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# Recasting Commodity and Spectacle in the Indigenous Americas

Edited by Helen Gilbert  
and Charlotte Gleghorn



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Cover image: Alex Wells – Lil'wat Nation Hoop Dancer. Photo: David Martin.  
Courtesy of Alex Wells and David Martin.

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The Institute for the Study of the Americas and the School of Advanced Study generously offered us the space of this volume to archive and expand upon the papers delivered during the symposium. We would like to acknowledge Kerry Whitston for her help in facilitating this arrangement and overseeing the initial stages of the book, and Valerie Hall for her excellent copy-editing as things progressed. Finally, a huge thank you to Alex Wells, the champion hoop dancer, and his photographer, David Martin, who kindly gave us permission to use the photograph on the front cover. We hope that the energy and vibrancy of this image convey something of the exciting discussions to be had as we strive to understand the specificities of indigenous performance in its diverse locales and contexts.

As we were preparing this manuscript, we learnt of the sad passing of Ivone Barriga Ramírez from our colleague Margaret Werry. Ivone was a postgraduate student at University of Minnesota-Twin Cities and was a lively and engaged participant during the symposium, where she delivered a paper on community-based theatre in Peru. We dedicate these pages to her spirit of inquiry and collaboration. Reasonable efforts have been made to identify and contact other copyright holders.



## Notes on Contributors

**Isabel Altamirano-Jiménez** is an Indigenous Zapotec from Oaxaca, Mexico. She holds a joint appointment as associate professor in the Department of Political Science and the Faculty of Native Studies at the University of Alberta. Recently, she has been awarded a KIAS-University of Alberta Cluster Grant to start the first phase of the Indigenous Women's Knowledge and Stewardship of Water project. Her research interests include comparative Indigenous politics, Indigenous feminism, indigeneity and gender, and the neoliberalisation of nature. She teaches, among other courses, Indigenous peoples and globalisation; Women and nationalism; Aboriginal women and politics; and Aboriginal peoples and natural resources.

**James Butterworth** recently completed an AHRC-sponsored PhD in ethnomusicology at Royal Holloway, University of London. His thesis is titled 'Andean divas: emotion, ethics and intimate spectacle in Peruvian huayno music'. James also holds a BA in music from the University of Cambridge and an MMus in advanced musical studies from Royal Holloway. His research focuses on folkloric and popular musics in Peru and deals particularly with issues of emotion, neoliberalism, public intimacy, gender and mass-mediation.

**Ximena Córdova Oviedo**, born in Bolivia and raised in Venezuela, completed an AHRC-sponsored PhD in Latin American and Hispanic studies (Newcastle University) on the relationship between processes of transmission of cultural memory and festive practices in the Andes. Previously, Ximena worked in the audiovisual industry, in development, production and training, which feeds into her practice of visual anthropology for academic purposes. Ximena's current research examines the intersections between popular culture, performative practices and identity politics, with a particular focus on 20th-century Latin American history and Andean anthropology. Ximena is developing a project that focuses on creating new social platforms for Latin Americans and related cultural events in the United Arab Emirates, from her base in Abu Dhabi.

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**Sergio Miguel Huarcaya** holds a BA in film and television production, an MA in Latin American studies and a PhD in anthropology and history. From 1998 to 2001, he collaborated with the Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador (CONAIE) as a video producer/instructor. From 2011 to 2014, he worked as postdoctoral researcher on the Indigeneity in the Contemporary World: Performance, Politics, Belonging project, hosted by Royal Holloway, University of London. His research focuses on the ways in which indigenous performance in festivities and social protest has transformed notions of indigeneity in the Andes. Sergio Miguel is author of *No os embriaguéis... borracheras, identidad y conversión evangélica en Cacha, Ecuador* and has published in the journals *Revista Andina* and *Latin American and Caribbean Ethnic Studies*. He works at the Universidad del Pacífico in Lima, Peru, and has articles forthcoming in *Latin American Research Review* and *Comparative Studies in Society and History*.

**Genner Llanes-Ortiz** is a Yucatec Maya scholar with a DPhil in social anthropology from the University of Sussex. He was an IFP-Ford Foundation fellow in 2002 and a research associate on the Indigeneity in the Contemporary World Project at Royal Holloway from 2011–13. His research investigates the strategic transformation of ritual and performance as part of the political mobilisation of Maya communities and organisations in the Yucatan and Belize. Genner's work has been published in *Etnicidad en Latinoamérica: movimientos sociales, cuestión indígena y diásporas migratorias* (2005), *Revista Tracce* (2008) and *Resistant Strategies* (forthcoming 2014). He collaborates with the digital storytelling project Tsikbal Ich Maya and is a member of the Mexican Interdisciplinary Indigenous Peoples' Researchers' Network (Red - IINPIM, A.C.).

**Yvette Nolan** is a playwright, director and dramaturg. Her plays include: *BLADE*, *Job's Wife*, *Video*, *Child*, *Annie Mae's Movement*, *Scattering Jake*, *The Unplugging*, the dance-text *from thine eyes*, the libretto *Hilda Blake*, and the radio play *Owen*. She is the editor of *Beyond the Pale: Dramatic Writing from First Nations Writers and Writers of Colour* and the coeditor with Donna-Michelle St Bernard of *Refractions: Solo*. In 2007, Yvette received the Maggie Bassett Award and in 2011, the George Luscombe Award. From 2003–11, she served as artistic director of Native Earth Performing Arts. She is currently working on *Medicine Shows*, a book about Native theatre in Canada.

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**Sarah Anne Stolte** is a doctoral candidate in the Department of Art History at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Her research focuses on visual representations and perceptions of American Indian peoples, arts and cultures in the United States and globally. Her recent curatorial projects include 'Air, Land, Seed', a collaborative exhibition of contemporary indigenous arts presented during the *vernissage* of the Venice Biennale and held at the University of Venice Ca' Foscari, Palazzo Cosulich in 2013. Sarah independently curated 'Ancestral Visions: Contemporary Voices', an exhibition presenting indigenous artists' visual renditions of ancestral uses of the Wisconsin landscape, for the Edgewood College Art Gallery in Madison, also in 2013.

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**Andrea Zittlau** is an assistant professor in the Department of North American Studies at the University of Rostock, Germany. Additionally, she coordinates the Graduate Centre, 'Cultural Encounters and Discourses of Scholarship', also at the University of Rostock. Andrea completed her PhD thesis on the representation of cultures inside museums ('Packaging culture. How ethnographic museums challenge their past, present, and future'). Her research interests include ethnographic museums, photography, collective memory, trauma theory, dark tourism and souvenirs.



## Introduction: Recasting commodity and spectacle in the indigenous Americas

*Helen Gilbert and Charlotte Gleghorn*

In her 1974 poem 'Hoop Dancer', the late Native American writer Paula Gunn Allen (1939–2008) lyrically describes the ways in which embodied practices and kinaesthetic knowledge connect with ceremonial time:

It's hard to enter  
circling clockwise and counter  
clockwise moving no  
regard for time, metrics  
irrelevant to this dance  
where pain is the prime number  
and soft stepping feet  
praise water from the skies:  
I have seen the face of triumph  
the winding line stare down all moves  
to desecration: guts not cut from arms,  
fingers joined to minds,  
together Sky and Water  
one dancing        one  
circle of a thousand turning lines  
beyond the march of gears—  
out of time,        out of  
time, out  
of time (1997, p. 146).<sup>1</sup>

For Gunn Allen, 'dancing in the midst of turning, whirling hoops is a means of transcending the limits of chronological time'. Despite the ravages of colonialism, possibilities for cultural renewal are imminent in this extended performative moment: 'the hoop dancer dances within what encircles him, demonstrating how the people live in motion within the circling spirals of time and space' (1986, p. 150).

<sup>1</sup> Published in her 1997 collection, *Life is a Fatal Disease*.

When she cast the hoop dance as a poetic emblem of indigenous<sup>2</sup> temporality in action, Gunn Allen could scarcely have foreseen the growth of this art form as a pan-tribal expression of Native North American culture – or that it would also come to vitalise (and apparently indigenise) elite entertainments produced primarily for non-Native audiences. In recent decades, hoop dance has featured not only in small-town powwow and rodeo circuits but also at the Calgary Stampede, at globally televised mega-events such as the Atlanta and Vancouver Olympics and, since 2010, in the grand marquee that stages Cirque du Soleil's signature touring show, *Totem*, a spectacularised vision of human evolution billed as being 'somewhere between science and legend'.<sup>3</sup> On the internet are numerous video-clips of such performances, eliciting appreciative comments from cyber-audiences in many parts of the world. In their e-profiles alongside lists of local and national tournaments where they have triumphed, hoop dance champions boast international appearances in European, Asian and Latin American cities and sometimes include contact portals for anyone looking to commission their work. Thus, on the surface at least, the recent history of this dance form would seem to exemplify the workings of both spectacle and commodity as particularly powerful forces on indigenous cultures in our times.

This book's cover image of world champion hoop dancer Alex Wells, from the Lil'wat Nation in British Columbia, indexes the challenges involved in analysing such forces as part of (rather than external to) the cultural forms and practices through which particular aspects of indigeneity are expressed. In the photograph, the performer cuts a luminous figure against the stormy sky, conveying not only the dynamism of his art and the corporeal skill and flair involved in its execution, but also, potentially, a dramatic touch of Otherness. His striking pose and regalia draw our attention even as – or indeed if – we resist the lenses of exoticism that work to register the performance as an embodiment of cultural alterity. Behind this image there is another story, however, one which refutes the presumption that the indigenous performer is *always already* staging a spectacle for the Western gaze. Alex Wells, who began dancing as a young boy, finds in his art a vehicle to tell stories, to keep fit, and to celebrate the virtues and vitality of Native cultures. Hoop dancing, in his

- 2 In various parts of this collection, indigenous and indigeneity may appear in upper or lower case, attesting to the changing uses of, and claims upon, the terms. Some authors specifically address this issue, making a distinction between a political identity and a general concept, and have asked that we retain their capitalisation. In other instances, we have opted for lower case, according to house style.
- 3 *Totem*, 'About the Show', online at [www.cirquedusoleil.com/en/shows/totem/show/about.aspx](http://www.cirquedusoleil.com/en/shows/totem/show/about.aspx) (accessed 4 Dec. 2013). On the *Totem* homepage is an image of a lithe dancer emerging with his hoops from the primordial depths of a lily pond. See [www.cirquedusoleil.com/en/shows/totem/default.aspx](http://www.cirquedusoleil.com/en/shows/totem/default.aspx) (accessed 4 Dec. 2013). The character is identified as 'Amerindian' elsewhere on the company's website and has apparently been played by various hoop dance champions.

world, is a mode of embodied pedagogy, a genealogy, an ecological practice that connects the dancer with the land and its peoples.<sup>4</sup> Like various other indigenous performance traditions, it is also a livelihood strategy, imbricated in a complex circuit of competitions, with a committed community of performers and audiences who nourish and innovate the form.

Considered in this fuller context, the photograph poses a critical question if we insist that such representations are intrinsically exotic. In Graham Huggan's words, 'How is their exoticism coded, and in whose interests does it serve?' (2001, p. 13). Can we assume, as some critics do, that those who enact their indigeneity in eye-catching ways are inevitably trapped in their own objectification, perhaps in a bid to make their art commercially viable by appealing to non-indigenous interests? Huggan's work is instructive here because it implicates the spectator in the spectacle. He argues that 'the exotic is not, as is often supposed, an inherent *quality* to be found "in" certain people, distinctive objects, or specific places; exoticism describes, rather, a particular mode of aesthetic *perception* – one which renders people, objects and places strange even as it domesticates them' (ibid.). Produced in that mode, cultural difference accrues commodity value, presenting both opportunities and concerns for indigenous societies as they become increasingly enmeshed in global circuits of capital and power at different scales. This situation conditions how, when, where and to what extent people can be indigenous through their practices, and what is invested, or excluded, in the process.

The chapters in this volume take up such issues through contextualised studies of the performances and cultural idioms used to express, and sometimes delimit, indigeneity in various parts of the Americas. We have begun our introduction with the spectre of exoticism to suggest that the concepts of commodity and spectacle are constructed dialogically, (re)produced through interpersonal exchange, cross-cut by cultural expectations and subject to historical contingencies. While the asymmetrical power structures of imperialism have long circumscribed the ways in which indigenous peoples in many parts of the world can represent themselves, the commodification and spectacularisation of their cultural and aesthetic practices have seldom escaped contestation or produced stable results. The two-day symposium, 'Recasting Commodity and Spectacle in the Indigenous Americas', held in November 2012 as the starting point for this book, was designed to revisit the dynamics of such processes in light of the intensified international circulation of indigenous performance in recent decades. This phenomenon is evident not just in the

4 Alex shared his views on hoop dancing in a series of conversations with us during his five-day visit to London in April 2013 to work with Indigeneity in the Contemporary World project researchers. For an edited video recording of some of these conversations and footage of his dance practice, visit <https://vimeo.com/72261874> (accessed 4 Dec. 2013).

arts – notably via festival circuits – but also in other realms of (multi)cultural production, including tourism, the heritage sector and state-endorsed mega-events such as Olympic opening ceremonies (see Gilbert, 2014).

From our vantage point in London, the decision to focus on the Americas was at once an effort to bring together in dialogue scholars working on indigeneity in different language areas, and a testament to the particularly potent brand of indigenous activism that has arisen in the region, above all in Latin America. Indigenous peoples in various parts of the globe have been organising against discrimination from at least as far back as the 1960s, but indigeneity has only developed as a significant force in global politics with the widespread indigenous mobilisations that began in the 1990s in places such as Ecuador, Bolivia, Mexico and the Amazon Basin. In addition to specific local grievances and demands, these protests were prompted by the emergence of new supranational discourses of cultural and collective rights spearheaded by the United Nations and (more contentiously) the World Trade Organisation. Like their counterparts elsewhere, these Latin American movements, though heterogeneous, have commonly recruited cultural difference, or indigenous particularity, to articulate the territorial, linguistic and spiritual rights of their constituencies, and have achieved considerable gains in the fields of constitutional reform and jurisprudence (Warren and Jackson, 2002, p. 13). In tandem with social justice, environmental activism has been a key rallying point for trans-local alliances. The rampant commodification of nature in indigenous territories, which shows its ugliest faces through mining and deforestation, has met with especially fierce local critiques, questioning the benefits of *laissez-faire* economics and neoliberal governance. These developments, in a region rich in the natural resources sought by multinational capital, have generated a renewed interest in the global reach of indigeneity and its specific purchase in contemporary social, economic, political, cultural and environmental debates.

Recent scholarship of neoliberal multiculturalism in the Americas has drawn attention to the pitfalls of coopting culture for capital's benefit, supporting a system of dominance that has long held indigenous subjects marginalised within nation-states. In the *Expediency of Culture*, George Yúdice theorises the notion of 'culture-as-resource' (2003, p. 1), positing that artistic and cultural projects are increasingly mobilised by a neoliberal logic; utilitarian in nature, they are designed to respond to broader economic and political agendas dictated by transnational institutions and developmentalist organisations. In sum, he argues that the reduced role of the state in social provision has made it the purview of culture to meet the deficit. Yúdice's claim is that 'globalization has accelerated the transformation of everything into resource' (p. 28), and that in this equation culture has become the weapon with which disenfranchised groups may battle for equality on the grounds of difference. 'These actors', he

writes, 'have put a premium on culture, defined in myriad ways, a resource already targeted for exploitation by capital (e.g., in the media, consumerism, and tourism), and a foundation for resistance against the ravages of that very same economic system' (p. 6). Significantly, though, Yúdice's analysis falls short of considering the full potential of performance-based art forms to contest the straightforward commodification of culture in innovative, ludic and strategic ways. John and Jean Comaroff's *Ethnicity Inc.* (2009), which considers Native American cultural commodities alongside their African counterparts under the provocative rubric of a global ethnic brand with specific local articulations, likewise tends to overlook the phenomenological thickness of performance as a complex relational process.

