept the rest away from the public. And, after a flight from Europe to Palestine in 1939, the writings passed from Brod to his secretary and lover, Esther Hoffé, who willed them to her daughters, Eva and Ruth, upon her death. In brief, Eva and Ruth attempted to put the writings up for auction, which led to the legal case, with several claimants to the ownership of the work stepping forward based on grounds of repatriation, including the National Library of Israel (on nationalistic grounds) and the German Literature Archive (on linguistic grounds).

Butler deconstructs both the National Library of Israel's and the German Literature Archive's claims of ownership-through-identity using Kafka's own writing. In the case of the National Library, Butler cites Kafka's own epistolary discussions around Zionism, showing the

way that he uses the idea as a site of “flirtation” with one of his lovers, Felice Bauer, and not an actual destination. As the letters develop, it becomes clear that Kafka has no intention of actually accompanying Felice to Palestine, as was initially agreed, in fact, he indicates that “he has doubts about Zionism and about ever arriving at that destination.” He eventually refers to Zionism as a “dream.” Butler notes that, for Kafka, “Palestine is a figural elsewhere where lovers go, an open future, the name of an unknown destination.” Franz Kafka, in his parable “My Destination,” has charted precisely such a path toward an unknown destination. In the parable, various types of miscommunication occur between a Master and a Servant. The Master calls for his horse to be brought from the stable, but the servant doesn’t understand the request, so the Master retrieves and saddles the horse himself. The Master then hears a trumpet sound in the distance and, not understanding the sign, asks the Servant what it means, but the servant, clearly understanding the question this time, hadn’t heard the trumpet call. At the gate, threshold of departure, the Servant stops the Master and to ask, “where are you riding to, sir?” to which the Master responds, “away from here, away from here, always away from here. Only by so doing can I reach my destination.” The servant misunderstands, thinking the Master has indefinitely referenced his destination, but the Master has definitely named his destination with a substantive, “away-from-here” (*weg-von-hier*). Concerned for the Master’s well-being, the servant notes that the Master has no provisions, to which the Master responds, “I don’t need any...The journey is so long that I will die of hunger if I do not get something along the way. It is, fortunately, a truly immense journey.”

In German, the term *W/weg* can mean either ‘away’ or a ‘path’, an ambiguity that is born out in the simultaneous substantializing of the destination through a place name (in German, the preposition) and the desubstantializing of the itinerary through the indication of an infinite journey (in German, the substantive). Butler reads the substantive away-from-here as transcending “the spatio-temporal conditions of any existing place.” If, indeed, this parable is a veiled reference to Palestine, Butler asks: for Kafka, is Palestine an imaginary place for Europeans, “not a populated place, not a place that can be populated by anyone?” In the failed speech, hearing, and understanding that structure the scene of departure towards such a depopulated landscape, echoing (by inverting) the starvation of Coyote discussed in chapter 3 who starves by staying and lives by going, the journey requires the starvation of the Master, and this because fortunately/luckily it is an *ungeheure* (immense-uncanny-monstrous-unfathomable) journey. Luck is here the monstrous aspect of the infinite, the journey into the infinite or an infinite journey, that, for Butler,

...will gesture towards another world. I say ‘gesture’ because it is the term that Benjamin and Adorno use to talk about these stilled moments, these utterances that are not quite actions, that freeze or congeal in their thwarted or incomplete condition. And that seems to be what happens here: a gesture opens up a horizon as a goal, but there is no actual departure and there is surely no actual arrival.

Non-arrival, non-departure, stilled movement caught in the gesture of miscommunication: these conditions make up *the poetics of non-arrival*. To assume that Israel has a claim to Kafka’s writings because he is Jewish ignores the distinction between Zionist and non-Zionist Jews,

casting the Jewish population outside the territory of Israel and into the *Galut*, “a state of exile and despondency that should be reversed, and can be reversed only through a return to Israel.” It also effaces the non-Jewish population that lives within the borders of Israel by conflating the State with Jewish identity. Despite the parallel risk of figuring indigeneity as bricoleur-empty speech-revolutionary..., of figuring Jewishness as nomadic,⁴³ a figuration performed in many theoretical contexts, in the context of the specific configuration of the State of Israel, it is important to note that, “Exile may in fact be a point of departure for thinking about cohabitation and for bringing diasporic values back to that region.” The *Patria* of repatriate is thereby questioned.

In relation to the German Literature Archive’s claims to Kafka’s writing based on his belonging to German literature, and, more specifically, to the German language, Butler writes, “though there is no attempt to say that he belongs to Germany as one of its past or virtual citizens [as the National Library of Israel is claiming in relation to the State of Israel], it seems that Germanness here transcends the history of citizenship and pivots on the question of linguistic competence and accomplishment.” To counter this, Butler points to Kafka’s own admissions to feeling no belonging to any language in particular. Being Czechoslovakian, writing in German, and regularly attending theater in Yiddish, Kafka is between linguistic identities.

We find in Kafka’s correspondence with his lover Felice Bauer, who was from Berlin, that she is constantly correcting his German, suggesting that he is not fully at home in this second language. And his later lover, Milena Jesenská, who was also the translator of his works into Czech, is constantly teaching him Czech phrases he neither knows how to spell nor to pronounce, suggesting that Czech, too, is also something of a second language. In 1911, he is going to the Yiddish theatre and understanding what is said, but Yiddish is not a language he encounters very often in his family or his daily life; it remains an import from the east that is compelling and strange. So is there a first language here?