A brief sideways glance at ethnological spectacle at the turn of the 20th century shows that indigenous performers have a long history of subverting the commodity relations in which they are entangled, by choice or coercion. At the Louisiana Purchase Exposition held in St Louis, Missouri, in 1904, for instance, a group of Kwakwaka'wakw and Nuu-chah-nulth performers recruited from Vancouver Island conspired to fake a cannibalism scene as part of a demonstration of their cultural traditions, to the horror of some 20,000 spectators, but then resurrected their victim (a crafted doll-like replica of an African boy) after being told they would be charged with murder (O'Bonsawin, 2012, pp. 479–81). Microhistories of other ethnological shows – in the sense of small-scale histories that illuminate larger questions (see Ginzburg, 1993) – likewise reveal that indigenous participants had strategic investments in the entertainments they enacted. Paige Raibmon has found that public performance functioned as 'cultural tradition, modern labour, and political protest' for an earlier Kwakwaka'wakw troupe who used their international platform at the Chicago World's Fair in 1893 to stage a version of a dance outlawed in Canada due to a government ban on potlatch ceremonies (2000, p. 189). Wild West Shows and related 'frontier' genres such as rodeo have also been excavated as porous zones where skilled performers negotiated the terms of their public appearances, sometimes crossing boundaries within the hierarchies that structured their social milieux (see Kelm, 2007; Kasson, 2000). Such examples should caution us against judging the political valence of indigenous spectacles in advance, even when the circumstances of their production seem weighted towards nakedly commercial ends. Margaret Werry's study of tourism, race and performance across more than a century in (and in relation to) New Zealand traces a long line of Māori involvement in state-making spectacles that could serve as a stimulus for thinking about indigenous agency elsewhere. Werry concludes that we should understand spectacle as 'a productive and dynamic force rather than dismiss it as reification or delusion'. 'Spectacle', she adds, 'is machinic rather than monumental, multivocal rather than monologic, not

hegemonically totalizing but a mobile cultural formation vulnerable to the intransigence and momentum of the subjects it produces' (2011, p. 132). In this formulation, spectacle can be a resource for the disenfranchised even as it seems to uphold the interests of the powerful. What is commodity to one person may be heritage to another, or even a kind of insurance against future oblivion – an echo, or a vision, of the adaptive resilience that Gunn Allen metaphorised in her early account of the hoop dancer transcending time.

With some important exceptions, the existing scholarly literature on commodity and spectacle in relation to indigenous peoples does not sufficiently theorise the transformations that are taking place in the arts and at the grassroots level.<sup>5</sup> Performers and communities alike are self-consciously rearticulating their identities (with an emphasis on the plural and the provisional) amid changing public discourses on indigeneity, migrancy and belonging, and shifting economic and political climates, both locally and globally; our challenge is to keep pace in the theoretical realm. This volume seeks to contribute to debates about such cultural transformations and their various entanglements with commerce and capital, typically in what James Clifford calls 'a dialectics of innovation and constraint' (2013, p. 32). The performance practices discussed in the following pages – in the realms of film, theatre, photography, music, museology, ritual, festival, carnival and political protest – invite us to reexamine indigeneity's distinctive relationships to economies of display and commodity circulation, and to address the historically contingent contours of indigenous performance and identity formation in different scenarios. How is heritage reinvested, or divested, as it now circulates as product for local, national or international audiences? To what degree is spectacle as a performative (and at times exoticist) idiom remodelled in the hands of indigenous artists and practitioners? How do the dynamics of consumption pertaining to indigenous performance produce particular affective communities? The 13 chapters gathered herein offer a variety of disciplinary methodologies to index the transactions that take place between indigenous subjects, artists and communities and national and supranational entities. The authors register a significant amount of agency among indigenous performers and cultural brokers in their negotiations with the state, distributors, producers and audiences, despite the limited recognition or acceptance of this fact among sceptical onlookers. The chapters also crucially acknowledge the thorny terrain of cross-cultural misperception, the long histories of appropriation of selective elements of indigeneity according to the interests of national elites, and the legacy of harmful stereotypes to this day.

5 Like Werry's work, these exceptions tend to come from interdisciplinary performance studies and they gather force and authority by tracing the historical roots of contemporary practices. See, for instance, Balme (2006), Shea Murphy (2007) and Dueck (2013).

Contemporary indigenous artistic productions often strive to rectify these negative portrayals and their enduring repercussions in public life. For Native Americans, the fantasy Indian of classical Hollywood film, invariably dressed in Plains costume and sacrificed for the frontier nation's better interest, is a case in point. Revisionist approaches to cultural history have analysed the development of such romanticised or vilified stereotypes, drawing attention to the agency, albeit limited, of the Native performers and image-makers involved in their production and highlighting indigenous influence in artistic circles that have long disregarded it. Michelle H. Raheja's *Reservation Reelism* (2011) is groundbreaking in this vein, excavating the layered histories of Native participation and dissent in the Hollywood film industry. Her chapter for this volume considers the efficacy of film aesthetics in communicating indigenous knowledges and rebutting colonialist discourses. In so doing, it reminds us of what is at stake in the perpetuation of racist stereotypes and myths of reconciliation, but also alerts us to the pressure on Native filmmakers in the United States to contest dominant historiographies and 'carry the burden of undoing over five hundred years of misrepresentation' (chapter 1, this volume). Raheja's protest against the foundational myth of Thanksgiving, epitomised in the annual rehearsal of a peaceful dinner between pilgrims and Indians, acknowledges the continued manipulation of indigenous history for nationalist ends.

In Latin America, the appropriation and mythologising of indigenous cultures by national elites found dominant expression through the nostalgic philosophy of *indigenismo*, employed to extoll, reify and arbitrate the meanings of indigeneity, as Michael Gonzales's chapter amply documents. Mexico's long history of *indigenismo*, which, he argues, pre-dates the Revolution of 1910–20, and the more consolidated implementation of *indigenista* policy subsequently, has had profound influence on the parameters of indigeneity in the country. Gonzales charts the changing attitudes of the state to its indigenous citizens by analysing the pageantry of two spectacular centennial celebrations: the first, the centenary of independence celebrated under Porfirio Díaz in 1910, and the second, in 1921, in its post-Revolutionary incarnation, under President Obregón. The selective elevation of some elements of indigenous culture as representative of the nation-state also operates in Bolivia, glimpsed here through Ximena Córdova Oviedo's analysis of the official rhetoric and conventions of the Oruro Carnival. Córdova argues that while institutional and nationalist discourses about this event retain troubling remnants of *indigenismo* and, bolstered by UNESCO

heritage discourses, continue to promote the *mestizo*<sup>6</sup> as the true embodiment of Bolivia's hybridity, the Carnival has become a locus for a new representation of indigeneity enacted through the rural Anata parades that descend upon the city from the surrounding countryside. This development has accompanied major shifts in the country's political climate, which has made it possible to revalue indigeneity. Both chapters historicise the changing values awarded to indigeneity by the nation-state, which have led to the commodification and misappropriation of some aspects of cultural difference, and the dismissal of others.

Gabriela Zamorano Villarreal's contribution to the volume takes up the topic of Bolivia's current debates on indigeneity, driven in large part by the transformations that have occurred at the level of political governance with the election of the country's first indigenous president, Evo Morales, in 2006. Zamorano Villarreal dissects the rich field of Bolivian indigenous video, as practised through the Plan Nacional Indígena Originario de Comunicación Audiovisual (National Plan of Indigenous Communication), in relation to existing visual repertoires of indigeneity in the region, the system's innovative distribution tactics, and the periodically conflicting interests and discourses that are brought to bear on the ways in which the videos are circulated and introduced. She argues that the epistemological and methodological innovations fostered by the Plan Nacional at the level of production and distribution are nonetheless defined by 'structural and historical conditions moulding how mediamakers see themselves and their realities' (chapter 4, this volume). This attention to the circuits through which indigenous videos reach their different audiences emphasises the materialities that inflect spectatorship as an important element of image-making.

Museums have long been key sites of mediation that conveniently package indigenous material cultures and realities as commodities for consumption by non-indigenous spectators. The repositioning and reframing of indigeneity in recent decades, however, has also been evident in the field of museology as institutions grapple with their former role as conspirators in 'freezing cultures behind glass' (Zittlau, chapter 5, this volume). Zittlau's contribution discusses how contemporary museum spaces, in this instance the National Museum of the American Indian in Washington D.C., are continually haunted by

6 The term *mestizo* is a shifting ethnic and ideological category denoting people of mixed indigenous and European heritage. *Mestizaje*, its counterpart discourse, was employed throughout much of Latin America as an assimilationist and homogenising rhetoric in tandem with *indigenista* policies. As these words are in common usage, they will not be italicised from this point. Other regularly used words mentioned here, such as *indigenismo* and *huayno*, are also italicised initially in the main text but not thereafter. In subsequent chapters such words as *indigenas*, *anata*, *cholo*, *coraza*, *Kriol*, *cargo* and *barrios* are also italicised on first in-text usage only.

earlier essentialist ideas of indigenous cultures, narrated through 19th-century ethnology and diorama exhibits. Her interpretation of Nora Naranjo-Morse's performative sculpture, 'Always Becoming' (2007), shows how performance has the potential to displace antiquated economies of display with a processual aesthetics that stages the search for contemporary Native identities. The sculptor's attempt to displace the trope of the 'museum Indian' invites viewers to consider material objects as things in dynamic relationship with each other and with the social and physical environments in which they exist, thereby subtly critiquing the commodification and consumption of cultural production today.

In his introduction to *The Social Life of Things* (1986), Arjun Appadurai argues that value is constructed through global market operations and that global processes of commodification may (inadvertently?) engender new social relations that operate in anti-imperialist interests, empowering the previously dispossessed. What he terms different 'regimes in value' operate upon objects and artefacts through exchange, thus creating commodities of cultural goods (p. 4). Appadurai contends that material objects acquire meanings 'in their forms, their uses, their trajectories. It is only through the analysis of these trajectories that we can interpret the human transactions and calculations that enliven things' (p. 5). Sarah Stolte's chapter precisely unearths the trajectories of production and circulation of mid-20th century photographic postcards of Ho-Chunk subjects in the Wisconsin Dells area. Her study demonstrates how Ho-Chunk found in their poses for the camera the possibility to carve a space of economic empowerment predicated on the rising profile and commercial success of Hollywood Westerns. Stolte analyses the performative nature of commodity, showing the ways in which Ho-Chunk capitalised, quite literally, on the phantasmic, homogenised Indian circulated in this genre by way of the silver screen, reappropriating its iconography to engage in the new tourist economy. By conducting an archaeology of these photo-postcards, Stolte illuminates the resonance of the images today, arguing that they become 'animated' through consumption. In her analysis, it becomes clear that 'the diversion of commodities' – in this case the Hollywood Indian – 'from their predestined paths' (Appadurai, 1986, p. 26) may offer potential rewards for indigenous performers able to harness touristic interests for their own economic empowerment.

Many critics have noted the commodification of authenticity that drives indigenous tourism, highlighting the uneven power relations performed in its characteristic scenarios of cross-cultural encounter. *Ethnicity Inc.* offers a broad and fascinating overview of the ways in which indigenous branding plays into the contradictory logics of the neoliberal marketplace, leaving marginalised cultures susceptible to the vagaries of consumer capital (Comaroff and Comaroff, 2009).

Nevertheless, we should be wary of the assumption that cultural tourism is only ever a trap, for either tourists or the communities that host them. A number of recent indigenous initiatives in this arena tap the embodied energies of performance to educate non-indigenous publics, reinvigorate artistic traditions and instil pride in local cultures, while channelling income into individual and communal needs. Moreover, as Andrew Canessa notes in observing the complex 'choreographies' of commodification and authenticity in Latin American tourism, 'power is never exercised unambiguously and [...] images can change, spaces can open up, and power relations can be challenged by the very tropes that set them up in the first place' (2012, p. 110). These observations also readily pertain to cultural and intercultural commerce beyond the world of tourism. Several chapters in this book recognise the power of indigenous artists and cultural brokers to adapt spectacles and circuits of consumption to their own needs and desires, thereby complicating the idea that indigenous spectacle is uniquely interested in satiating non-indigenous appetites for exotic Otherness. In this equation, capitalism is typically viewed as a juggernaut that predetermines commodity relations and militates against indigenous agency. Taking issue with this perspective, James Butterworth's assessment of commercial *huayno*, a highly popular Andean musical genre in Peru, positions the labour of indigenous entertainers as instrumentally fostering subaltern visibility and empowerment. His analysis demonstrates that the idioms of *huayno* spectacle are oriented towards 'internal' communities, forging new forms of indigenous citizenship based on the consumption of hybrid (urban and rural) musical aesthetics. Butterworth disputes the idea that spectacle is about performing for cultural outsiders, offering instead an interpretation of the economic and symbolic gains that *huayno* divas harvest through performance. While the new terrains of citizenship generated by this genre and its attendant distribution circuits are not free from neoliberal manoeuvring, they clearly signal the limitations of approaches that position indigeneity as straightforwardly oppositional to capitalism.

Genner Llanes-Ortiz also offers a fresh perspective on the workings of spectacle in his chapter on the performance of Maya corporeality during Maya Day celebrations in Belize. In this annual cultural festival, Mayanness is celebrated through the staging of daily chores, wherein the indigenous 'cultural muscle' is communicated through the language of spectacle, here used as a 'recruiting device' that engenders community dialogue about tradition (chapter 8, this volume). Quotidian tasks, including corn grinding and firewood splitting, accrue value as traditional cultural practices through staged competitions charged with the celebratory mood of the festival. In the broader context of Maya invisibility in Belize, Llanes-Ortiz reads these performances

as embodied strategies for working towards the cultural recognition that could deliver greater social justice.

Performative celebrations of ethnic resurgence are the subject of two other chapters in the volume. Andrew Roth-Seneff's study of the P'urhépecha New Year in the state of Michoacán, Mexico, illustrates how the interpenetrating realms of civil society and state legislation have brought about a subaltern public sphere in which the annual performance of P'urhépecha ethnicity resignifies previously commodified performance practices in a new economy of reciprocity. His close attention to the symbolism and iconography mobilised in the New Year celebrations demonstrates that colonial structures of Christian ritual have been transformed and revitalised as part of an evolving ethnic subalternity. For his part, Sergio Miguel Huarcaya examines different uses of, and stakes in, the Fiesta del Coraza in Ecuador among two separate populations, mestizo and indigenous. His interpretation of the differently encoded renditions of this Fiesta, in light of the reinvestment in indigenous identity and culture among Kichwa activists in Otavalo, demonstrates the crucial role that performance plays in community power relations, instrumentalised to contest national imaginaries and avow ethnic allegiances. This finding resonates with Néstor García Canclini's assertion that 'identity is a construct, but the artistic, folkloric, and media narratives that shape it are realized and transformed within sociohistorical conditions that cannot be reduced to their *mise-en-scène*. Identity is theater *and* politics, performance *and* action' (2001, p. 96).

Concerns over the policing of indigeneity and endorsement of its legal and cultural value run through a number of the chapters in the book. In the legal domain, Isabel Altamirano-Jiménez shows how existing cartographic mechanisms to map indigenous territories in Nicaragua play into the stereotype of the 'noble savage'. The legal framework activated in order to protect such territories from transnational and nation-state encroachment places what she terms a 'grid of intelligibility' on indigeneity, authenticating the mythologisation of indigenous peoples as innately of the land. The *Mayagna (Sumo) Community of Awas Tingni v. Nicaragua* judgment offers a compelling case study through which to explore how relationships to territory and environment are commodified under neoliberal governance and rights discourses, presenting 'indigeneity as a form of human capital' (chapter 11, this volume). In other words, legalistic discourses of indigeneity necessitate a performance of identity (to attain access to land) that relegates indigenous peoples' difference to the realm of the natural and frustrates their aspirations to modern forms of resource management. Yvette Nolan's meditation on her own experience as an Aboriginal Canadian director and dramaturg calls attention to a comparable economy of expectation operating in the arts, which, in her context, makes its effects felt in the funding and reception of indigenous

theatre, particularly when it dares to adapt Shakespeare's texts. Her discussion of the complex manufacturing of indigenouness expected in such adaptations – just enough to make the production recognisable as Native, but not so much as to make it untranslatable to a general audience – asks that indigenous theatre be allowed to develop its agenda, performative methodologies and praxis 'on its own terms', without the arbitrating (and often uninformed) assessments of cultural critics on the grounds of authenticity.

If this book's central concern is the agency of indigenous artists and subjects, seen as a weapon against the codification of an 'authentic' subaltern identity, then the instrumentality of place in recasting commodity and spectacle likewise deserves a mention. According to Coll Thrush, 'the idea that particular locations have both identity and agency is central to indigenous epistemologies of place, in which sites not only have meaning but volition, acting upon the lives of human (and other) peoples' (2011, p. 54). Selena Couture's contribution to this book deconstructs the site of Klahowya Village in Stanley Park, Vancouver, to reveal it as a place where multiple histories, memories and investments coalesce and are constantly at play with each other in the redevelopment of a community tourism venture. Her evocation of this palimpsestic landscape is a powerful reminder of the indigenous ghosts, real and imagined, that haunt the places and performance practices discussed during the London symposium and in this book. Several authors employ a rhetoric of haunting in their chapters, in relation to the colonialist visual repertoire that contemporary artists often seek to dispute. Raheja talks of the haunting 'afterlife of Native American images', and Zittlau applies Jacques Derrida's concept of hauntology (*hantologie*) to her analysis of outmoded museology practices. Other contributors make reference to the spectre of Native pasts more obliquely, often in reference to the Hollywood Indian or 'Dead Indians' (King, 2012) that so frequently subtend North American cultural imaginaries. It is fitting in this context to conclude our introduction with a discussion of how London, too, seems haunted by indigenous ghosts.

To organise a conversation on the indigenous Americas in London has, of course, political implications, which did not go unnoticed by the symposium participants. The city's role as imperial hub for the largest empire in history duly prompted an engagement with the myths that have sanitised colonial narratives of dispossession. As Michelle Raheja reminded us in her keynote address, the first day of the event coincided with Thanksgiving celebrations in the United States, providing an apt moment at which to explore the offensive redfacing that is staged annually during this national holiday, and the practice's racist underpinnings as a rendition of benign British settlement in the 'New World'. Raheja's intervention urges us to remember the shared histories forged by European colonialism and the ways in which they connect indigenous

communities in many parts of the world to London to this day. Coll Thrush's work on indigenous London<sup>7</sup> likewise asks us to acknowledge and investigate the indigenous lives lived, and sometimes lost, in this city of empire and to recognise the crucial role that indigenous servants, envoys, diplomats, translators and performers have played in its historical development.

Intersections in the cultural, economic and political trajectories of Britain and the indigenous Americas are equally pertinent today. Given the impact of London-listed mining and gas companies that intervene in indigenous territories, there is an urgent necessity to disseminate informed accounts that recognise the trade and migration networks sustaining transnational flows of natural, manufactured and artistic commodities. Chadwick Allen advocates this kind of contextualising as critical to a model of analytics he terms 'trans-indigenous', which 'locates itself firmly in the specificity of the Indigenous local, while remaining always cognizant of the complexity of the relevant Indigenous global' (2012, p. xix). As home to various diasporic groupings of indigenous denizens linked to distant parts of the world, London figures on both of these geographical axes, and functions as a site where indigeneity manifests in multiple modes. There is a sizeable community here of Māori and other Pacific Islanders, for example, which boasts innovative and high-profile artists whose contributions to the city's cultural matrix often interweave art with diplomacy on behalf of their countries of origin. Cultural festivals and commemorations have also become common platforms for the embodied expression of diasporic indigeneity. In this vein, recent Día de los Muertos (Day of the Dead) events organised by London's Mexican community have featured Maya practices and philosophies, and there is a vibrant indigenous strand to the Latin American music scene. The Origins Festival of First Nations and the Native Spirit Film Festival extend these activities with an exclusive focus on indigenous works, local and international.

Visiting artists also contribute to such networks through the museum sector, where opportunities are gradually opening for indigenous peoples to be involved in the interpretation of their histories and artefacts. The National Portrait Gallery's 2013 exhibition, 'George Catlin: American Indian Portraits', co-curated by Dakota art historian Stephanie Pratt, exemplified this trend with creative interventions by Cheyenne/Arapaho conceptual artist Edgar Heap of Birds and Mohawk filmmaker Shelley Niro to counterpoint Catlin's romanticised paintings. In a similar spirit six months later, in a raw warehouse gallery overlooking the river Thames, the Indigeneity in the Contemporary World project hosted 'EcoCentrix: Indigenous Arts, Sustainable Acts', a major

7 Thrush is currently preparing a monograph, *Indigenous London: Native Travellers at the Heart of Empire*, for Yale University Press; the book traces histories of indigenous peoples' presence in London over the last 500 years.

performance-based exhibition drawn from First Nations communities in the Americas, Australia, the Pacific Islands and South Africa.<sup>8</sup> As part of the core team mounting this event, we were only too aware of the ways in which our own respective work, as curator (Gilbert) and film associate (Gleghorn), had the power to mediate public perceptions of indigeneity. What helped the exhibition to negotiate the fraught legacies of commodity and spectacle as conceptual paradigms for circulating indigenous arts in museum and gallery spaces was the extensive participation, in the lead-up to the event and on the ground in London, of so many of the designers, choreographers, performers, filmmakers, musicians and artists whose works we had the privilege to feature. Among the exhibits, Tahltan performance artist Peter Morin's 'Cultural Graffiti in London' (2013) conveyed most profoundly a sense of the indigenous inhabitations – past and present, fleeting and sustained, visible and invisible – that indelibly haunt the city. This installation of photographs, video footage and recorded sound showed Morin singing the Tahltan songs of his homelands in Canada to British landmarks, including the Houses of Parliament, Buckingham Palace and Big Ben. Juxtaposed with these records were images and sounds of similar performances at lesser-known monuments such as Kwakwaka'wakw carver Mungo Martin's 'Totem Pole' in Great Windsor Park and the statue of Pocahontas (Powhatan) at Gravesend, on the Thames estuary, where she is thought to have been buried. Morin envisioned his work not as entertainment for audiences, but rather as an intervention enacting indigenous forms of conversation and nation-to-nation contact with historical figures and ancestors.<sup>9</sup> 'Tagging' these different London sites with his voice in acts of invisible graffiti constituted an assertion of cultural resilience, which often ended with the statement, 'We are still here'. During the exhibition, Morin performed two more instalments in the series: the first bore witness to the life of an Inuit child buried at St Olave's Cathedral in central London in 1577; the second took a new form, a button blanket 'bombing' to shroud a statue of Christopher Columbus gifted to the city by Spain in 1992 with the following

8 'EcoCentrix: Indigenous Arts, Sustainable Acts' ran from 24 October–10 November 2013 at Bargehouse in London's Southbank arts precinct. Funded by the European Research Council, this multi-arts exhibition featured films, live performances, digital and sound installations and crafted artefacts by more than 40 indigenous performance makers. Other members of the core exhibition team were assistant curator and codesigner Dani Phillipson; curatorial assistants Sergio Huaracaya, Genner Llanes-Ortiz (Yucatec Maya) and Dylan Robinson (Stö:lö); and production assistant Rose Harriman. The Indigeneity in the Contemporary World project also coproduced the third biennial Origins Festival of First Nations, staged in 2013 in conjunction with the 'EcoCentrix' exhibition.

9 This information derives from discussions we had with Peter Morin and Stö:lö scholar Dylan Robinson during Morin's three-week residency as visiting fellow with the Indigeneity in the Contemporary World project from 8–29 June 2013.



*Figure 1. Peter Morin performing outside Buckingham Palace as part of his 'Cultural Graffiti in London' series, 2013. Photo: Dylan Robinson.*

inscription: 'dedicated to all the peoples of the Americas in commemoration of the 500th anniversary of encounter between the two worlds'.

Such performances intercept hegemonic discourses with artistic cunning, overturning the hierarchies of power and privilege that underpin the naturalised categories of imperial centre and indigenous periphery. More broadly, the emerging trans-indigenous cultural sphere in London, and the hidden histories it indexes, offers counter-narratives to official renditions of place, urging Britons (of all complexions) to entertain the idea that the nation's capital has been shaped by indigenous lives since at least as far back as 1501. Manifest in various and sometimes surprising ways, this subaltern presence provides an antidote to anodyne and reconciliatory accounts of the past that simultaneously renounce Britain's responsibility in (neo)colonial violence, and erase indigenous agency and participation in global affairs over time.

The artistic interventions outlined also challenge us to examine the ways in which indigeneity is (and can be) conceptualised in Britain, as a country that has emerged from many waves of conquest in its early history and which does not have a definitive rendition of first-comers and invaders. To put it simply, who are the British indigenes? Is there need or reason to develop a definition of indigeneity in this nation? Or does the process of thinking about Britain in relation to the concept demand modifications to its underlying narratives of origin, priority and rights of belonging? Beyond the occasional press article

revealing ‘lost’ or ‘uncontacted’ tribes, or documenting resistance of indigenous communities against any number of multinationals in Latin America, or Canada, there is very little general knowledge among Britons about indigenous cultures. The task of contributing to the conversation in this country about the meaning and provenance of indigeneity seems all the more pressing in light of the fact that the term has been coopted by proponents of far right politics, notably the British National Party and the English Defence League, who disingenuously equate it with whiteness and Christian Britain to bolster their racist anti-immigration rhetoric. The circulation of this connotation of indigenous through the media, despite critics’ attempts to highlight the fallacy of the BNP’s argument, has further compromised informed debate about the category among the British, with many people disregarding the significance of historical disenfranchisement to most definitions of the term. As colleagues James Mackay and David Stirrup wrote in *The Guardian’s* Comment is Free (2010), ‘The co-opting of the term “indigenous” and its associated rights’ among British nationalists ‘is a cynical attempt to legitimise the targeting of minority ethnic groups’.

At this conjunction, where issues regarding heritage, first coming and settlement are far from resolved in Britain, recognising and reflecting upon indigeneity’s negotiated status in comparative terms, as this book does, seems an essential strategy through which to anchor responsible local debate. Performance, in its complex intermeshing of embodied politics and regimes of affect, might just channel these frustrated discussions in productive directions, offering fresh ways to engage estranged populations in dialogue, and to approach entangled and painful histories. The metaphysics of the hoop dance are worth recalling in this endeavour insofar as they suggest a rhythm for moving forward while ‘living in motion’ with the past.

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## 1. 'Will making movies do the sheep any good?' The afterlife of Native American images

*Michelle H. Raheja*

In 1966, under the auspices of a National Science Foundation grant, anthropologists Sol Worth and John Adair, with their research assistant Richard Chalfen, travelled to Pine Springs, in Dinétah, Arizona, to teach Navajo students how to use film technology for the creation of community-based films and, according to Randolph Lewis, 'to see if the results would reveal a uniquely Navajo perspective' (2012, p. 126). The students produced a series of short, experimental and documentary films, many of which have been preserved. They are important because they demonstrate a Navajo visual aesthetics that diverges from that of mainstream cinema culture. According to Lewis, the filmmakers exhibited 'a sense of intercultural respect that had often been absent from Western ethnographic films about Navajo people' by eschewing close-up shots; filming mock ceremonies rather than actual healing events to avoid offending community members; and shooting long, non-diegetic landscape sequences (p. 127). Although the resulting films might be interpreted by a mainstream audience as boring, confusing, and/or less personal, the Navajo filmmakers used new technology to produce the kinds of visual images that reflected their personal and collective interests and ways of perceiving the world.

Prior to selecting the students, the anthropologists visited Sam Yazzie, a silversmith and healer from Pine Springs, in his *bogan* (traditional Navajo home) to request permission to begin the project. Yazzie asked the filmmakers, through his interpreter, an oft-cited series of questions about the 'use' of film: 'Will making movies do the sheep any harm?' After Worth assured him that it would not, Yazzie asked, 'Will making movies do the sheep any good?' Again, Worth said that it would not. Yazzie responded, 'Then why make movies?' (Worth and Adair, 1997, p. 4). The anthropologists admitted, 'Sam Yazzie's question keeps haunting us' (p. 5). I would like to return to this important provocation, nearly 50 years later, to think about how film, like the work of any cultural production created by or about Native people, impacts upon the world. If we imagine films and other forms of visual culture as 'living' things that change with each screening and with each spectator's interpretation,

then what is at stake when we make, watch, and engage with images of Indigenous peoples? How do we, Indigenous and non-Indigenous spectators alike, continue to be haunted, like Worth and Adair, by the ‘afterlife’ of Native American images? And what kind of public pedagogy do these haunting images – the multiple products of national fantasies such as those attending the Thanksgiving holiday spectacle, Hollywood Indian stereotypes, and the compelling counter-narratives produced by Native American filmmakers – provide us with?

Yazzie did not own any sheep and was not speaking literally about the ways filmmaking would benefit or hurt the actual sheep his neighbours herded. He was posing a theoretical question about the point of filmmaking, one that speaks to Hollywood cinema’s persistence over the last one hundred years in making films about Native people that have been suffused by stereotypes and misinformation. In an attenuated form, Yazzie was asking how filmmaking might do something good for his local community at Pine Springs, the Navajo Nation, and Native people in general – through supporting their values, cultures and languages, or through changing the dominant culture’s perceptions of these peoples. Conversely, he was also questioning whether filmmaking can potentially harm Native people and contribute to the stereotypes already in circulation. Many scholars have argued that Hollywood has created harmful images of Native Americans, even while involving them intimately in filmmaking since its inception, and that these images have negatively impacted the lives of Indigenous people.<sup>1</sup> The first half of this chapter begins with a cautionary tale, a personal anecdote, and extends into an analysis of what is at stake in filmmaking that takes issue with the spectacle of indigeneity. The second half takes up Yazzie’s provocation – whether films ‘do the sheep any good’ – and asks what kinds of responsibilities Native American filmmakers may or may not have towards achieving that aim.

I initially delivered a version of this chapter in London at a conference called ‘Recasting Commodity and Spectacle in the Indigenous Americas’, held on 22 November 2012, the date of the Thanksgiving holiday in the United States. The irony of being a Native American in England on Thanksgiving was not lost on me. A multitude of stories surround this particular holiday – the national fantasy of the peaceful feast that brought together pilgrims from England and Wampanoags from what is now known as Massachusetts in 1621; the practice of English Puritans offering up thanksgiving prayers for the genocide of Indigenous peoples in the 1630s and 1640s; the institution of Thanksgiving as a national holiday by President Abraham Lincoln in 1863 in an effort to quell tensions between the North and South in the wake of the Civil War; and, of

1 See, for example, Aleiss (2005), Bataille and Silet (1980), Buscombe (2006), Churchill (1992), Friar and Friar (1972), Kilpatrick (1999) and Singer (2001).

course, the thanksgiving prayers offered up by Indigenous peoples throughout the Americas for millennia to recognise and honour all forms of life on Earth. To this list of Thanksgiving stories, I offered a personal anecdote about the celebration as a segue to discussing the intersection of Native American images and settler colonial popular culture in the US. It was designed to provoke thinking about the production mode of Indigenous films, their distribution, and the mass public's recalcitrant refusal to consider Indigenous history through a different lens (and what this might mean for Native American mediamakers and film scholars).

In November 2008, shortly before Thanksgiving, I submitted the revisions of a book manuscript about Native American directors, actors and spectators from the silent era to the present, and the problems and pleasures of representations of Native Americans in both Hollywood and independent film (Raheja, 2011).<sup>2</sup> Ironically, within a week afterwards, I became intimately aware of the persistent, sometimes violent afterlife of mainstream images of Native Americans, despite the decline in popularity of the Western and a resurgence in Indigenous filmmaking over the past 20 years. In November 2008 my daughter's kindergarten class reenacted the popular, if completely fictive, Thanksgiving spectacle with children cast as 'Indians' dressed in phantasmic redface costumes and others cast as pilgrims representing friendly, harmless neighbours. This annual event, designed to teach American history and commemorate the national holiday, is part of a 40-year-old school tradition in Claremont, the small college town in southern California where I live. When I asked the school about why this practice persisted when the histories it taught of other marginalised peoples were much less offensive, the ensuing uproar instigated local and national news coverage, threats of violence against my family, and various forms of electronic harassment that have persisted for several years.

Given that so many schools and elementary school systems have given up the racist practice of playing Indian, it was dismaying to learn that it still persists in a number of places in the United States (and continues to this day in Claremont). Imagine, for example, a public school tradition in Germany of dressing children up in Jewish concentration camp costumes and Nazi military regalia in order to teach national history and celebrate the Holocaust. Or dressing children up as African-American slaves and white masters to learn about and commemorate the long, brutal history of slavery in the so-called New World. In response to what was to me an equally surreal spectacle, I consulted with other parents whose children were in the same school district, local Tongva tribal members, colleagues who teach Native American Studies at university level, the Title 7

2 Publication was delayed in order to release the book in the Fall 2011 catalogue with other Indigenous-themed books.

Indian Education organisation in the Los Angeles School District, the National Indian Education Association, and students at my campus's Native American Student Program, all of whom opposed, in particular, the costuming aspect of the school's holiday celebration. As a result of these conversations, I sent a private email to my daughter's teacher expressing surprise at the planned pageant, which would perpetuate misleading mythologies of 'reconciliation' and US history, and constitute what Jonathan Walton calls 'intellectual child abuse' (Walton, 2008). In the email, I explained why my daughter would not be attending school on the day of the spectacle and suggested some age-appropriate alternatives to commemorate the season and teach children more sensitively about values of friendship and expressing gratitude.<sup>3</sup>

Stereotypical images of Native Americans are predicated on a persistent, wilful ignorance of the richness and diversity of their communities and their manifestation of what Anishinaabe scholar Gerald Vizenor terms 'survivance' (2008, p. 1) in the face of the world's most devastating genocide, one of epic proportions both in terms of the sheer number of individuals affected and the length of time Native people were subject to colonial and national efforts to eradicate them. The Thanksgiving costumes children typically don are cartoonish and historically inaccurate, as they borrow heavily from Plains Indian visual aesthetics, not those of tribes of the East Coast (although the issue is not really the verisimilitude of the costumes as the performance would be equally troubling were the regalia actually 'authentic'). The school's website features photographs from past years of children dressed up in Indian simulacra: war-painted faces and generic vests fringed with brown paper, pasta-shell necklaces and feathered headdresses.