Perpetually entering language from the outside, as a foreigner, no matter what the language, Kafka cannot be said to be comfortably at home, dwelling within any linguistic space. To be a foreigner in one’s own language is to participate in the *postvernacular*, in such a way that language acts as a conscious prosthesis, a making-be-at-home that registers the unfamiliar. Non-arrival, in this context, describes the linguistic predicament of being multilingual in a “pure” language, allowing Kafka to exploit “the syntactical rules of formal German to produce an uncanny effect,” but also to write “in a contemporary Babel where the misfires of language come to characterize the everyday situation of speech...” The problem of the detour of the message is often raised in Kafka’s writing, such as in the parable “An Imperial Message,” which “charts the travels of a messenger through several layers of architecture, as he finds himself caught up in a dense and infinite grid of people: an infinite barrier emerges between the message and its destination.” It is precisely such a detour of the message, echoed in the miscommunications in “My Destination,” that makes Kafka’s request to Brod, to destroy the posthumous remainder of

⁴³ See fn 12

his writing, a final enactment of his own work, a request not accomplished by Brod which led to the predicament over the proper location of these remains. It is also what destabilizes the German Literature Archive's claim that Kafka "belongs" to the German language.

Without conflating specific contexts--that of Palestine/Israel and the German language with that of the various conditions discussed by indigenous peoples seeking repatriation of remains, cultural artifacts, and other beings--and thereby effacing one or the other, the case of the remainder of Kafka's writing, as analyzed by Butler, shows the way Kafka's own sense of return (or deferral of return) acts as a form of research in itself, one opposed to the institutional and state-based forms of identification claims based on truth and belonging, through the poetics of non-arrival. Linking this more generally to research as interrelational space and the repatriation of research through indigenizing practices, what are the trajectories, what is the itinerary, of such movements? The *where* and the *when* of repatriation have been mediated by *research*, with the competing sides of a debate seeking to make claims as to the true place of repose. As mentioned, these two sides are often structured in an asymmetrical power relationship, with one side (subject) actively researching the other (object). The translations of bones, funerary objects, and cultural artifacts in their various networks of physical research *to* centers of higher learning, for instance, have distinctly different temporal and spatial orientations and trajectories than in the networks moving *from* those same centers in the mode of return. To move across such interrelational spaces is always to move doubly in the sense that each network is irreversible in the terms of the separation caused by power relations. There is no direct route for return, in other words, as the movement must pass through the magical translations that have to do with subjectivity and objectivity, boundaries of metamorphosis and thresholds of the sacred and the profane. Distortion and curvature.

Edward Said has called such a structural deployment of unequal space-time relations *exteriority* (41). It is the surface or exterior relation of the text to what it describes, the "existential and moral fact" of being Outside, that irrevocably imagines and then imagines-into-being through discursive operations the impossibility of contemporaneous and commensurable movements. Through distance, the text enters into the representation, marking it with its own impossibility. The very fact that a colonial entourage of scholarly, spiritual, aesthetic, educational and military representatives *could* go to the colony, and not vice versa, shows clearly the separation that founds and organizes interrelational space. But research goes beyond being merely the confrontation of enemies, even if such confrontation is now often multi-dimensional. Such a one-to-one confrontation can have the tendency to unify through assimilation or destruction. If research is understood to be related somehow to occupation it is because research took the form of occupation through colonial, discursive means, genetically producing the conditions of interrelationality through research and "the [micro] deployment of geopolitical awareness" (Said 12). Where and when? Here and now, where and when the here and now are both deferred. Distortion and curvature, "...a separation that will hereafter be the measure of every other distance and every other time."

Said has described such unification through discourse as the mode of transforming what is strange into the familiar. For him, it is the "written statement" that has presence for the reader, a presence made possible through exclusion, displacement, and the making superfluous of the "real" object of research. This unifying-through-rendering-familiar by Western discourse

operates by making visible and clear, distinctly situating what is “here” and what is “there.” Geopolitical awareness through an optics of the imagi-nation, yet, speaking is not seeing. “Knowing by the measure of the “unknown,” approaching the familiarity of things while preserving their strangeness, relating to everything by way of the very interruption of relations is nothing other than hearing speech and learning to speak” (Blanchot, *The Infinite...*6). The description of knowing as a mode of speech by Blanchot, of approaching things through interruption and detour, inverts the formula Said describes of approaching the strange by rendering familiar, by fixing the object through the rules of clarity. It also shows that relationality, however one might understand this term, is not the same as inter-relationality--read perhaps as that which is between relations, respecting difference without attempting to assimilate it⁴⁴--, and cannot be a solution to the problem of the discursive production of distorted space-time that Said describes. It offers, perhaps, only a new unification.

Can repatriation so easily be understood as political in origin or sequestered to a political discussion then? Listening to the turn in the term ‘re-patriate’, *Patria*, or the fatherland, from the standpoint of the Greek city-state, applied only to barbarians who had a common home, while the political life was reserved for Greeks who had a common *polis* (a free city-state), their social association uprooted from the land (Liddell). This is one beginning of history’s distinguishing itself from story (renaming it ‘myth’ and itself ‘truth’) and the engine of history, politics, delimiting its field as separate and separating from the natal place. Insider and outsider were stabilized as positions based on relative relations to the other with an imbrication of discourses holding a hierarchical imbalance in place. In this sense, to re-patriate is an a-political act, or more precisely a de-politicizing one (literally removing or being removed from the *polis*), moving something or someone outside of the sphere (and seat or non-origin) of politics by pointing towards a land-based origin with its different forces. Would the current trend to think everything in political terms, as opposed to the natural or essential, be a matter of displacing this center-to-margin relationship? Would it be appropriating what happens outside of the polis in terms set by those who speak from the center? The ongoing battle waged against essentialism and naturalization can be thought within this originary scene, amongst others. “One can date it back to the immemorial days when a group of mighty men attributed to itself a central, dominating position vis-a-vis other groups; overvalued its particularities and achievements; adopted a projective attitude toward those it classified among the out-groups; and wrapped itself up in its own thinking, interpreting the out-group through the in-group mode of reasoning while claiming to speak the minds of both the in-group and the out-group” (Trinh, *Woman, Native, Other* 1). Marx and Engels tell an origin story as well, of the origins of both history and politics, history arising from the physical need to reproduce life, placing nature in the mode of appropriated other, and politics arising from the division of labor, organizing society across the representative division that Trinh notes in the above quote (Engels). In these scenes of emergence, spaces are understood to exist before politics and after nature as each gets conceived.

In origin narratives that mark the bifurcation of Man and Nature, there is never a way in nor a way out of such an emergence: both event and non-event, this imagined pre-cultural space is a pedagogical mechanism that is meant to exist in the infrathin distance between history and

⁴⁴ “...an exorbitant relation or a relation that is not a relation.”

nature. A duality exists here between the creator and the one who knows, the former working through creative destruction while the latter also creates but within the confines of existing knowledge edifices. Emergence and theories of emergence rest on this oscillation to explain what is inexplicable, how something comes into existence.⁴⁵ Indigenizing as both de- and re-politicizing moves across these stories of emergence, temporally through the pre-political and spatially through the a-political, as the Native gets redrawn in the margin to center relationship. ‘Politics arises from nature’. ‘Nature is a political construction’. Both of these statements in juxtaposition reveal the weakness of emergence. Both are correct and both are wrong. “The new, because it cannot take its place in history is also that which is most ancient: an unhistorical occurrence to which we are called upon to answer as if it were the impossible, the invisible--that which has always long since disappeared beneath the ruins” (Blanchot, *The Writing of the Disaster* 37).

The a-political is never stable. Instead, moving towards effacement of the political is a political gesture, following the (earthen) umbilical cord. And the political in its sociality perpetually seeks to reconstitute the *Patria*. Moving back towards the root, in this sense, is to disappear from the light of democratic reason, justice and economics. The dawning of the clear light of day is arrested. Quietness. Intervenes suddenly in the middle of the day.

See all things howsoever they flourish
Return to the root from which they grew
This return to the root is called Quietness

--Lao Tzu, Tao-te-ching, (quoted by Trinh T. Minh-ha in *Woman, Native, Other*)

Transcription and Transcendence

Writing has long been associated with death and disappearance. Understood to take place on both sides of the representative gesture, disappearance affects both the author and the subject. To be written is to be fixed into an image, to “pass through the toilette of the dead,” or be embalmed (Barthes). Thus the perceived need to re-write, to re-vive. The initial transcriptional process was made emblematic in relation to the colonial archive in the form of collecting, arranging and grammaticizing indigenous cultures and languages. An act of preservation, salvage ethnography, for example, holds within it the anticipation of disappearance that marks the colonial approach to many indigenous peoples, particularly in settler states. “Over and above rendering local knowledge invisible by declaring it non-existent or illegitimate, the dominant system also makes alternatives disappear by erasing and destroying the reality which they attempt to represent” (Smith 103). Preserve and make disappear, two acts of genocide in tandem. To write carries within it this double posture of disappearance. This is the risk of ethno-graphy.

The writing about and enacting through discourse, as well as the anticipation of disappearance, makes the call and response form of exchange of words and letters, ‘writing back’, one structured by the question *how do we come back from the abyss?* Especially when the

⁴⁵ See Friedrich Nietzsche, “On Truth and Lying in an Extra-Moral Sense” for a tongue-in-cheek and highly reflexive explanation of how socio-political organizations and the values of truth and falsehood co-determinately emerged.

abyss is a black hole from which nothing escapes. Attempting to register your children as full-blooded indians and being told that they are at most 99%, because, due to the history of genocide, colonization and rape, *being a full-blooded California Indian is impossible*: a black hole.⁴⁶ Semiotically, the issue has been raised in terms of the disappearance of referential worlds and the status of unhinged signs and signifying systems. Partially collected taxonomies from languages with few or no native speakers; idiosyncratic transcriptural recording systems by professional and amateur ethnographers and ethnomusicologists; technological limitations of A/V recording devices and the artificiality of forms of preservation; the massive amount of mostly uncategorized (or categorized according to outdated theoretical groupings) archival documents (the immensity of the collections); in situ hyperreal displays merging “authentic” artifacts with produced contexts; competing rationalizations for systematic organization, together make up the post-apocalyptic terrain of material culture, the matter of current projects of recovery. Combine this with the recent critiques of representational practices, including a critique of signification itself as a manner of critique, and the dumping ground of broken signs that acts as a trope in postmodernism takes on material force for indigenous research agendas. When the ground is a field of fragmented signs returned to materiality, this fragmented field itself also threatened with disappearance as evidenced by polemics concerned with what to do with such collections, the problem of representation and the remains of its critique, after being rent by such reading practices, particularly when the question of the real is raised in relation to the anticipation of disappearance, creates a vertiginous position for indigenous reading and writing subjects.