Without my knowledge or consent, my child's teacher forwarded the email, with my name and that of my daughter, to the principal, who subsequently brought the unredacted message before a meeting of kindergarten teachers and parents. Following this meeting, the email was leaked to and read on the *John & Ken Show*, an incendiary, conservative talk programme that spun the story into a narrative about 'elitism' (a code word for critical thinking) and fears about the loss of white privilege in the aftermath of Obama's election. The show also ridiculed Native victims of epidemics such as smallpox.<sup>4</sup> Nationally syndicated newspapers and television news agencies such as the *Los Angeles*

3 There are hundreds of print and online sources about the teaching of Thanksgiving myths to children and finding alternatives to masquerading as 'Indians'. These include Bigelow and Peterson (1998), Keeler (1999), Williams (2009), Dow (2006) and Swamp and Printup, Jr. (1997). Debbie Reese, a Nambé Pueblo scholar, writes an engaging and important blog on this issue, 'American Indians in children's literature: critical perspectives of Indigenous peoples in children's books, the school curriculum, popular culture, and society-at-large'.

4 John Chester Kobylt and Kenneth Robertson Chiampou are the hosts of the *John & Ken Show*, which is broadcast on KFI, AM-640 in southern California.

*Times*, FOX and CNN, as well as internet blogs and local news outlets, covered the story with varying levels of veracity. While there were plenty of messages of support, I also received almost a thousand hateful and threatening telephone calls, faxes, emails and letters, many of which labelled me in misogynist terms, demonstrated a profound ignorance of US history, and verbally supported the genocide of Indigenous peoples. Some messages even advocated violence of various forms against my daughter (a threat that I took seriously, given that at least a third of all Native women are sexually abused in their lifetimes and sexual violence is used against women in general as a form of intimidation and silencing) (Williams, 2012). It is ironic that the defenders of the Thanksgiving myth, which purports to celebrate peaceful coexistence, would employ hate speech and threats of violence and intimidation in an attempt to stamp out any open discourse about this holiday.

The *Los Angeles Times* printed a vertiginous editorial on Thanksgiving day that both acknowledged the violence of the pilgrims towards Wampanoags in the wake of the so-called 'first Thanksgiving' and also advocated the spectacle of stereotypical costumes, noting that 'making Pilgrim hats and Indian headbands out of construction paper is a lot of fun' (2008). Failing to apprehend the difference between destroying the innocent fun of childhood and not wanting children to witness racist images during an extracurricular event, the editor concluded that the masquerade was amusing and should continue to be staged, though he did concede that 'Raheja and other Claremont parents angry about the pageant can be forgiven for wanting their children to understand the real story of North America's colonization and conquest'. Timothy Lange, a Seminole tribal member living in Los Angeles, replied to the editorial:

'Forgiven' for wanting their children and others to know the truth? Wow. Are you arguing that there is no age-appropriate way of teaching young children historical truth, and that therefore half-truths masquerading as fun are proper substitutes? Your view that complaining parents are 'oversensitive' insults us Indians and all Americans who want our children to understand history. We're lucky to live in a nation where we can observe our past without being shackled to it. Presenting the original Thanksgiving in its ironic context can be accomplished without harming 5-year-olds, without making anybody feel guilty and without stealing anybody's fun.<sup>5</sup>

Adding to the irony, the *Los Angeles Times* printed an article that contradicted the editorial's position on the opposite page. In it, historian Karl Jacoby contends that the US Thanksgiving holiday as currently celebrated is a post-Civil War fiction (2008). He also briefly details how the descendants of the

5 Letter to the editor, *Los Angeles Times*, available at: [www.latimes.com/news/printedition/asection/la-le-tuesday2-2008dec02,1,752092,full.story](http://www.latimes.com/news/printedition/asection/la-le-tuesday2-2008dec02,1,752092,full.story) (accessed 2 Sep. 2013).

Wampanoag present at the fabled 'first Thanksgiving' were executed, sold into slavery and abused in the decades following. While there is much emphasis placed on the comforting narrative of hospitality in celebrations of the pilgrims' settlement, few Americans know the tragic fate of many Wampanoags and other Indigenous people living in 'New England'.

Although the principals at both schools eventually decided to forgo the stereotypical costumes in favour of the children dressing in their respective school t-shirts to visually emblematised encountering the 'other' (a decision that would be reversed in subsequent years), some parents, as well as teachers, dressed children (and in some cases, themselves) in costume. Some parents even circulated flyers notifying others that costumes would be made available to anyone who wanted them, and one parent, who identified herself as Choctaw and whose son participated in the previous year's event, claimed, 'my son was so proud. In his eyes, he thinks that's what it looks like to be Indian' (Mehta, 2008). This comment alarmed me most because it indicates the way national propaganda predicated in part on Hollywood images stands in for any modicum of truth when it comes to Native images, even for Native people themselves.

My daughter attended school on the day of the event as a result of the principals' decision; however, when her father dropped her off at her classroom, another parent, who had come to the school dressed in a fringed paper vest and wearing red 'war paint', accosted the kindergarteners and their parents waiting outside the classroom door. She proceeded to perform a 'war dance' complete with 'war whoops' around the parents and children and then told those gathered to 'go to hell'. With no trace of irony, this individual threatened five-year-olds and their parents with what amounted to a thinly veiled threat of violence. As public pedagogy, this performance was intended to demonstrate to the children assembled that Native Americans are racially inferior – they don't communicate using words, but through war whoops and the occasional curse. In a perversion of Bakhtin's notion of carnival, redfacing and other forms of racial masquerade, with their attendant 'anonymity', were presented as acceptable ways to act out violence against subordinate and/or resistant, non-assimilationist groups that pose a threat to the discourse of white supremacy.

This parent engaged in a long-standing, contradictory practice of defining US national identity (and 'tradition') both in opposition to and closely identified with Native American culture. On the one hand, standard pedagogy on American origins, from elementary school to college, begins with either Columbus's landfall in 1492 or the Pilgrim Fathers' disembarkation at Plymouth Rock in 1620, conveniently eliding thousands of years of Indigenous history and presence in the Americas. On the other, Americans have created a national identity through appropriating fantastical revisions of Native history

and culture. As Rayna Green argues, 'one of the oldest and most pervasive forms of American cultural expression, indeed one of the oldest forms of affinity with American culture at the national level, is a "performance" I call "playing Indian"' (1988, p. 30). The parent in redface exemplified this love/hate relationship by performing a dance sequence patterned on Hollywood films, while at the same time disavowing concerns expressed by parents that this tradition promotes cultural and historical ignorance and stereotypes.

The elementary school found many imaginative and accurate ways of teaching Martin Luther King Junior's contributions to American society and his experiences of racism without resorting to dressing children in blackface. Surely there are equally creative and educational ways of helping young students understand other equally fraught histories of the United States. Dressing children up in stereotypical costumes rehearses traumatic histories and underwrites models of colonial power and white supremacy. In his study of numerous historical moments of playing Indian, Philip Deloria writes, 'From the very beginning, Indian-white relations and Indian play itself have modelled a characteristically American kind of domination in which the exercise of power was hidden, denied, qualified, or mourned. Not surprisingly, Indian play proved a fitting way to negotiate social struggles within white society that required an equally opaque vision of power' (1999, p. 187). In this fashion, elementary school Thanksgiving costume pageants stage colonisation as accidental, and even welcomed; the emphasis on cordial relations elides the specific history of the Wampanoag and other Indigenous communities throughout the Americas in the wake of European invasion, even while they provide the backdrop for white performances of power.

The contemporary pageants of Thanksgiving indicate that the US as a nation has created, and is deeply invested in, comforting fantasies of racial harmony that are underpinned by historical amnesia. If the dominant culture continues to violently perpetuate and relentlessly support the egregious stereotypes generated during Thanksgiving, by sports mascots, or other forms of visual culture such as film, then there remains little room for Native American self-representations to be visible. What happened at my daughter's school is not an isolated or anomalous incident. In 2006, an Omaha parent who requested that her son's San Francisco-area school not perform Thanksgiving reenactments was also intimidated; in 2008, a young Chumash man in Santa Barbara County received death threats and hate mail for protesting about his high school's stereotypical Indian mascot;<sup>6</sup> and Wampanoag docents at the Plimoth Plantation historical site continue to

6 See the following news sources for information about these two events: Cholo (2002) and Murillo (2009).

be subjected to verbal insults and ignorance.<sup>7</sup> These cases illustrate why early Native American cinematographers, performers and artists operated primarily within the bounds of hegemonic discourses out of fear of violent reprisal, while also subtly critiquing Indian images.

The experience of publishing a book about Native American images on the eve of the Thanksgiving debacle helped me to elucidate the ways in which Indigenous media might not be effective in terms of its public pedagogy in a historically amnesic state. It is common knowledge that images of Native Americans have deeply influenced settler colonial visual culture since at least 1492. From engravings depicting the putative cannibalism and savagery of Indigenous peoples through the 16th and 17th centuries, to silent cinema and Western films in the 20th century, to historical revisionist movies in the first decade of the 21st century, Native Americans have been central to European American colonial and nationalist fantasies.

Indigenous peoples have visually represented their own cultural practices for thousands of years, and have also been depicting colonialism since the invasion of their homelands. A growing transnational project of Indigenous film has recently emerged that is geographically dispersed throughout the 'Americas' but nevertheless politically linked and networked. The list of filmmakers engaged in this project is far too lengthy to detail here. Igloolik Isuma, Shelley Niro, Chris Eyre and *Video in the Villages* are perhaps the best-known examples of individuals and collectives who challenge entrenched stereotypes about Indigenous peoples and offer original, engaging and insightful representations of historical and contemporary communities.

In thinking through the 'afterlife' of the images that have shaped contemporary representations of Native Americans, I would like to investigate what kind of impact, if any, this growing body of important, Indigenous-authored work has had, particularly on the mass public in the United States (since this is the primary site of my research). In other words, do these films represent work that Yazzie would consider beneficial for Native Americans? Native directors have been producing documentary and fiction films with Indigenous content since the silent era, yet have the lived experiences of these peoples improved as a result? And in what ways, if any, have settler/colonial attitudes towards Indigenous peoples changed as a result of filmic self-representations by Native artists? Concomitantly, we should ask what kind of

7 For a contemporary Wampanoag perspective on Thanksgiving and Indian costumes, see Fifis (2008). According to that article, Linda Coombs and Paula Peters, Mashpee Wampanoag docents at the reconstructed Plimoth Plantation and descendants of the Native Americans whose homelands the Puritans colonised, regularly face the dominant culture's ignorance about their community. Peters states that visitors often remark, 'I thought we killed all of you', and that staff constantly have to ask children not to come to the site dressed in Indian costume.

burden we place on Indigenous filmmakers by expecting them to undo the racist imagery that has been in circulation for the past 500-plus years. To what extent are Native filmmakers charged with the responsibility of representing indigeneity in ways that engage Indigenous knowledges and how might this be accomplished through non-conventional, tribally specific methods? And, lastly, given the constraints Native filmmakers face in terms of content, form, economic pressures and limited circulation, is it possible for their films to change public opinion?

With the exception of *Smoke Signals* (1988), directed and coproduced by the Cheyenne/Arapaho filmmaker Chris Eyre, documentary film has been the most prevalent vehicle for offering Native perspectives to a wide spectatorship. Such film performs a self-consciously pedagogic function, typically attempting to educate its audience (usually assumed to be non-Native) about some aspect of Native history or culture. Documentary cinema conventionally seeks to present a social reality in order to compel the spectator to take a particular action, whether that action spurs new forms of intellectual production or political activism. According to Bill Nichols, this form of cinema operates as a 'vehicle[ ] of domination and conscience, power and knowledge, desire and will' (2001, p. 36). It is invested in representing a version of the world that masquerades as the 'real', a generally sober, putatively objective vision of a series of events or social issues.

Contemporary documentary films by Native filmmakers employ the conventions of the genre to the same ends. Navajo filmmaker, activist, and musician Klee Benally's 2005 film *The Snowbowl Effect*, for example, documents the desecration of the San Francisco Peaks, a mountain range in the Four Corners area of the American Southwest that is sacred to over a dozen Native communities. The film employs testimony by environmentalists, biologists and Native activists to make a case against the expansion of the Snowbowl ski resort and the use of wastewater to create snow, a process that the resort argues is necessary as a result of global warming. This film describes a non-fictional series of events by representing a particular constituency (accentuated by the fact that Benally is personally involved in direct actions against the Snowbowl expansion project) and by entreating the audience to take action against the project by writing letters, screening the film, and occupying/blocking the new roads and wastewater pipelines that the resort is building.

The five-part documentary series *We Shall Remain* (2009), also directed by Chris Eyre and produced under the auspices of the US Public Broadcasting System (PBS), is another important cultural and political achievement. Native directors, producers, scholars and actors on every level were involved in the series. It begins with an episode about the events surrounding the pilgrims' invasion of Wampanoag homelands and ends with one on the FBI's 1973

siege of Wounded Knee on the Pine Ridge Reservation. *We Shall Remain* is part of PBS's ongoing and popular 'American Experience' series. It has very high production values, the result of generous funding by philanthropic organisations such as the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, the Ford Foundation and the National Endowment for the Humanities. It has also been endorsed by Native American Public Telecommunications, the National Indian Education Association and Native Public Media. The PBS is a large, institutional, fairly mainstream organisation that often offers watered-down, politically empty content and whose intended audience is 'viewers like you', a tagline that obscures the class, race, education level and age demographics of its spectatorship. Yet, unlike most documentary makers working on Native American subjects, the producers of *We Shall Remain* successfully collaborated with Native filmmakers and community members on a project that is critical, to some extent, of settler colonialism and of media representations that confine Indigenous peoples to the past.

*We Shall Remain's* most remarkable attributes, however, are probably its holistic and comprehensive distribution and pedagogical strategies. The episodes were screened on many local public broadcasting channels, so were viewed by a broad-ranging and large spectatorship. Additionally, the PBS website provides an opportunity to watch clips of the episodes in the series, purchase the DVD collection and learn more about contemporary Native history and culture through other multimedia projects. 'Beyond Broadcast', a teacher's guide to the project, features an interactive map detailing shoot locations and communities featured in the episodes; a listing of *We Shall Remain* initiatives in different states involving Native community centres, local libraries, museums and universities; and information about organisations that support the work of the series. This link encourages viewers to become involved more intimately and on a more sustained level with the issues raised in the series. Most importantly, PBS creates a reciprocal relationship with Native communities through two Indigenous-focused projects launched from the *We Shall Remain* website. 'ReelNative' is a link that offers emerging Native filmmakers, such as Keely Curliss, Michael David Little and Rebecca Nelson, the opportunity to showcase their fiction shorts in a respected and prestigious national venue. It also empowers viewers to tell their own stories in an interactive format through local PBS affiliates. Additionally, the 'Native Now' link features current news coverage and documentary film under three critical rubrics: language, sovereignty and enterprise.

While PBS and Native and non-Native documentary filmmakers perform admirable work attempting to educate a wide audience about historical and contemporary Indigenous issues, there are a number of critical problems with the documentary form in representing Native knowledges. These include

the conventionality of the expository format with its presumed non-Native audience; use of 'expert' testimony (often by a non-Native scholar) to explain, interpret and mediate the ascribed alterity of the subject; and the lack of suitable idioms and conventions within the confines of the genre for presenting Indigenous epistemologies on Indigenous terms. For example, Benally in *The Snowbowl Effect* foregrounds the environmental effects of using wastewater to create snow within the various ecosystems in the fragile Four Corners area, but also the more ephemeral, less scientifically visible or verifiable issue of the sacred relationship many Native Americans have with specific cultural and physical landscapes. The 'land as church' analogy works to some degree, but it is nearly impossible to convey exactly what it means to think of land as sacred in a conventional documentary format.

Series such as *We Shall Remain* are also limited in the cultural work they do insofar as they always situate Native history and culture already within the context of the US state, often within the discourses of 'multiculturalism' and ethnic and racial 'inclusion'. In this respect, the documentaries have fostered a somewhat mistaken belief that Natives pine for recognition as Americans with full civil and legal rights (a rhetoric often associated with African Americans, Asian Americans, and Latina/os) rather than recognising the autochthony of Native peoples with cultural practices, knowledges and sovereignty that pre-existed the settler/colonial nation state. The *We Shall Remain* website describes the series as 'spanning three hundred years' to 'tell the story of pivotal moments in US history from the Native American perspective'. Within the documentary film tradition, Native history is rarely, if ever, conceived as *a priori* to the founding of settler colonial states such as Canada, the US, Mexico and so forth, and it is rarely, if ever, presented on Indigenous terms. In other words, an Indigenous presence, when it is marked at all, appears somewhere on the timeline of a settler/colonial history originating in 1492 that always privileges a white perspective as the point of entry.