These aren't simply shifting grounds, the ground is a little more than merely unstable, it is more like an Escher drawing where each assumed plateau and stabilizing height becomes a new abyss and loss of bearings. And even this reading is too much based on phenomenological figure/ground reversibility or “multi-stable phenomena,” while Escher at his best produces pure surface and irreversible folds, topologically like the infinity of the moebius strip or Klein Bottle. The fragment as surface-to-infinity. His “Day and Night,” for instance, though seemingly representing a diurnal pattern in a figure/ground relationship between white and black migrating ducks, merges also with the landscape. The zero point of indiscernibility between roughly symmetrical agricultural fields, black ducks flying towards the daylight, white ducks flying towards the night, combines them in a migratory movement in multiple directions. Day into night, night into day. North into south, south into north. Sky into earth, earth into sky. Property into nature, nature into property. Black into white, white into black. Transversally, these becomings are further destabilized when crossed by other becomings: duck into sky, sky into duck. Field into bird, bird into field. River into wing, wing into river. Lines. Patterns. Textures. Shades. So that all stable points of orientation are not simply upended, but become the neutral point whereby each opposite becomes the dream of the other as effected by a multitude of other points of articulation. No horizon, no twilight, no border, no skin. Is this dis-position terrifying or liberating? Without an horizon, flying and falling are the same motion.

Birds were people one time. Two birds went around the world. One bird was over here. And he talked back and forth with the other bird, over there.

⁴⁶ A story told to me by my mother about a friend of hers.

When they came to a place where they couldn't just get through (like the white man has a place you cannot get through, such as a gate--it's closed), they had to stay there and gamble and beat their way through. If they won they could go on (like a white man in a war: the beat man takes over, something like that). Those birds beat all the different animals. They sang like this:

*one bird went over the blue sky
it's blue as far as you can see
nobody knows what's behind the sky
he went over the sky
just to show the others what he could do.*

--from Songs of the California Indians

A fragment? A song? A story? It is unclear, at first, how to name and where to situate this text about gambling birds taken from a record insert which explains, comments upon and offers the lyrics for the native California Indian songs etched and subsequently heard on the vinyl grooves, protected by the sleeve and cover. *Protected. Explained. Commented upon. Offered in lyrical form.* And obviously *produced* somehow. Each one of these verb phrases, whether physically altering or significantly interpreting, both as acting upon some thing, a material perhaps, can lead into a different critical inquiry of such activity. But critical inquiry itself, as activity, is also acting upon some thing, transforming it. It doesn't matter whether this thing is physical or not, but only that it is actively transformed. So critique produces its object as well, but to what end? Do ends matter? What is rendered, both in terms of material and product, in the mode of making, through the activity of critical inquiry, and who or what does such rendering serve? This sense of material, understood in this way, as rendered actively, always situates such materiality in the mode of potentiality. The material then, as counterpoint to product, is thus always the obverse of meaning. It lies in wait for its historical and active uptake, its differentiation, even if sometimes it resists or falls back into possibility.

Collapsed into language and meaning through transcription and translation, the above quote about birds gambling holds something of the spirit of risk and challenge. In the successive acts of recording, listening, translating, grammaticizing, and hierarchically structuring the "song", getting through the white man's gate, so to speak, is to pass into meaning, history and the realm of thought. It is to be groomed for viewing: a cadaver. "We have embalmed our speech like a mummy, to preserve it forever" (Barthes 3). What is inevitably lost in this process of transcription, as discussed in chapter 1, is the body and its "intellectually empty" pleasures. But what happens in the instant of listening to a recording of a voice, before the preparations of the dead are made? What happens in the moment that the mortician first looks at the cadaver, before seeing it as a body of work or a person? Does anything of this moment survive in the work of dressing, of transcription? How does one hear silence, and what kind of silence allows itself to be heard? Playing off of Caught in "the trap of scription," the obverse process of *listening* to such transcription for this prior moment involves a work of re-membering the body.

Transposing this problem, of moving from speech to writing, onto song, it is less the desire for the other, in conversation, manifested in the body's fragile innocence and frantic flailing towards another body in its desire to be heard, that is lost. It is, rather, the proximity of language and voice, what Barthes called the "grain of the voice", the sung-in-place as it relates to a recognizable and yet anonymous singularity, a specific "I" who sings, that is lost. This "I" of the voice can be sung by anyone for whom a particular language meets a voice, where there is "a double posture, a double production: of language and music." (Barthes, "The Grain of the Voice" 269). An impersonal individual, as evidenced by the connection of one's diction to an originary "gesture-notice," which would carry the body over the vibrations of pleasure to the listener, the singer with grain has no personality (271). Gesture, often considered to be the workshop of language, is the plastic space that exists *prior* to the technology of speaking or any form of territory, in which meaning has yet to sediment or exists in a primal state: the hot magma of images in Nietzsche's account of language formation, for instance. What takes refuge in this glittering fragment of a song? Impersonally, the pleasure I give myself, in hearing/feeling my own voice vibrate, occurs at this plastic site where "*a language encounters a voice*" (269). I would say where language "first" encounters voice; the technology of how it makes it work. This encounter is itself frozen in an image that puts language and music in competition. Speaking in the "story" gets the birds far, but singing as gambling takes them over the sky itself.