The constrictions of documentary as a form, and economic concerns within the circuitry of marketing and funding, present challenges in representing the complexities of Indigenous histories and cultures in critically engaged, nuanced ways. The work of Arnait Video Productions, an Inuit women's film collective based in Nunavut, Canada, is a striking exception to conventional documentary filmmaking traditions. For example, films such as *Anaana (Mother)* (2001), a biopic about Vivi Kunuk, codirected by Mary Kunuk, her daughter, portray traditional Inuit practices such as seal hunting (evocative of *Nanook of the North*, the classic 1922 silent docudrama), but do so by acknowledging both cultural continuity and change. The film opens with an Inuit family riding snowmobiles to get to their summer camp. Later, the main protagonist, Vivi, harpoons a seal with a hockey stick outfitted with a blade while displaying

her keen – perhaps particularly Inuit – sense of scatological humour. The film unapologetically offers up a view of contemporary Inuit culture through its use of (subtitled) Inuktitut and its depiction of elements such as the ingesting of raw meat – often associated with more primitive societies as Claude Lévi-Strauss (1958) famously noted – and the playing out of gender relationships that might be viewed by non-Inuit to be queer or atypical, all without the mediation of ‘expert’ testimony, a conventional plot trajectory, or explanation of much of the film’s content.

Fiction films present alternative ways of representing Indigenous history and reaching a wider audience, as the case of *Smoke Signals* has proven. Although much more costly to produce, they make possible more imaginative renderings of Indigenous culture. I would argue that this genre is effective at responding to Yazzie’s questions about the ‘work’ of filmmaking because it has the potential to portray Native people as complicated characters and can provide a point of entry for a more complex audience response by casting Native issues within a broader emotional, cultural, physical and spiritual realm than is usually presented within the more narrow concerns of documentary. For example, Arnait’s best-known fiction film, *Before Tomorrow* (2008), dramatises the poignant story of an Inuit grandmother and her grandson who starve to death following a devastating smallpox epidemic in the early 19th century. The story, narrated in Inuktitut, shot on location in Nunavik and involving intense collaboration between the community and the production team, features long, slow shots of the landscape that might not be interpreted as part of the plot by spectators accustomed to Hollywood-style filmmaking. *Before Tomorrow* also supplies precisely the kind of individual, personal story that would garner sympathy and do the kind of work that the television series *Roots* performed for African Americans in the late 1970s and the various films based on *The Diary of Anne Frank* did for Jewish people in personalising the Holocaust. Arnait’s films employ what Steven Leuthold terms ‘indigenous aesthetics’ to narrate Inuit history for both an Inuit and non-Inuit audience through the use of a specifically Inuit plot, form and mode of production. ‘Indigenous aesthetics’, according to Leuthold, ‘is primarily synthetic, involving a search for and appreciation of the connections between categories of experience ... Continuity of expression – whether its source is historical, religious, conceptual, generational, tribal, or cosmological – is a central ingredient’ (1998, p. 190).

Fiction films that are more experimental in nature present even more possibilities for representing Indigenous culture, notions of time and space, ontologies and individual perspectives through an Indigenous aesthetic. One film that exemplifies how experimentalism can be harnessed as a vehicle for Indigenous aesthetics is Iglulik Isuma’s critically acclaimed feature *Atanarjuat/*

*The Fast Runner* (2001). Like *Anaana* and *Before Tomorrow*, *Atanarjuat* features Inuktitut dialogue and long, slow, seemingly non-diegetic shots of the landscape. Its amateur actors do not conform to Hollywood standards of beauty, there are very few action sequences, and some of the scenes, sub-plots and Native humour might not 'make sense' to a non-Inuit spectator.

Some Indigenous filmmakers have utilised experimental cinematic techniques in order to present Native knowledges on Native terms, often through staging dream sequences, non-linear plots and oral narratives, as well as by using animation. According to Edward Small, experimental film can be defined as having one or more of the following five characteristics: a small production crew; low or ultra-low budget; shorter length than a full feature film (which makes them harder to broadcast on television, play in a Cineplex or schedule for festivals); abstract imagery; and the tendency to subvert classical cinematic storytelling through non-linear structure, unfamiliar plots, shocking imagery and/or unusual camera angles (1995). Experimental film is particularly effective because of its ability to convey a sense of Indigenous 'feeling' through cinematic forms more suited to Native knowledges. For example, Chris Eyre's first film, *Tenacity* (1995), produced while he was a student at New York University's Tisch School of the Arts, is a short black-and-white production that evokes the sense of imminent violence that plagues reservations. Shelley Niro's experimental film *It Starts with a Whisper* (1993) likewise creates a sense of Indigenous 'feeling' in the opening sequence with its Mohawk language voiceover and extreme close-up shots of Haudenosaunee beadwork and a camp fire. Niro's specific perspectives could not be achieved within the confines of the documentary form. Her later film, *Suite: Indian* (2005), also highlights Haudenosaunee representations of matriarchal relationships, prophecy, cosmology and time, along with kinetic understandings of origin stories. Experimental film (or experimental work in any artistic genre) is limited, however, because it can be so unfamiliar to spectators that it is dismissed as too strange or esoteric. This kind of film rarely reaches a wide audience because of content and length and Indigenous filmmakers are hard-pressed to find funding for work that is non-traditional and unlikely to generate revenue.

Electronic media has become an avenue for disseminating both documentary and fiction film for Indigenous artists. Sites such as YouTube and Rezkast offer free content to spectators with an internet connection all over the globe, making it possible for Indigenous filmmakers to provide self-representations and other artistic content on their own terms. Electronic media also allow Indigenous artists who can afford even the cheapest of video technologies to work from their home community, instead of a studio in a metropolis. The limitation of this form of media is that there is so much content on the web

that it is hard to compete for an audience that has to sift through so many videos. The Inuit production company Igloodik Isuma addressed this concern by creating Isumatv, a television broadcast station tailored to address specifically Indigenous concerns and thereby build Indigenous visual culture. IsumaTV offers courses in Indigenous languages, truth and reconciliation interviews, experimental shorts, media workshops and access to work by Indigenous mediamakers in places ranging from Sapmi in northern Europe to Mapuche territory in South America.

In addition, electronic media can provide a broad, transnational space for conversations about issues of importance to Indigenous communities. The Native American comedy group, the 1491s, for example, produces low-budget shorts, public service announcements and music videos that address a full range of Native concerns – from the devastating rates of sexual abuse of Native women to the appropriation of Native imagery by corporations such as Urban Outfitters. The group, composed of Dallas Goldtooth (Navajo/Lakota), Sterlin Harjo (Seminole/Creek), Migizi Pensoneau (Ponca/Ojibwe), Ryan Red Corn (Osage) and Bobby Wilson (Dakota), critique Hollywood representations of Native people and, more importantly, how the latter have embraced stereotype as ‘tradition’. The 1491s’ videos provide a kind of ‘virtual reservation’ that invites spectators to engage critically with the images that are being screened. They also open the possibility for the creation of video responses and off-screen conversations about Indigenous issues for an audience that is much broader and more diverse than that of film spectators.

Recently, the 1491s engaged in a video critique of ‘Indian’ spectacles by releasing a ‘Halloween responsibly PSA’ (public service announcement) featuring ‘Matt Kull, concerned white man’, a character who implores his fellow white people not to wear Indian simulacra costumes such as those created by school children for Thanksgiving and Halloween celebrations. Kull calls the costumes a ‘disingenuous, culturally racist façade that reduces real human beings to hypersexualized, turkey feather douche bags ... a cultural skid mark on the underwear of America’. (The intertitles read: ‘Here are some big words, I hope you read books and stuff’.) The 1491s conclude the video by dressing Kull in blackface and an Afro wig, ostensibly demonstrating how Indian costumes are just as offensive and racist. A number of highly emotional blogs and YouTube comments responded to the video: some expressed outrage that a Native American comedy group would use such a charged and patently racist image of blackface for any purpose; others saw blackface as the only effective tool to teach how equally problematic redface is.<sup>8</sup>

8 See, for example, YouTube videos ‘1491s on blackface’ (2012a) and ‘One Indigenous perspective on 1491’s use of blackface’ (2012), and the tumblr video, ‘Please stop with the blackface comparisons’ (n.d.).

In response to the heated debate caused by their 'PSA', the 1491s issued a video rejoinder: '1491s on blackface',<sup>9</sup> in which the group films a woman dressed in a stereotypical Utah Utes Indian sports costume at a University of Utah event. She identifies herself as 'half Navajo and half African American' and states that she has no problem with sports teams that appropriate Native American imagery. Yet when she is asked if she would dress in blackface for a team, she responds that she would not and has 'absolutely no idea' why redface is permissible but blackface is not. Perhaps the 1491s could have presented the connections between blackface and redface differently – Rob Schmidt suggested in his Newspaper Rock blog that it might have been more effective to juxtapose historical photographs of actors in blackface next to contemporary photographs of hipsters in redface or to also dress up in blackface at a Utah Utes rally to gauge fans' responses to both racist costumes (2012). Yet what is perhaps most critical is that the video has produced some vital dialogue on race, racism and spectacle in the US, placing individuals from various walks of life in sometimes-civil, sometimes-hostile conversation with each other. The YouTube commentary, for example, illustrates a range of responses, with some writers expressing how their ideas have changed in response to others' comments, and some refining their original thoughts on the subject of costuming as they read the reactions posted. In turn, these comments and blog posts motivated the 1491s to reframe their presentation of blackface through the subsequent video that defends the style and content of their original PSA. This internet dialogue demonstrates how the videographers take their own public pedagogy and what Yazzie would call 'the sheep' seriously.

Disappointingly, beyond videos produced for the internet, Native films in the US continue to have limited distribution, only a small and generally already sympathetic audience and decreased funding opportunities in a nation state that is increasingly unwilling to finance the arts. Despite its achievements in creating and putting forward a range of dynamic representations, increasingly in the realm of YouTube and other electronic media, Indigenous filmmaking has done little in its first one hundred years to change a public opinion that swings from ignorant to hostile when it comes to Native issues. Nevertheless, I am critical of expecting Native filmmakers to carry the burden of undoing over five hundred years of misrepresentation. Although limited, the kinds of work Indigenous films do is crucial to our communities. The process of creating the films performs important functions for the filmmaker as both an aesthetic and a political project. Indigenous spectators benefit from seeing positive representations of themselves on screen and films play an important part as a kind of love letter to future generations who can use this visual archive in ways we may not be able to imagine today.

9 See YouTube video, also entitled '1491s on blackface' (2012b).

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## 2. Modernity and the indigenous in centennial celebrations of independence in Mexico City, 1910 and 1921

*Michael J. Gonzales*

In 1910, Mexico commemorated the centennial of Father Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla's call for independence from Spain by staging a month-long celebration before an audience of tens of thousands of countrymen and foreign dignitaries. The occasion permitted President Porfirio Díaz and his inner circle, who had governed Mexico since 1876, to celebrate Mexico's emergence as a modern nation, and to present an official narrative of Mexican history and culture through speeches, monuments, parades, conferences and museum exhibitions. In cultural-historical terms, these events presented a version of Mexican history that showcased Mexico's pre-Columbian past, embraced its Hispanic heritage and ignored its contemporary indigenous population.

The Porfirians<sup>1</sup> celebrated pre-Columbian civilisations, such as the Aztecs, the Toltecs and the Maya, because of their desire to establish an impressive historical pedigree. They compared pre-Columbian cultures to those of ancient Greece and Rome, and invested in reconstructing ancient cities, such as Teotihuacán, and in building a national museum to display and protect the national patrimony. Merging the indigenous with the modern, however, created contradictions that proved difficult to reconcile. Porfirians disassociated pre-Columbian cultures from contemporary indigenous peoples, believing them to be racially inferior and an obstacle to progress. Scholars and political leaders used racist explanations based on Social Darwinism to explain Natives' poverty and social degradation, a theory that ignored the negative consequences of three centuries of colonialism. Porfirians believed that Mexico's future material and social progress would be facilitated by replacing Indians in the work place with European immigrants, or by acculturating Natives into mestizos through public education and secularisation. The centennial celebration promoted mestizos as proto-typical Mexicans and celebrated independence leader José María Morelos as the quintessential mestizo hero, and liberal icon Benito Juárez as Mexico's most famous acculturated Indian. This was an important step in the formation of

1 Supporters of President Porfirio Díaz.

the idea of Mexico as a mestizo nation, a discourse generally associated with post-revolutionary governments.

The Mexican Revolution from 1910–20 swept away the Díaz dictatorship, and provided revolutionary leaders with opportunities to revise Mexico's historical narrative and national identity. In 1921, President Álvaro Obregón ordered the celebration of the centenary of Mexican independence, and this would provide an ideal stage on which to revise the Porfirian image of Mexico. Although the 1921 centenary reasserted Mexico's commitment to modernity and cultural links with pre-Columbian civilisations, in a dramatic departure from Porfirian times, it also presented contemporary indigenous culture as integral to national identity. This transformation reflected the liberating cultural-ideological impact of the revolution, and political pressure from below to fashion a more inclusive image of national culture. The opportunity for creativity was enhanced by artistic trends in Europe, particularly primitivism, which saw traditional culture as a reflection of the collective spirit of a people, and as inspiration for new artistic production.

During the 1921 centenary, impresarios drew upon indigenous culture to stage original theatrical and musical galas that proved widely popular with Mexico City audiences. These productions fused the traditional with the modern, creating a new style, and helped to launch the nascent aesthetics of revolutionary indigenismo. The centennial also included a major exhibition of contemporary indigenous artisanal ware, which drew large crowds and contributed to the commercialisation of Mexican *artesanía*. These shifts in presentation of national identity, however, did not supersede the emerging idea of the country as a mestizo nation. Instead, indigenous culture was appropriated and used by impresarios and the state to represent the traditional, natural and authentic Mexico, while the image of the mestizo nation was associated with modernity from the Porfiriato<sup>2</sup> to the present. Cultural brokers also selected what to present about the indigenous past in museum displays and in the reconstruction of pre-Columbian cities.

### **Centennial celebrations in historical perspective**

Large-scale ceremonies and spectacles were regularly staged by pre-Columbian, Spanish and Mexican states in celebration of religious and secular holidays important to maintaining political and social hierarchies (Carrasco, 1999; Curcio-Nagy, 2004; Beezley and Lorey, 2001). Following independence in 1821, Mexico's leaders used Independence Day celebrations to advance their political agendas through associations with revolutionary era heroes. Liberals drew parallels between themselves and the populist warrior-priests, Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla and José María Morelos, while conservatives

2 The 35-year period from 1876 when Díaz and his allies ruled Mexico.

remembered Agustín de Iturbide, the pro-Church monarchist who briefly ruled as Agustín I (1821–2). Following independence, civil conflict between liberals and conservatives increased the propaganda value of Independence Day celebrations (Beezley and Lorey, 2001; Duncan, 1998; Thomson, 2002).

A disastrous war with the United States in the mid-19th century left Mexico vulnerable to a Franco-Austrian invasion and the installation of the Archduke of Austria as the Emperor Maximilian. He ruled Mexico with the support of Napoleon III of France and Mexican conservatives from 1862–7, when liberals led by Benito Juárez ousted the invaders and executed Maximilian. Liberal war hero General Porfirio Díaz seized the presidency in 1876 and brought political stability and economic growth to Mexico.

Díaz forged a dictatorship based on authoritarianism, state-sponsored capitalism, secularism and spectacles that reminded the public of the Liberal party's patriotic struggle against imperialism. Díaz cleverly brokered political compromises with his conservative opponents, such as the hierarchy of the Catholic Church and businessmen, and crushed those who threatened the *pax Porfiriana*, including the rebellious Yaqui Indians, striking workers and the pro-labour Partido Liberal Mexicano (Hu-DeHart, 1984; Cockcroft, 1976; Anderson, 1976; Gonzales, 1994). Díaz also promoted a liberal, secular state by creating national holidays honouring Hidalgo, Morelos and Juárez. Such annual celebrations linked these patriots together in a historical narrative that privileged liberal contributions to Mexico and largely ignored its Catholic and conservative heritage (Gonzales, 2002, ch. 1; 2007). Díaz also embellished the narrative by staging lavish state funerals for deceased liberal war heroes and politicians, which fashioned a hegemonic relationship between the state and the people (Esposito, 2010).

In an international context, Mexico's commemoration of secular heroes and events also reflected a trend in western Europe and its former colonies to mark political and cultural events through spectacles and new national holidays. This became popular following the French Revolution as republican governments and nationalist movements promoted their agendas through the commemoration of revolutionary and cultural icons. Such events also established secular heroes and holidays that competed with saints and religious holidays as markers of national identity, a policy advocated by the French positivist Auguste Comte and the Scottish historian Thomas Carlyle (Quinault, 1998; Gildea, 1994; Simpson, 2005; Rearick, 1974; 1977).

### **The 1910 centennial celebration in Mexico City**

Díaz and his associates used the centenary to present a historical narrative that credited liberals with transforming Mexico into a modern nation. The government welcomed thousands of visitors from the countryside and

foreign dignitaries from Europe, Asia, Latin America and the United States, and provided them with continuous entertainment during September 1910. Porfirians proudly displayed their capital city, which featured a grand avenue (the Paseo de la Reforma), a large park in the city centre (the Nuevo Bosque de Chapultepec), electric tramways, and upscale suburbs with modern plumbing, streetlights and manicured gardens. Their blueprint for a modern Mexico City was based on Haussmann's remodelling of Paris. The money for modernisation came primarily from the exportation of minerals and commercial crops, facilitated by a network of railroads built during the Porfiriato. The centennial celebration also featured exhibitions of natural resources designed to encourage more foreign investment (Gonzales, 2007; Tenorio-Trillo, 1996a).

Material progress based on natural resources, science and technology made the case for Mexico's acceptance as a modern nation, and urban beautification demonstrated a cosmopolitan flair. In addition, elites captured essential elements of Mexican history and culture in monuments, museum exhibitions, parades and ceremonies. For example, monuments of historic figures decorated roundabouts (*glorietas*) along the Paseo de la Reforma, providing a historical narrative for passers-by. Those honoured included Cuauhtémoc, the Aztec ruler who resisted the Spaniards, King Charles IV of Spain, and independence heroes (Tenenbaum, 1994).

Porfirians compared Mesoamerican pre-Columbian civilisations with famous cultures of the ancient world, including those of Greece, Rome, Egypt, China and Persia. As Christina Bueno shows, leading up to the centennial celebration the government charged the National Museum's director, Leopoldo Batres, with expanding the collection. The museum was a symbol of national patrimony and identity, and also served to protect Mexico's antiquities from collectors in Europe and the United States. At the request of the government, local collectors donated antiquities, and construction crews in Mexico City regularly unearthed Aztec treasures and sent them to the museum. An ambitious Batres also organised expeditions into the countryside to collect artefacts (Bueno, 2010).

Indigenous people, however, sometimes resisted Batres's attempts to remove pre-Columbian objects from their communities. For example, in Tetlama, Morelos state, villagers prevented Batres from removing a monumental carving of a female figure they worshipped as the goddess of marriage and equated with the Aztec mother of gods, Tonantzin. Villagers made offerings to the goddess, referred to as 'La India', to help women find suitable husbands. When Batres attempted to move 'La India' to the national museum, community members hid the massive carving in the village church, and defended their cultural and religious beliefs. The use of the local church as a hiding place suggests the cooperation of the local Catholic priest, and his tolerance of religious practices rooted in paganism.

Batres and Mexico's leaders valued pre-Columbian objects as part of the national patrimony and Mexico's historical and cultural identity. However, the study of pre-Columbian cultures was still in its infancy, and Batres and his staff were learning on the job. The curators' lack of knowledge led them to exhibit objects from different cultures together in a haphazard way, and to present inaccurate interpretations of indigenous symbols and script. Displays also reflected the interests of curators and the state, and ignored the meaning and function of the objects for their communities of origin. In this way, the artefacts' importance to the indigenous communities' cultural and historical identity was sacrificed to the state planners' desire to link modern Mexico with its pre-Columbian past (Bueno, 2010).

The centennial celebration provided the perfect occasion to draw attention to Mexico's pre-Columbian heritage. Visitors were encouraged to visit the National Museum, and President Díaz posed for a publicity photograph before a massive Aztec sacrificial altar curators incorrectly identified as the 'Aztec calendar'. In addition, Minister of Education Justo Sierra opened the International Congress of Americanists, which included scholarly papers on pre-Columbian cultures, and hosted a tour of the recently reconstructed Teotihuacán, where guests heard lectures on ancient Mesoamerica by eminent anthropologists Edward Seler and Franz Boas. Following the Congress, Boas remained in Mexico and served as the first director of the government-sponsored International School of Anthropology (García, 1911, pp. 225–35; Gonzales, 2007, pp. 523–4).

A 'Desfile Histórico', or historical parade, was a marquee event of the *centenario*. It presented a visual history lesson understandable to both illiterate Mexicans and educated observers unfamiliar with Mexican history. As a performance, it had kinship with spectacles and ceremonies used by both indigenous groups and Spaniards for centuries to convey politico-cultural messages (Taylor, 2003; Hellier-Tinoco, 2011; Curcio-Nagy, 2004), and also resembled the Porfirians' use of lavish state funerals to celebrate their ideological and political legacy (Esposito, 2010). In 1910, centennial organisers Guillermo de Landa y Escandón and José Casarín designed the Desfile Histórico to present three historical events which would encapsulate Mexican history from the Spanish invasion until independence: the encounter between Hernán Cortés and the Emperor Moctezuma in 1519, symbolising the Spanish invasion; the 'Paseo del Pendón', a colonial ceremony that commemorated the military defeat of the indigenous peoples; and the entry into Mexico City of the army that ousted Spain in 1821. Thus, the parade emphasised the subjugation of the indigenous by the Spanish, and the winning of political independence from Spain.

The parade unfolded through the heart of Mexico City in three separate acts. In the first act, 809 performers representing Aztecs and conquistadors marched in period costumes and weaponry. Moctezuma's entourage included Native lords, priests, warriors and servants, while Cortés's force consisted of Spanish cavalry, infantry, crossbowmen, musketeers, Tlaxcalan allies, Catholic priests and Malintzin (also known as La Malinche and Doña Marina), Cortés's Indian mistress and translator.<sup>3</sup> In the second act, the Paseo del Pendón, several hundred performers recreated an annual colonial ceremony commemorating the Spanish Conquest of Tenochtitlán. In the final act, performers costumed as independence leaders and their troops marched into the central plaza. The parade also included allegorical carriages dedicated to the memory of Hidalgo and Morelos and floats that commemorated rebel victories (*El Diario*, 16 Sep. 1910; García, 1911, pp. 46–50; Gonzales, 2007, pp. 512–13; Tenorio-Trillo, 1996a, pp. 98–9).

The organisers of the Desfile Histórico staged a spectacle, which, from their ideological perspective, was historically accurate, didactic and inclusive. They outfitted performers in period costumes and recruited Indians to march in Moctezuma's entourage, and lighter-skinned Mexicans to play Spaniards. Envoys recruited Natives from the provinces and the National Penitentiary to march in the parade, but encountered resistance in some areas. For example, Indians from the state of Morelos refused the invitation to participate, expressing concern that they might be conscripted to suppress a civil conflict in San Luis Potosí (Tenorio-Trillo, 1996a, p. 99, n. 81). Distrust of Díaz's government ran high in Morelos, where rural communities would rise in rebellion against the regime in the months ahead (Womack, 1968).

## Indians, mestizos and Spaniards

For the moment, the federal government ignored the simmering tensions in Morelos and concentrated on staging their gala centennial celebration of independence. The carefully orchestrated event addressed in speeches, monuments and ceremonies the complex historical relationship between Spaniards, Indians and mestizos. The celebration commemorated the military victory over imperial Spain and the creation of Mexico, but it also presented an opportunity for reconciliation between the former mother country and its

3 An iconic and controversial figure, Malintzin was a young slave girl from Coatzacoalcos, given to Cortés by Indians, and had two children by him. Her skills as a translator, working in conjunction with the Spaniard Jerónimo de Aguilar, helped Cortés defeat the Aztecs. For many Mexicans, she is cast as a 'shamed' woman who symbolises the violation of the Spanish Conquest and is referred to as 'La Malinche'. Some historians, however, have attempted to understand her choices within the context of the time, place and circumstances for indigenous women. For a fascinating discussion see Townsend (2006).

rebellious colony. Spain's delegation presented Porfirio Díaz with the Real y Distinguida Orden de Carlos III, the highest honour that Spain could bestow on a foreign dignitary, and Mexico's Spanish émigré community arranged for the return of José María Morelos' uniform. By 1910, many Porfirians had drawn closer to their Spanish cultural roots, and had embraced the modernism of Enrique Rodó and Rubén Darío, who celebrated Hispanic culture and criticised American materialism. For the centennial celebration, the Porfirians acknowledged their Hispanic heritage by dedicating a monument to Isabel la Católica (García, 1911, pp. 1–32, 70–1; *El Imparcial*, 18 Sep. 1910; Gonzales, 2007, p. 511; Tenorio-Trillo, 1996a, pp. 101–2).

In Mexico, racial definitions could be socially constructed and racial identity was a tricky business. In 1910, the national census estimated that Indians constituted a third of the country's population, but this proportion increased to half if one included Central Mexico's large bilingual population. Most Indians closely identified with their communities of origin, and there did not exist among Natives a sense of pan-indigenous identity, nor a consistently clear identification as Mexicans (Knight, 1996).

By 1910, land consolidation had forced thousands of Natives from the countryside into cities in search of work (Johns, 1997; Piccato, 2001). This trend alarmed municipal authorities who arrested migrants as vagrants, and passed ordinances that required indigenous men to exchange loin-cloths for trousers, sombreros for felt hats and sandals for shoes (Johns, 1997, pp. 53–6; González Navarro, 1957, pp. 396–7; Piccato, 2001, pp. 13–50; Gonzales, 2007, p. 510). Porfirians considered Native peoples to be primitives, and scholars accepted racist theories based on Social Darwinism and phrenology. For example, scientific papers presented at the International Congress of Americanists attempted to understand Indians' racial inferiority through bone measuring and the anthropometry of their skulls (Tenorio-Trillo, 1996a, p. 100). In polite society, indigenous features created anxiety among influential mestizos, including Porfirio Díaz who sprinkled powder on his face to appear whiter (Lomnitz, 2001, p. 51).

Porfirian public intellectuals identified mestizos as the country's most important social-ethnic group, and mestizaje as the solution to Mexico's so-called Indian problem. For example, Andrés Molina Enríquez wrote that: 'The fundamental and unavoidable basis of all the work that in future will be undertaken for the good of the country must be the continuation of the mestizos as the dominant ethnic element and as the controlling political base of the population' (cited in Knight, 1996). Justo Sierra, the Minister of Education, added that: 'We need to attract immigrants from Europe so as to obtain a cross with the indigenous race ... for only European blood can keep the level of civilisation that has produced our nationality from sinking, which

would mean regression, not evolution' (cited in Buffington, 2000, pp. 146–7). When mass European immigration to Mexico failed to materialise, Porfirians focused on promoting mestizaje through acculturation of the indigenous. This strategy relied on public education to teach Spanish, science, history and national identity.

The centennial celebration, selecting certain national heroes with particular qualities, paid special attention to José María Morelos, the mestizo independence leader. The fallen hero's uniform, returned to Mexico by Spain, received the equivalent of a state funeral by being placed in an ornate carriage guarded by a contingent of troops and led by an honour guard, which carried an image of the Virgin of Guadalupe, Mexico's Indian patron saint and symbol of the independence movement. The cortège marched from the Spanish Embassy to the central square, where President Díaz presided over a ceremony that included the ringing of cathedral bells, performances by military bands and a flag raising that reportedly left everyone in tears (*El Diario*, 18 Sep. 1910). In his address to the nation, Díaz praised Morelos as Mexico's 'greatest hero' and 'most famous man', and described the opportunity to hold Morelos's uniform as 'the most satisfying event in my life' (*ibid.*). At the same time, other dignitaries praised Morelos in print as the quintessential mestizo national hero. Genaro García, a prominent public intellectual, wrote, for example, that 'Morelos is the legendary figure par excellence. He is also the mestizo who symbolises the new race with all the greatness of the others, and, for this reason, Morelos is the genuine representative of Mexican nationality' (García, 1911, p. 70). Moreover, Isidro Fabela, scholar and future revolutionary, praised Morelos as the greatest independence hero and 'the genius of our race' (*ibid.*, pp. 53, 67–8).

Another hero particularly highlighted during the centennial celebration was Benito Juárez, an architect of the liberal 'Reform' of the 1850s, and famous for authoring the 'Juárez Law' that abolished ecclesiastical courts and for enforcing the confiscation of Church estates. Juárez was also celebrated for his mid-century defeat of conservative insurgents, and for ousting the Austro-French imperialists and Maximilian. Juárez's pivotal role in saving Mexico earned him the titles 'Benemérito de las Américas' and the 'Mexican Moses', and the Porfirians created a national holiday in his honour (Esposito, 2010).

Juárez, a Zapotec, was Mexico's only indigenous president. Aged 12, he left his village and walked 41 miles to the capital of Oaxaca, where his older sister found him lodgings and work in the home of a Franciscan lay brother. The Franciscan helped Juárez pay for his schooling, and he later graduated from law school and rose through the ranks of the Liberal Party to become president. For the Porfirians, Juárez's remarkable life and career epitomised the possibilities of indigenous acculturation through secular education and the rejection

of Catholicism. For the centenary, organisers commissioned the erection of a massive marble monument to honour him as a national hero. Located in the heart of downtown, it depicted Juárez seated on a throne with a gardenia crown on his head (to evoke a stoic philosopher), and flanked by two beautiful women representing Glory and Mexico. Created in classic style, the structure included Doric<sup>4</sup> columns framing the subjects, and two bronze lions at its base. Representing Juárez in pure, white marble also conveyed a visual impression of an Indian being transformed into a mestizo (*The Mexican Herald*, 25 Sep. 1910; García, 1911, p. 174; Tenorio-Trillo, 1996a, p. 97).

The 1910 centennial celebration drew impressive crowds and high praise from the national and international press. Ironically, however, the *centenario* was Díaz's final gala (Gonzales, 2007). Following the president's fraudulent reelection in 1910, Mexicans rose in rebellion over accumulated grievances, particularly the loss of land and local political autonomy. Díaz resigned after a few months of fighting, but revolutionaries could not form a viable government and different factions waged war on each other for another ten years at the cost of hundreds of thousands of lives. The group that emerged victorious, the Constitutionals, favoured moderate social reforms, a strong executive, limited democracy and material progress. However, they also recognised that building a revolutionary state required the development of popular support and political legitimacy, which could be facilitated through image-making and public spectacle. It was within this context that President Álvaro Obregón announced plans to celebrate the centennial of Mexican independence (Gonzales, 2002; 2009).

## The 1921 centennial celebration

This major event presented an image of Mexico as a modern nation with a populist social and cultural agenda. But it also occurred at a political juncture that elicited divergent views from unofficial circles about Mexico's historical, cultural and racial identity. The centenary commemorated the ousting of Spain by a rebel coalition led by Agustín de Iturbide, who represented conservatives angry over liberal reforms in Spain. In 1921, conservatives remained influential in business, Church and civic organisations, and they published newspaper articles that celebrated Mexico's Hispanic culture, the Catholic Church's importance in Mexican history and Iturbide's legacy.

The Obregón government, despite its revolutionary pedigree, was more committed to material progress than to social reform, and used the centennial to reassure investors that Mexico was open for business. The celebration included a commercial parade composed of floats designed by businesses, including

4 Doric refers to an ancient Greek architectural style characterised by its simplicity of form.

major foreign multinationals, and a 'Commercial Exposition of Airplanes' that showcased the new technology. Military parades and pledges of loyalty by the army to the government also reassured investors that the fighting was over and that political stability reigned. In this regard, the *Obregonistas* had much in common with the *Porfiristas* (Gonzales, 2009).

The 1921 centennial, however, also included a variety of cultural events of interest to the general public. For example, committees of worker-residents organised 'popular functions' in their neighbourhoods that included films, plays, dances and sporting events. Widespread screenings of Mexican film testified to its emergence as a popular art form. Besides local theatres, special showings were held in correctional facilities, hospitals, poor houses and the asylum for those with mental illness. The centennial committee organised additional cultural activities of popular interest, including bullfights, circuses, soccer matches, baseball games and air shows. The enthusiasm for baseball and aviation indicates shifts in popular culture influenced by proximity to the United States and a growing interest in new technology (*El Universal*, 23, 24, 29 Sep. 1921; *El Demócrata*, 4 Sep. 1921).

The centennial commission and newspapers also reminded the audience of Mexico's pre-Columbian heritage. For example, cabinet members hosted dignitaries for a luncheon and tour of the ancient ceremonial centre of Teotihuacán, and on 1 September 1921 the newspaper *El Universal* published new songs by Alfonso Cravioto based on Aztec themes, including 'A Cuauhtemoc', 'El Calendario Azteca' and 'Porfesía de Papantzin'. The most prominent invocation of pre-Columbian memory, however, linked the Aztec patroness of artists, Xochitlquetzalli, with the revolutionary government's recent creation of a national park at Xochimilco, the site of the famous floating gardens. A gala event featured elaborate floral decorations of ancient temples, and Indian musicians and dancers performing before a large audience that included President Obregón. For the grand finale, in a simulated ceremony, a beautiful maiden was sacrificed to Xochitlquetzalli to evoke the importance of human sacrifice among the Aztecs,<sup>5</sup> which suggests public familiarity with the practice (*El Universal*, 24, 29 Sep. 1921).