For Barthes, this grain of the voice rubbing against language is what is "past (or previous to) the meaning of the words;" the closest site with any difference "from the depths of the body's cavities, the muscles, the membranes, the cartilage...as if a single skin lined the performer's inner flesh and the music he sings" (270). A sameness so near that it is separated from itself by an infrathin distinction. Yet, even in its past-ness, in its relation to genus in the form of a "genosong," somehow, for Barthes, it is not original.

How do "I" *hear* this song in reading the transcription and translation of the words? The fact of translation makes this an even more difficult question, because the language from which it is translated is considered to be a dead or dying language. To speak indigenously is now to be considered to be participating in a symbolic world (still) on the threshold of extinction.

But what about "to sing" in an indigenous language? Especially considering that singing in the old stories always came first, before word, land or body. Everything was sung into being and had its own song. Is there a double posture still available in reading this song? Have the meaning, history and thought, which this song has now passed into, closed the circle? Captured and embalmed the gesture completely? Has the "toilette of the dead" done its work? In the reading of a transcription and translation of a song imagined to be caught in the precarious moment of the demise of a people, from death to death, this song is carried over through various acts of preservation: from recording to transcription. The grain of a voice that no longer has a body (of people) to speak it, the double posture of erasure through recording and erasure of the body through killing, inverts the double production into a double murder. Between the birds speaking here to there and speaking there to here, in the place where I listen or read, physically, linguistically and intellectually, there is a speaking and singing relationship caught up in the question of how I listen to such a vulnerable voice. As a third term, then, singing comes into the much discussed reading and writing relationship: in the form of a fragment.

This speaking between here and there in the singing about birds who sing about flying over the sky, the horizon of sight itself, lacks meaning. Without a horizon to orient oneself flying and falling become the same movement. In this trans-cription and trans-lation, re-read as loss of orientation, there is a mere hint at how one can possibly confront the impassable, what I understand Marina Tsvetaeva to be saying when she writes of the “impossible” task to, “express the sigh a-a-a- with word (that is meaning). With words/meanings to say the sound such that all that remains in the ear is a-a-a-” (Lewandowska). Orifice to orifice: mouth to ear and back again, there are no straight lines from here to there nor to get to where one is going. The way is blocked. The path and the medium are made the same through impasse. And what can be shown is, despite what many ethno-semiologists might think,⁴⁷ the indigenous world is not cyclical. It is, however, always problematically marked by the play of origins that moves between the linear and the cyclical, which I find provocatively invoked in every detour and moment of impasse. Fragments.

Two birds went around the world. One over here talked with the other over there. Came to a place they couldn't pass through. Sang, “one went over the sky just to show the others what he could do.” So many movements, directions, geographies. Did they circle the globe? Travel around? If they did this simultaneously, how near or far were the here and there? If they were separated, how did they arrive at the same impasse? And, more importantly, how can singing and gambling about going over the sky allow one to pass through/over? The best I can do is follow them in their erratic movements: a tracker picking up a broken trail. For this reason, the bone game that the birds are playing, as risk in the moment of impasse, forcing them to sing about going beyond the most stable horizon itself, the blue sky, *just to show what he could do*, is a figure of research. An old song sung to hide the pattern of the bone playing pieces in the hands of the singers, on these bone playing pieces of the game and in these impasses, with a smirk, unsettled, I will ruminate until the tooth falls out, hoping to hear an a-a-a-a-

In saying this toothlessly, ruminating, and mumbling, ‘I’ will attempt such a risk by turning to the work that language has done on itself, such that listening with a sensitized ear means to ask how the sensitive “objects” of cultural patrimony and scientific work, the sacred, can even begin to be spoken about? Teeth become bones in the toothless mouth, rolling around, making us mumble. When listening to a recording of a conversation, in order to transcribe a voice, how does one hear a mumble? How do you transcribe it? In the middle of an argument, where reason and winning are at stake, what happens when someone stumbles over their tongue? How does this change the mode of listening? A mouth without teeth, full of bones. An ear without drums, full of resonances. For me, these are questions of research as material form, a glistening trail of fragments. In this way, “it is necessary that, leaving aside vast regions of darkness..., a slender thread of light search out not other symbols but the very fissure of the symbolic” (Barthes, *Empire of Signs* 4). An old problem of representation traced in its becomings and impasses by another light, not its “realities,” the material specificities of this linguistic work, takes research down a forking path of materials, theories, methodologies and disciplines to be used (hopefully despite themselves). Encounters and moments of contact, proliferating phantasms of what could’ve been, or is, research is a forking path. This infinite

⁴⁷ Todorov, Sahlins, et al.

maze of research, language and materiality makes it necessary for me to find my own Ariadne's thread so that I can return home.⁴⁸ For this I must listen! Ho. (rattle shakes)

The Return Home

I had to leave that space I called home to move beyond boundaries, yet I needed also to return there. We sing a song in the black church tradition that says, 'I'm going up the rough side of the mountain on my way home.' Indeed the very meaning of 'home' changes with experience of decolonization, of radicalization. At times, home is nowhere. At times, one knows only extreme estrangement and alienation. Then home is no longer just one place. It is locations. Home is that place which enables and promotes varied and everchanging perspectives, a place where one discovers new ways of seeing reality, frontiers of difference. One confronts and accepts dispersal and fragmentation as part of the construction of a new world order that reveals more fully where we are, who we can become, an order that does not demand forgetting...[Yet, on crossing the tracks to perform services for the more privileged] There were laws to ensure our return. Not to return was to risk being punished. (bell hooks, "Choosing the Margin as a Space of Radical Openness" 205-206).

Neither object nor subject, because it moves, even while at rest. What is at stake in research? Return of/to the unknown. And the relation between the unknown and the familiar is one of infinity, a perpetual interruption such that in a moment of stillness it is only interruption itself that gets interrupted for a moment. "We must try to recognize in this "shattering" or "dislocation" a value that is not one of negation. It would be neither privative nor simply positive" (Blanchot, *The Infinite*...308). Neither researcher (subject) nor researched (object). To begin in dislocation, to have dislocation as a beginning position, to dislocate--as the ensuing gesture: an infinitive mode. Irreversible. Asymmetrical. Asynchronous. Incommensurable. But unrecoverable?

What better way is there to imagine research as interrelationality? Both politically contested and sought as origin. The form and politics of research. Two movements. Imagined-into-reality. Research is *the form in which thought moves to encounter what it is seeking*, and "probably one of the dirtiest words in the indigenous world's vocabulary."

Dislocated: this is always the beginning position, as well as the first gesture, of every movement of repatriation, of every repatriative movement. To return. Must have left. Dislocated. Must there be a place, a Patria, to return to? Or a time? The same one that was left? Who or what returns? What transformations have taken place a-long the journey? What absences have been made, and what have these absences made or unmade? And by which path

⁴⁸ Nietzsche's prophecy, "A labyrinthine man never seeks the truth, but only his Ariadne," as quoted by Barthes in *Camera Lucida*, follows along his "slender thread of light" quoted above. A beautiful figure for a research that acknowledges its own affective beginnings. As will be shown, my own movement between loss and still-ness in their relation to the ambiguous identity of indigeneity follows a similar type of thread.

(s) does one return? Movement to movement, one (emptily) moves here within, alongside, through a (socio-political) movement. Many of the claims by and stakes for indigenous politics, peoples and their concerns are currently fueled by a generalized movement of return. Language revitalization projects; calls and protests for the return and restoration of sacred sites; legal battles over the repatriation of remains, artifacts, and even blood; land and title claims; and recovery of individual and social health (physical, mental, spiritual, cultural...); as well as the various sites, materials and things being contested, all participate in this general movement. These specific movements take place across a diverse spectrum from local to international and within various funding and otherwise material networks. The abstract movement of return works doubly as socio-political movement and physical translation/transformation.

In 2009 he witnessed, by standing next to or standing in, hard to say, a quiet and mostly unnoticed political demonstration lead by Japanese Buddhists sitting silently outside of the Phoebe Apperson Hearst Museum on the UC Berkeley campus for-the-return-of-Ohlone-remains. (Were they silent? He seems also to remember them drumming, but, oddly, this drumming is silent as well) The Buddhists were joined by activists who quietly handed out flyers and held Native American flags. The Muwekma Ohlone, lacking federal recognition and having been understood anthropologically to be extinct as a people, are related to the Bay Area Shellmounds--large, many thousand year old burial mounds most famously, and perhaps ironically, memorialized by Shellmound Street and the open air shopping mall in Emeryville.⁴⁹ These mounds were the primary source of the massive collection of human remains housed below the Hearst museum, having been excavated during the construction of the Bay Area. Federal legislation in the form of the Native American Graves and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) has been clear that remains of Native Americans held by public institutions are to be repatriated to culturally affiliated tribes. These tribes, of course, are understood to be federally recognized anthropological and/or political entities. With the current Ohlone people meeting neither of these criteria, the lion's share of culturally identified remains (a small percentage of the remains overall, as most lie in the ambiguous state of culturally un-identifiable) seemed to have no federally recognizable home to return to. Patria.

Two instances of the concrete, of action and mobility, in specific *contexts* with *real* players: here the political (protest) and the natural (objects) are related through return. Movement to/for movement: across the many contexts and localities, holding tight to a sense of uniqueness of place and position, this general bi-movement is understood to be a process of 'indigenization'. Bringing bodies together in the (per)form(ance) of a unified movement asking for the return or movement of other bodies back-into-place. The frictional space between and

⁴⁹ Over the past few years, protests of Black Friday, the first day of the Christmas shopping season and the biggest day for sales and consumer gluttony, have been staged at the Emeryville Mall, site of what was the largest Shellmound in the Bay Area, in the name of the Ohlone people.

articulating/articulated by these two movements--more or less in unison--produces rhythmic possibilities and must be understood in terms of intimacy or lack thereof. This relates return to the ear and the heart. Between the socio-political movement calling for return and the movement of return itself: rhythm. The political or social and the natural: one becomes lodged in the other where form and politics meet.