In a bold decision evocative of revolutionary indigenismo, the centennial organisers also staged an arts programme that presented contemporary indigenous culture as integral to national culture. As Rick López shows, in a dramatic departure from Porfirian norms, a 'Noche Mexicana' and an 'Exhibition of Popular Arts' presented Native art as meritorious, inspirational and uniquely Mexican. Alberto Pani, the director of the centennial committee, entrusted the organisation of these events to progressive artists who had lived in Paris during the revolution. Their work would reflect the influence of European cultural trends, particularly primitivism, Mexico's indigenous cultures and

5 On human sacrifice see Clendinnen (1991), pp. 2–4, 73–5.

the revolution's liberating spirit (López, 2001; 2006; 2010). Artistic styles and forms had been exchanged among Native cultures for centuries, and indigenous and European art had commingled since contact. Examples taken from contemporary indigenous art would now inspire the creative process and influence the emergence of revolutionary aesthetics (Hellier-Tinoco, pp. 65–7).

Pani had envisioned the 'Noche Mexicana' as a garden party that would showcase recent renovations at Chapultepec Park (like electric lighting and paved sidewalks) as signs of material progress under the revolution. He entrusted the organisation and staging of the event to Adolfo Best Maugard, granting him creative license. Best Maugard's innovative theatrical production reflected his belief in cultural relativism and popular traditions as carriers of the collective spirit. Stages erected in the downtown park featured singers and dancers from the provinces in regional attire performing songs and dances of indigenous origin or inspiration. Examples included Maya troubadours from the Yucatán and Yaqui deer dancers from Sonora, as well as performers dressed in *charro* and *china poblana* costumes originating from the colonial period and widely associated with rural Mexico (López, 2006).

The 'Noche Mexicana' also featured the Mexican premiere of a new ballet, *Fantasia Mexicana*, inspired by the *jarabe tapatío*, a dance from colonial-era Jalisco that had been frequently performed regionally and as a vaudeville act. Conceived by Best Maugard, it was choreographed by Anna Pavlova of the Ballets Russes and scripted by Katherine Anne Porter, a leading fiction writer from the United States. First staged in New York City in 1920 as an avant-garde production, *Fantasia Mexicana* was redesigned for the 'Noche Mexicana' to include hundreds of dancers (López, 2010, p. 70).

In staging a ballet adapted from a regional colonial dance, impresarios used indigenous art in altered forms for stage designs or as props. For example, Ruth Hellier-Tinoco observes that in an early production designers painted a huge *jícara*, a type of gourd or flat wooden dish from Uruapan, Michoacán, on the stage curtain to underscore the ballet's indigenous inspiration. Hellier-Tinoco also notes that *jícaras* were subsequently used as props in Ballet Folklórico performances in Mexico and the United States, and as dishes to serve indigenous food during the 'Noche Mexicana' (*El Universal* erroneously identified them as originating from the Lake Pátzcuaro region, Hellier-Tinoco, pp. 64–7). The 'Noche Mexicana's' grand finale was divided into two stages. First came a performance by hundreds of regional dancers, dressed as *tehuanas* (indigenous women from the Isthmus of Tehuantepec), accompanied by a 350-piece orchestra. Then, a replica of the volcano Popocatepetl erupted from the lake in the middle of the park, illuminated by special lighting and pyrotechnics and a fly-over by military planes emitting multicoloured flames (López, 2006).

The productions comprising the 'Noche Mexicana' have been described as postcolonial aesthetic forms that were both modern and national in nature (López, 2010, p. 72). The core of their inspiration came from regional indigenous culture, enhanced by the inclusion of Native performers. Influenced by primitivism, the impresario Adolfo Best Maugard presented indigenous culture as national culture (López, 2006), although the staging process modified traditional forms to create new art for a national spectacle. The 'Noche Mexicana' drew as many as 500,000 spectators over a three-day period (*El Demócrata*, 27 Sep. 1921), and its popularity suggests that indigenous cultural expressions resonated within the memory and experience of urban residents and visitors from the countryside. The creative imagination of Best Maugard and his collaborators helped to shape indigenismo and an image of national culture that distinguished revolutionary Mexico from its Porfirian predecessor (Gonzales, 2009, pp. 263–4).

Other centennial events contributed to the appreciation, popularisation and commercialisation of contemporary indigenous art. As Rick López shows, Roberto Montenegro, Jorge Enciso and Gerardo Murillo (also known as Dr Atl) organised an 'Exhibition of Popular Arts' to showcase Native arts and crafts – textiles, ceramics, woven straw mats, leather goods, paintings and more – as examples of popular art reflective of the national soul. The artwork was displayed in a two-storey building downtown and decorated to capture the ambience of curio shops in a rural market. This created the right aesthetic effect for an urban audience, without the sights, smells, sounds and people of a village market. The exhibition appealed to many visitors, who included President Obregón, cabinet members and other dignitaries. The event's success also increased interest among Mexicans and Americans in collecting indigenous arts and crafts (López, 2001, pp. 100–01; 2006).

Beyond their talents as artisans, Dr Atl envisioned Natives as ideal workers essential to Mexico's modernisation. Atl believed Indians possessed innate artistic talents that made them versatile factory workers, and compared them favourably to American assembly-line workers restricted to repetitive tasks. These views contradicted Porfirian critiques of Indians as inferior workers and impediments to modernisation. Nevertheless, Atl's assessment of Natives as workers had a paternalistic ring, and Indians themselves were not consulted about their future careers in manufacturing (López, 2001, pp. 108–9; Gonzales, 2007, for Porfirian norms).

The centennial celebration also included, as a marquee event, the staging of a beauty contest for Native women, the so-called 'India Bonita' contest. Rather than being a celebration of indigenous beauty, however, the contest exposed ingrained racial prejudices against Indians and barriers to forging a national cultural identity. The idea for the contest originated with Félix Palavicini, the

publisher and editor of *El Universal*, who wanted to encourage social reforms and to increase sales of his newspaper. Palavicini offered the winner 10,000 pesos in prize money and the appointment of a godfather (*padrino*) to sponsor her education and social advancement.

*El Universal* encouraged interested citizens to submit photographs of attractive indigenous women to a panel of judges who would select the finalists. The beauty contest quickly became controversial. *El Universal*, a moderately conservative paper, came under attack from *Excelsior*, a staunch defender of Mexico's Hispanic, Catholic heritage. Insensitive readers wrote letters expressing their confusion over the linkage of 'India' and 'Bonita', as if they were mutually exclusive terms. This led Palavicini to publish photographs of Native women who exhibited what he considered to be ideal Indian features, such as dark skin, round face, braided hair, good teeth and a 'serene expression'. Upon reflection, organisers concluded that this combination of characteristics did not constitute beauty, and subsequently judged contestants on the basis of their ideal 'Indian features'.

As Rick López observes, the physical characteristics and demeanour of the finalists conformed to stereotypical views of Indians held by non-indigenous Mexicans. This included those who submitted photographs of entrants, the organisers of the contest and the judges, among them the prominent anthropologist Manuel Gamio. Judges privileged what they called a 'natural' appearance associated with 'primitive' Mexico, and they preferred rural, subservient women untainted by modernity. For example, they rejected contestants as unauthentic Indians if they wore stylish clothing, used cosmetics and preferred current hairstyles, regardless of entrants' genetic make-up and self-identification as indigenous. López concludes that 'this modernist and nationalist invocation of authenticity operated as a gendered discourse that limited indigenous women's control over their own bodies and self-representation' (2010, p. 42).

The winner of the 'India Bonita' contest was Bibiana Uribe, a 15-year-old from Necaxa, Puebla, who had been working as a maid in Mexico City. The runner-up lost narrowly because of her green eyes, which, in Gamio's opinion, disqualified her as an authentic *indígena*. President Obregón officially crowned Bibiana the 'India Bonita', and she was feted at lavish dinner parties, theatre performances and concerts. Nevertheless, things did not end well for Bibiana Uribe. Her appointed godfather failed to provide her with an education, perhaps after discovering that she was pregnant. She returned home and married the father of her child, with whom she eventually had six children. According to relatives, she squandered the 10,000 pesos in prize money and toiled as a maid and laundress for most of her life.

The 'India Bonita' contest revealed the difficulty of overcoming ingrained racial and gender prejudices. Natives themselves were not consulted about definitions of beauty, and there were no indigenous judges. The contest also reflected, more generally, how colonisers imposed particular forms of performance on colonised populations to address their own cultural and political agenda (Deloria, 1998). *El Universal* intended the 'India Bonita' contest to facilitate the integration of indigenous women into Mexican society, underscoring the idea of unity in diversity. The newspaper editorialised that the contest was 'as much a realization of beauty as an example of civic education, because it contributes to the current movement to affirm national unity by identifying ... with all the components of the Mexican races' (quoted in López, 2010, p. 42). According to López, in Mexico today public memory has merged the 'India Bonita' contest with the 'Miss Mexico' contest, an event reserved for contestants with European physical characteristics, thus obliterating the memory of this failed attempt to associate physical beauty with indigenous Mexicans (2002).

## Indians and mestizos

The 1921 centenary, particularly the 'Noche Mexicana' and the 'Exhibition of Popular Arts', helped to launch revolutionary indigenismo. This important shift in Mexico's cultural and political landscape would be expressed subsequently in the murals and paintings of Diego Rivera, José Clemente Orozco, David Alfaro Siqueiros and Frida Kahlo; the commercialisation (and appreciation) of Native arts and crafts; the appropriation of indigenous performance as examples of authentic national culture; and the transformation of the Museo Nacional de Antropología into a world-class museum. Some of Rivera's murals, in particular, depicted the indigenous from the Aztecs to the first Zapatistas as dignified, attractive and brave people who had struggled against imperialism and capitalism from the Spanish invasion until the fall of Porfirio Díaz. The acceptance of Rivera and other Mexican painters as modern masters spread this edifying image of Indians as heroic victims throughout the West.

Besides evoking revolutionary indigenismo, Diego Rivera's portrayals of indigenous women sometimes drew a cultural line separating the traditional from the modern. As López observes, Rivera's depiction of Mexican flappers (the liberated young women referred to as *chicas modernas*), in a mural he painted for the Secretaría de Educación Pública, mocks them as un-Mexican. However, he reserves his coarsest images for indigenous flappers who appear particularly unattractive and unnatural dressed in gaudy outfits and wearing heavy make-up (2010, pp. 56–7). These portraits can be contrasted with Rivera's many pictures of indigenous women in rural or domestic settings, where they appear attractive and dignified in Native clothing and engaged in cooking, weaving

and marketing agricultural products. His pictures echo contemporary images of women in traditional settings unsettled by modernity, and suggest the period's reimagination of indigenous Mexico as natural, authentic and dignified.

The popularity of 'all things Mexican' in the 1920s drew attention to pre-Columbian and contemporary indigenous cultures and helped to launch the tourist boom in Mexico, which revolutionary governments promoted at World Fairs, International Exhibitions and folkloric productions in local, national and international venues (Delpar, 1995; Tenorio-Trillo, 1996b; Hellier-Tinoco, 2011). Although the talents of Native artisans were recognised in this boom, most of the profits from the sale of their wares went to Mexican and foreign merchants (Delpar, 1995; López, 2010). As Ruth Hellier-Tinoco shows, beginning in the 1920s cultural brokers demonstrated great interest in indigenous dance, music and costume, which they appropriated and staged in various venues, including Mexico City and abroad. Fascination with such art also made some rural areas popular tourist destinations, including the island of Jarácuaro (Michoacán), well known for its 'Dance of the Old Men' and 'Night of the Dead' performances (Hellier-Tinoco, 2011, pp. 72–3). Outside of Mexico, pre-Columbian architectural styles captivated the imagination of Frank Lloyd Wright, who built dozens of Maya revival-style homes in California, where interest in Mexico was particularly strong (Delpar, 1995, pp. 130–1).

With the revolution, some argued that Indians could be integrated into the larger society through education and socialisation, while still retaining their cultural identity. They could acquire the linguistic, social and political skills to navigate successfully in the modern world. Others argued that this process would, in effect, transform Indians into mestizos, an ethnic category that was more socially than racially constructed. In public discourse there emerged the image of Mexico as a modern, mestizo nation that coexisted with a traditional, indigenous population. José Vasconcelos, an influential writer, educator and politician in the 1920s, promoted the mestizo as the 'cosmic race', arguing that they were racially superior to others. Vasconcelos, who wrote his book (1925) largely in response to Social Darwinism and as an expression of nationalist pride, viewed mestizos as dynamic and strong, and Indians as docile and archaic (Alonso, 2004). As Minister of Education, Vasconcelos favoured an educational curriculum that emphasised Western classics over American arts and letters, and he has been called a 'cultural elitist' who preferred European to indigenous arts (López, 2010, p. 75). Manuel Gamio, considered the father of Mexican anthropology, also promoted *mestizaje* as a means of giving Mexicans a sense of cultural and racial unity during and after the revolution. Gamio associated mestizos with the forces of modernity, including science and material progress, and advocated the transformation of Natives into mestizos through education, secularism and improvements in health, diet and material culture (1960 [1916]; 1922; Brading, 1988).

Promotion of Mexico as a mestizo nation, of course, did not originate with Gamio and Vasconcelos. Its origins lay in the Porfiriato and the writings of Justo Sierra, Andrés Molina Enríquez (1909) and others (Knight, 1996; Brading, 1988), and found expression in the 1910 centennial celebration. On that occasion, public intellectuals praised mestizo heroes (notably Morelos), referring to them as the national race, and unveiled a monument to Juárez, Mexico's most famous acculturated Indian. The 1910 centenary celebrated Mexico's emergence as a modern, mestizo nation guided by liberal elites who viewed contemporary indigenous populations as obstacles to progress.

By comparison, the centennial celebration in 1921 promoted contemporary indigenous culture as authentic Mexican culture. The national spectacle featured the 'Fantasía Mexicana', inspired by the colonial era dance the *jarabe tapatío*, a performance of women dressed as *tehuanas* dancing to a 350-piece orchestra, an exhibition of indigenous *artesanía* in a downtown building and the 'India Bonita' contest. These events and others valorised indigenous culture through new theatrical productions, while simultaneously modifying it and setting guidelines for what it meant to be an Indian, as in the 'India Bonita' contest. The presentation of indigenous culture as national culture also facilitated the integration of the Indian population into the national political imagination, an important aspect of revolutionary nation-building.

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### **3. Indigeneity in the Oruro Carnival: official memory, Bolivian identity and the politics of recognition**

*Ximena Córdova Oviedo*

**O**ruro, Bolivia's fifth city, established in the highlands at an altitude of almost 4,000 metres, nestles quietly most of the year among the mineral-rich mountains that were the reason for its foundation in 1606 as a Spanish colonial mining settlement. Between the months of November and March, its quiet buzz is transformed into a momentous crescendo of activity leading up to the region's most renowned festival, the Oruro Carnival parade. Carnival is celebrated around February or March according to the Christian calendar and celebrations in Oruro include a four-day national public holiday, a street party with food and drink stalls, a variety of private and public rituals, and a dance parade made up of around 16,000 performers. An audience of 400,000 watches the parade (ACFO, 2000, p. 6), from paid seats along its route across the city, and it is broadcast nationally to millions more via television and the internet.

During the festivities, orureños welcome hundreds of thousands of visitors from other cities in Bolivia and around the world, who arrive to witness and take part in the festival. Those who are not performing are watching, drinking, eating, taking part in water fights or dancing, often all at the same time. The event is highly regarded because of its inclusion since 2001 on the UNESCO list of Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity, and local authorities promote it for its ability to bring the nation together. When I attended the parade in 2008, it was being filmed by the BBC and a number of other international TV crews, as well as local media, and VIP attendees included President Evo Morales and several diplomats.

Months of preparation go into the parade and when the big day arrives it is possible to distinguish different levels of meaning and action. There is much bustling activity: visitors and tourists all bring significant money into circulation as they need to be housed and fed, and they also consume goods and services during their stay. The audience and the media await the parade with much expectation, and onlookers judge how closely troupes are adhering to tradition or, conversely, how innovative their renditions are. Oruro is thus



*Figure 3.1. Oruro Carnival parade, 2008. Photo: Ximena Córdova Oviedo.*

– for a short period of time – transformed from being a quiet trading town, with little resonance in the collective memory of Bolivians, to being a ‘centre of national imagination’, to borrow Arjun Appadurai’s term (2008, p. 212). Oruro has fulfilled this role since 1970, when the city was named the ‘capital of folklore’ by presidential decree. Subsequently, the Carnival has become the focus of Bolivia’s official repertoire of memory and heritage; Bolivians look to the celebration as a way of remembering their past and traditions, and to locate a sense of national identity.