Zora Neale Hurston has explored the difficulty of setting out on a journey of discovery from the unknown,

The theory behind our tactics: “The white man is always trying to know into somebody else’s business. All right, I’ll set something outside the door of my mind for him to play with and handle. He can read my writing but he sho’ can’t read my mind. I’ll put this play toy in his hand, and he will seize it and go away. Then I’ll say my say and sing my song (*Mules and Men* 4).

A dirty word: *research*. Site of both political contestation and the search for origins, it traverses many fields, disciplines, and methodologies--territories. As a movement, what Zora Neale Hurston described as “formalized curiosity,” research has as one of its guiding images a return home or a home to head out from and to continue to return to. In her particular journey home, of her departure/return, she writes “I went off in a vehicle made out of corona stuff” (*Dust Tracks...* 174). From dwelling in the “marble halls” of Barnard College to the place where she was “pitched headforemost into the world” and “landed in the crib of negroism,” Hurston herself didn’t “go back there so that the home folks could make admiration over me because I had been up North and to college and come back with a diploma and a Chevrolet” (*Mules and Men* 3). In a way, she said, it would not be a new experience for her. But whenever there is recognition of “ways” there is always another way. Perhaps *in a way not new* points to a way that slips the new and not new dichotomy. The uncanniness of returning home, as the cliché knows so well, has about it that Gertrude Steinian sense of *there’s no there there*.⁵⁰ But Hurston, “hurried back to Eatonville because [she] knew that the town was full of material and that [she] could get it without hurt, harm, or danger.” If the direction of research as return marks two irreversible, incommensurable and yet simultaneous in-a-way-that-is-asynchronous movements, how can Hurston’s way-that-is-not-new be thought in relation both to the home and large amounts of material waiting for her? “It is poking and prying with a purpose. It is a seeking that he who wishes may know the cosmic secrets of the world and they that dwell therein” (Hurston, *Dust Tracks* 174).

Prying with a purpose, but the cosmic has long been related to dwelling, connected either through analogy, magical inscription or the force of rhythm and repetition to protect and orient. Where and when? Here and now. Felix Guattari and Gilles Deleuze have together mapped the three simultaneous moments whereby the forces of chaos get marshaled into a world by passing

⁵⁰ Stein is referring to her birthplace, Oakland, CA. It always strikes me as ironic that the border between Berkeley and Oakland is marked by two large, metal sculptures; one that reads “HERE” on the Berkeley side and another that reads “THERE” on Oakland’s. Clearly, and emphatically, there’s a “THERE” there.

through the home, through the making of a home by following the thread of a refrain. This is for them a “Native” or “Natal” movement, “along sonorous, gestural, motor lines...” (316). Related to a land, “it always carries earth with it,” and, through markings, through the sketch of a circle, or through singing a certain tune, a territory is chalked out. Chaos, territory, cosmos. What are the “cosmic secrets of the world” and who “dwells within”?

Going further back, Friedrich Nietzsche has likewise mapped the movement of research in his essay, “On Truth and Lying in an Extra Moral Sense,” through a series of tongue-in-cheek emergence narratives. From the fabulistic scope of a Universe of innumerable stars in which insignificant humans produce an equally insignificant knowledge; to a pseudo-Hobbesian contract in the form of the legislation of language in order to produce the binding values of truth and falsehood for the sake of communally mediated self-preservation and to escape the insecure need for dissimulation; to the construction of a series of cold, death-related conceptual edifices of knowledge (pyramid, columbarium, spider web, sepulchre) out of the hot, malleable stuff of *primitive* metaphors; what is mapped out is likewise the relations between chaos (the unknown or mysterious ‘x’ in this case as represented by and representative of “nature” in its variable forms), territory (in the form of a “primitive metaphor world”), and cosmos (the bony, cube-shaped conceptual die related in its necessary throw to the stringently delineated spheres of the gods of knowledge). What is the primitive in Nietzsche’s account? It is the *infinitely refracted echo of a primeval sound--man*. In the catachrestic mode of producing a sense of originality without any true referent, the desire for truth and knowledge, in a word, research, is for Nietzsche the plastic form of “man” in contention with nature. “Man” echoes while “nature” remains infinitely silent. The original incompleteness of every system of knowing marked by this silence, what makes possible this arbitrary connection between the word and the stimulus, for instance, is, by the same tendency and in the same mode as what makes it possible, forgotten. To know and to forget, to survive and to kill, partake of the same material and gesture with the same motion. Like a spider, the human draws this delicate material from itself, a gossamer form that makes impressions/intuitions and later concepts possible. Where and when? Here and now. Mathematically divided conceptual sky thanks to the time-space forms that make experience possible. Time-space blocs. Research is here caught *between* paths then: between the all-too-human and the inhuman.

With eyes wide open and ears stopped shut, the researcher living in *his* hut next to the edifice of knowledge seeks a protected space, a place, through which the chaotic forces of the cosmos are redirected and domesticated into life-preserving forces. What is needed in the service of truth, knowledge, reason and life is the humble, mildly curious, and silently industrious tinkering of the researcher to fill in the cracks and thereby be sheltered from the storm. Moving and remaining still, going out into the field and puttering around in the hut in the shadow of the existing fortifications: both of these activities rely upon a sense of repose, a desire for repose, which comes along with the comfort of a song or story. Radicalizes it in fact in order to push it to the extreme and sync it up with a world without gaps, where each conceptual god remains in the appropriate sphere of knowledge. To the depths of the microscopic world and to the heights of the telescopic world, the researcher works within a continuous shaft of holistic

regularity.⁵¹ Singing while you drive or whistling while you work; song in the service of the day and activity; a supplement to seeing ‘the right path’.

With eyes wide shut and ears stopped open, the artist playing on the beams of the structure of knowledge, “smashes it apart, scattering it, and then ironically puts it together again, joining the most remote and separating what is closest...” (Nietzsche 255). This shifting of the boundary-stones of intellectual territories is effectively dreaming-in-the-middle-of-the-day. Life in the service of art such that (again consistency), “the waking of a mythically excited nation...by the *constant action* of marvels” [my ital] leads to an experience where, “neither the house, nor the stride, nor the clothing, nor the clay jug betray the fact that need invented them...” (256). But this clear distinction between reason and art, research and “playing with serious matters,” waking and dreaming, perhaps already betrayed by their opposing faces of different continuities, breaks down through a series of interruptions brought about by figures of dis-abilities of the artist-researcher.

When we built it, the spirit came out of the fire pit. We tore it down because we wanted to be able to reconstruct it if we could manage it in the future. After the house was taken down, the spirit returned to the earth (LaPeña 19).⁵²

Zora Neale Hurston describes how her benefactor, “an earnest patron of the arts,” who afforded her \$200 a month to do research, would reprimand her for her garrulity and lack of sincerity with a return to stories. “She was just as pagan as I. She had lived for years among the Plains Indians and had collected a beautiful book of Indian lore...she would take this book from the shelf and read me something of Indian beauty and restraint” (*Dust Tracks...*176). Beauty and restraint here mark a rest from speaking. Hurston, an African American woman trained as an ethnographer to collect stories, “lies” as they were called, from rural black folk in the early twentieth century, is here educated on how to listen through using the collected materials from Plains Indians. Just as pagan as I. “I was glad when somebody told me, ‘You may go and collect negro folk-lore’” (*Mules and Men* 3). Listening to the stories taught her how to research, how to find and hear other’s stories. And it is no coincidence that Native stories were called upon to establish a sincere ear and voice.

“Then I had to have the spy-glass of Anthropology to look through at that.” Fitting her “tight like a chemise”, Hurston couldn’t see the stories for wearing them, even going so far as to

⁵¹ The question posed by ruptures in such a space-time continuum, at the subatomic level in the form of a quantum field of probability and at the cosmic level in the form of the bending of time, space and light, can be read in one of two ways here, as either indicating the limits of the “utterly human” conditions of knowledge to continue to condition experience at these extreme scopes or as the continued assimilation of ruptures in the knowledge fabric as evidenced by Bohm’s attempts to assert a higher level of continuity. Either way, Nietzsche’s point seems to stand, with the first reading being the exception that proves the rule and the second being the further complication of his theory through the subtilization of knowledge, what Foucault has referred to as the will-to-truth, working itself out through discourse.

⁵² Frank Lapeña discusses here the difficulty faced in trying to protect the Clipper Gap roundhouse, a sacred ceremonial house that was deemed dangerous because it did not meet county building safety regulations. Ultimately the county forced the removal of the roundhouse.

relate them to an undergarment, one meant to feel soft to and feel like skin. Somewhere between outside appearance and the hidden skin (though, as Hurston reminds, “no Negro in America is apt to forget his race”) this links stories, particularly home stories, to an unconscious but felt space in between (*Dust Tracks* 218). Neither clothed nor naked, neither natural nor cultural. Maybe both?

How to hear them and how to see them? “And now I’m going to tell you why I decided to go to my native village first” (*Mules and Men* 3). Too close to see, drowned out by the researcher’s own speaking, Hurston outlines the problem of research in the form of collecting folk-lore, which is “not as easy...as it sounds.” Reluctant to reveal “that which the soul lives by” different informants give her a clear distinction between modes of resistance. “The Indian resists curiosity by a stony silence. The Negro offers a feather-bed resistance. That is, we let the probe enter, but it never comes out. It gets smothered under a lot of laughter and pleasantries.” Detours, ruses, niceties, and jokes are here opposed to silence (as if silence cannot be humorous, cannot be a detour). But, as Vine Deloria (among many other Native intellectuals) has noted, a significant part of Native American survival strategies also involves humor. The red and black, despite Deloria’s own distinctions, are perhaps not as distinct as all that. “He can read my writing but he sho’ can’t read my mind. I’ll put this play toy in his hand, and he will seize it and go away. Then I’ll say my say and sing my song.” Hurston herself has been instructed by her benefactor, Mrs. R. Osgood, “the World’s most gallant woman,” to remain close to the primitive spirit and chastised by Papa Boas, “the most famous anthropologist alive,” for not being rigorous enough, not keeping her distance (though he did, perhaps begrudgingly, praise her “unusual contribution” to his discipline). The insider-outsider position discussed above, can be summed up by the impossibility of being native enough to be an insider (thanks to Hurston’s well articulated “Barnardese”) and being anthropologist enough to be an outsider (thanks to her “lovable personality” and “revealing style”). Somewhere between being taught to hear black stories through being disciplined by red restraint and the ambiguity of the glass case/lens that offers a small amount of distance through the objectification of methodologies, the eye and the ear are problematized in their relations to an almost felt undergarment. A rest from speaking. I couldn’t see it for wearing it. Red and black. Silence and detour. Pause. Rest. Take a breath.

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