Since its first records dating back to 1904, the Oruro Carnival has transformed from a humble urban indigenous parade – prohibited from entering Oruro’s main square owing to racial prejudice that discriminated against its indigenous roots – into a commodity for the nation. Local cultural and tourism authorities promote the Oruro Carnival globally as the ‘face of all Bolivians’ because the dances are taken to depict pre-Hispanic and legendary figures from different regions of the country. Carnival came to the Andes and the rest of the Americas with the European invasion of 1492 and, in Oruro, the festival coincides with the feast of Candlemas (3 February), providing an example of how festive saints’ days were superimposed over pre-existing local traditions during the colonial period (MacCormack, 1991; Sallnow, 1987). The ritual focus is the Virgin Mary, in the figure of the Madonna of Candlemas, or the Virgin of the

Mineshaft as she is locally known. All dancers are formally initiated in Carnival dancing by giving an oath led by the priest in a special ceremony, where they vow to dance for three consecutive years and be good Christians. The central feature of the celebration is the three-kilometre danced parade, performed in honour of the Madonna of Candlemas and culminating inside the Church of the Mineshaft, which is home to a sacred painting of the Virgin. During my research several dancers told me that they invested time, money and a huge amount of effort into the Carnival because of their devotion to the Virgin, and that being Catholic has been a pre-requisite for participation since the 1960s.<sup>1</sup>

Carnival represents much more than a devout Catholic celebration in the region, however; it is also linked to the Andean agricultural calendar, particularly in the countryside. The landscape around Oruro is dry and cold, characterised by mostly arid highlands, and surrounded by permanently snow-capped mountains. Carnival coincides with the rainy season and the harvest of the potato, the staple food of the region. The fertility of this period is usually linked to ideas of the spirits of the dead, who, returning to help push the potato shoots up through the soil so the plants can flower, promote good growth and food for the living (Stobart, 2006; Harris, 2000; Téllez Nava, 2003). Many Andeans celebrate by performing rituals dedicated to the spirits, involving dances, music and special feasts between November and March. Some well-off members of rural communities also sponsor a sort of danced parade (sometimes called *anata* or despatch) designed to send off the dead and mark the end of the rainy season until the following year (Stobart, 2006, p. 248).

The sense of polyphony discerned in the celebration, the result of the popularisation of European Catholicism mixed with Andean beliefs (Sallnow, 1987; MacCormack, 1991; Celestino, 1988), has allowed for national identity discourses that emerged during the 20th century to be crystallised in the festivities. This chapter argues that its role in defining official notions of what constitutes Bolivian national heritage has a Eurocentric bias and that this has been shaped by nationalist elites and international organisations such as UNESCO. Discourses of the past in Oruro, although acknowledging the contribution of ancestral indigenous cultures, systematically reject any recent-past or modern-day contributions from indigenous actors. In this chapter the process is called the 'Eclipse of the Indian', adapting Enrique Dussel's naming of the Conquest and the inauguration of modernity (the leading 'universalist' epistemology) as the 'Eclipse of the Other' (1995). The starting premise is that the lack of visibility of some key Carnival actors in the representative dimension of the festivity in national discourse stems from racialised notions of cultural heritage inherited from the colonial period. That lack is also the

1 I recorded these comments during fieldwork and interviews in Oruro between 2007 and 2008.

result of national populist configurations of social hierarchies that reduced the relevance of indigeneity while building segregationist principles attached to colonialist ideas of 'race' into notions of 'class'. However, as demonstrated here, these discourses are at present challenged by alternative carnival displays such as the Anata Andina. In this sense, beyond constituting a nationalist celebration of the Bolivian 'melting pot', the festivities in Oruro have emerged as a locus for competing demands and interpretations of the nation along ethnic and class lines.

### **National populism and festive practices**

The privileged positioning of the Oruro Carnival in the projection of Bolivian identity becomes evident when looking at the development of cultural heritage discourses regarding the parade. Prior to the 1940s, it (like many other urban and rural indigenous cultural expressions) had been practically invisible to non-participants. Thomas Abercrombie (1992) notes that up to this point there had been two carnivals, one for the elite in ballrooms and one for the popular classes, enacted in the streets rather than in front of a formal audience. Festive practices in Oruro in the 1940s underwent forms of modernisation mirroring, to an extent, the political and cultural reconfiguration of the nation taking place during the same decade. In the lead-up to the 1952 Revolution, when the political ideology of national populism was implemented, the advent of managed uses of popular culture influenced the new nation-building project, characterising the Carnival's dynamics from then on (Klein, 2003). National populism gained legitimacy through the redistribution of resources and their reappropriation from foreign hands, social reforms and the championing of national culture, which extended to popular expressions previously in the hands of the lower classes (Williamson, 1992). Ideologically, the main concern of this process was the unification of citizens under the concept of the nation. However, the Eurocentric bias of national populism during the 1940s and 1950s (Zavaleta Mercado, 1987) had a profound effect on the structure of the Oruro festivities. The need for events and practices that could be fed into emerging national imaginaries acted as a preamble for the introduction of Carnival dances and practices to the country's authorities.

During this period General Villarroel (president of a military junta in Bolivia 1943–6) formally invited the Diablada de los Mañasos – the first official Carnival troupe on record, made up of workers from the meat trade and performers of the devil dance – to do a public demonstration at La Paz Stadium. For some present-day Carnival dancers, these developments constituted the first time the political elite of the country had taken an interest in the festival. Pedro C., a high school teacher who self-identified as *cholo*

(roughly translated as ‘urban-indigenous’), recalled how his grandfather and other close relatives were among the founders of the Diablada de los Mañanos. According to his recollection, when the first new elite troupe, popularly known as La Fraternidad, was formed in the 1940s, it recruited some of the butchers from the Mañano devil troupe. These included his father, who became La Fraternidad’s lead choreographer but, as Pedro C. explained, the troupe, which has since become the Carnival parade’s referent and main image, ‘erased’ his father’s presence from the group:

My father was one of the founders of the Fraternidad, but ... as a result of racial and social discrimination in the Fraternidad, which had middle-class people, [he] was erased from their Foundation Certificate. My father was the first [choreographer] of the Fraternidad, but he is not mentioned in the records.<sup>2</sup>

This erasure, an experience commonly shared by rural and urban indigenous groups in Bolivia, resonates with Linda Tuhiwai Smith’s observation that there are ‘numerous oral stories’ among indigenous peoples that narrate the feeling of being present and having one’s history deleted ‘before your eyes, dismissed as irrelevant, ignored or rendered as the lunatic ravings of drunken old people’ (1999, p. 29). Tuhiwai Smith describes this process in terms of a ‘negation of indigenous views’ (ibid.). In Oruro, the rearrangement of systems of participation in the festivities, which started to open up to elite groups, worked alongside established class, racial and ethnic lines of social discrimination in which *cholo* or indigenous participants remained invisible. This process determined which practices and actors would enter national discourses, and which would remain excluded from official versions of the festivities, forging an ‘economy of forgetting and remembering’ (Appadurai, 2008, p. 210) in order to uphold the existing matrix of power relations.

### **Officialising memory**

Oruro anthropologists Marcelo Lara Barrientos (2007) and Gonzalo Araoz Sanjinés (2003) identify two strands of interpretation for the festival that are constantly projected in official discourses: the parade as an expression of Christian-Catholic devotion, and as a folkloric display that frames the transmission of national traditions. Lara Barrientos also demonstrates that the official discourse is in turn elaborated and sustained through established regulations, the press, educational events, books and local authorities (2007). The authorities in Oruro are the political, religious, economic and cultural institutions and individuals who engage in decision-making processes that affect

2 Pedro C., interview with the author, Oruro, 25 Jan.2008.

the majority of the population in the city. These include the tourism/heritage and cultural officers at the mayor's office and other state and local government institutions, the religious representatives at the Temple of the Mineshaft, and the scholars and intellectuals whose research and published works about the Carnival are regarded as 'authoritative'.<sup>3</sup> As products of a discursive approach to representation, such 'authoritative' interpretations of the event seek to render the past in univocal terms. This occurs through the institutional channelling of memory into the framework of heritage via UNESCO, and through the Christianisation of Andean symbols as a source of symbolic capital for the legitimisation of the Eurocentric mestizo discourse.

The Carnival's canonisation by UNESCO, the world's highest authority for specifying connections among civilisations, cultures, education, science and communication, has raised the 'unique' character of the event to the level of universal recognition. The implication is that outsiders ('experts' and institutions) as well as insiders are responsible for preserving the cultural integrity of the festivities, to the extent that the producers of the celebration now hold less sway in the look and feel of the event than the cultural authorities, who act as gate-keepers of tradition. Since 2001, when Oruro was proclaimed a Masterpiece of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity, the role of UNESCO, and of other institutions that were instrumental in the coordination of the bid, has become central to the festival in terms of raising its profile and dictating the guidelines for its development. For instance, troupe leaders must now present historical research to justify any innovation to the choreography or characters of their dance style.<sup>4</sup> This sort of policing of 'tradition', which stifles natural processes of innovation, appears to be founded on the principle that cultural practices are unchanging and fixed in the first place.

The aims of the 'Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage' (2003)<sup>5</sup> are, according to the official documents, to distinguish what constitutes World Intangible Cultural Heritage from the myriad of cultural expressions around the globe, and to safeguard that heritage. Ashworth et al. argue that UNESCO's criteria for defining 'intangible heritage' is problematic, for it relies on its opposite: tangible heritage (2007, p. 34). The issue here is that the distinction between the two realms is not always clearcut, and the connotations of 'the tangible' and 'the intangible' may be culturally sensitive.

3 A vast array of research literature on all aspects of the festivities has been produced by local authors. Among the most representative are Condarco Santillán (1999), Beltrán Heredia (1962), Fortún (1961) and Murillo Vacarrea (1999). More contemporary works include Romero et al. (2003) and Lara Barrientos (2007).

4 Interview with dancer, Jorge P., Fraternidad, Oruro, 20 Dec. 2007, and interviews with expert Darío A. Mañaso, Oruro, 9 Feb. and 5 March 2008.

5 The text of this is available at: [www.unesco.org/culture/ich/index.php?pg=00006](http://www.unesco.org/culture/ich/index.php?pg=00006) (accessed 4 Sep. 2013).

In order to be awarded the status of Masterpiece of Intangible Heritage, entries were judged according to how closely they fitted UNESCO's criteria of demonstrating the roots of the event 'in the cultural tradition or cultural history of the community concerned'. Entries also had to prove that the event reproduced cultural identity and reinforced a communal bond among its 'members', promoting intercultural exchange among the peoples concerned (UNESCO, 2001, n.p.). In other words, it was necessary to show how belonging and community are embodied in the Carnival, and how these aspects are reaffirmed for the people involved. The following excerpt taken from the bid illustrates how UNESCO's criteria was interpreted by the cultural authorities in Oruro:

The Oruro Carnival is an ongoing cultural process that has unfolded over 2000 years, and it is characterised by a high degree of interculturality and intangibility. It takes place in a layered cultural site, shaped by the accumulation and selection of various cultural expressions over time. (ACFO, 2000, p. 6, my translation)

The bid places prominence on the accumulative powers of the celebration, the festival's capacity to engage with the different historical trajectories of its participants, and its ability to reproduce their diverse symbols, customs and values. However, the document states further on that the carnival has come to acquire an 'urban Catholic' focus from 'the upper layers of society', which has since become 'a phenomenon of universal integration' (ibid., p. 6). There is an internal contradiction here: how did its all-encompassing representativeness come to focus on a single brand of religiosity dictated by an elite group? For Gregory Ashworth et al., this kind of paradox is intrinsic to heritage discourses (2007, p. 37). The Carnival is 'all-encompassing', yet the selection of the symbols for its representation is guided by individual interests. Thus, an essentialised sense of a Bolivian subjectivity begins to emerge from the document, based on a shared legacy of intercultural memories that evolved into Catholic mestizaje. This notion matches the view put forward by scholars who argue that whilst the ideology of mestizaje in the Andes claimed to include 'all the voices' of the past, some 'spoke' louder than others (Larson, 1999, 2007; de la Cadena 2000, 2007). It is as a response to these processes of homogenisation of a sense of Bolivianness that 'peripheral' and more openly political festivities, such as the Anata Andina, have emerged.

### **The Anata Andina**

Anata means 'play' or 'carnival' in Aymara, a highlands indigenous language (Véliz López, 2002, p. 73). Hans Van Den Berg describes the rural anata as one of the Aymara *jallupacha* (rainy season) celebrations to mark the close of

‘carnival’ in the countryside, which is centred on the *Pachamama*, or ‘Mother Earth’ deity (1985, cited in Véliz López, 2002, p. 73). It usually takes place *after* Carnival weekend, when Aymaras in rural regions celebrate by decorating their houses, making offerings to the generative powers of the fields and paying visits to each other. Ritual activity is also directed towards the *wak’as* (or religious shrines rooted in the landscape in traditional Andean religiosity), sites entrusted with the fertility of the land, animals and humans. At the end of the anata, there is a celebration with music and drinking, dispatching ‘carnival’ until the following year.

The Anata Andina parade, on the other hand, is a public performance that takes place in the city of Oruro a few days *before* Carnival. Organised by the Oruro branch of the National Peasant Federation of Rural Workers (FSTUCO),<sup>6</sup> it is the largest of several rural parades that enter the urban space around the same period, all of which involve ritual dancing and music performed along the streets of Oruro. In its overall shape, the Anata Andina is similar to the main Carnival parade and follows its circuit, with coordinated dancing troupes crossing the city, though Anata dances pertain to rural practices. The instruments used to play the accompanying music bear greater similarity to the hand-made instruments, such as *pinkillos* or *tarkas* (today, these are often commercially produced), played in rural festivities during the rainy season. Similarly, the clothes worn by Anata dancing troupes are uniform across each of the groups and resemble the traditional garments of the countryside, which are hand-made using animal products and mechanical tools. At the end of the Anata’s circuit, a jury assesses the performances and the winners receive agricultural goods as prizes. According to the festival organisers, Anata parade participants belong to ‘peasant’ communities, most of whom are rural agricultural workers who spend months of the year living and working in *ayllus* (territory-based indigenous communities), and carry out manual work in urban centres the rest of the time. In terms of their demonstrations of religiosity in public space, however, the Anata and the Carnival parade present some striking differences. The Carnival parade dancers mostly save any expression of religiosity for when they arrive inside the church, perhaps because the dancing itself could be considered a devotional act. The Anata dancers, in contrast, perform many rituals during the parade. Participants burn offerings to the Pachamama before, during, and at the end of the performance, and engage in ritual drinking and animal sacrifices, all of which form part of the religiosity of rural communities in the highlands.

6 FSTUCO is the acronym for the Spanish title: Federación Sindical de Trabajadores Unica del Campo de Oruro (Oruro’s local branch of the National Peasant Trade Union Federation).

The emergence of the Anata Andina in 1993 in the Oruro arena, as a public display of rituals normally reserved for the rural sphere of the community, acquires particular relevance when viewed in relation to the disputed position of indigenous peoples in the national imaginary. In Bolivia, the assimilationist project of the 1952 Revolution generated resentment against the state when it became obvious to indigenous populations that they continued to be dominated, or 'co-opted at best'. School education, an instrument that was meant to increase the intellectual capital of the population as a whole, instead emerged as a strategy to incorporate indigenous people into the dominant ideologies of the Church (Canessa, 2000, p. 122). The new *campesino* category, created by the powers of the state to 'name and organise', served to gloss over differences in ethnic traditions shaped by geographically, historically and culturally given contexts (Wade, 2004), and to neutralise any subversion in political and cultural terms (Barragán, 2000, p. 145). Thus, indigenous identity was broken down into parts, some of which were selected to be included in the imaginary of a national identity, while others were discarded.<sup>7</sup> Far from an idea of cultural hybridity whereby the European and the indigenous both found a space to reproduce, it became clear that citizenship – the main promise of becoming a mestizo – implied 'distancing oneself from the Indian social condition and thus de-Indianising' (de la Cadena, 2000, p. 316). This structure was built on the paternalistic belief that the Indian was essentially illiterate, subordinate, prone to savagery and averse to modernisation (Barragán, 2000; Larson, 1999). The managers of the Oruro Carnival adopted this version of mestizaje, tied to Eurocentric ideas about nation-building, as a way to theorise the myriad influences on the development of the festivities. Even today, from the point of view of the authorities and those managing the event, the Carnival's multivocality and its historical contributors are adequately represented by the voice of the mestizo.

According to historians of the region, the cost of the adoption of this new mestizo imaginary for an emerging national consciousness was the neglect of indigenous histories and collective identities in the construction of a national project, largely led by a Western-oriented and urban elite who did not understand indigenous experiences (Klein, 2003; Bautista, 2010; Larson, 1999). In contrast, the appropriation of selected elements of indigenous culture and spaces occurred through the practice of folklore, projecting particular, sanitised, non-subversive and simplified images of the *indio permitido* (or

7 This selection process, which valorised and romanticised certain aspects of indigeneity to the exclusion of others, was common to the ideology of indigenismo as it developed throughout Latin America during the early 20th century in an effort to incorporate indigenous expressions into the nation's culture. In literature this discourse made it acceptable for the elites to appreciate 'foundational fictions' of the nation that crossed racial and social boundaries (Sommer, 1991).

‘permitted Indian’, Hale, 2004). These representations survive to this day, and do not adequately convey the legacy of discrimination, theft and extermination suffered by indigenous peoples for centuries as a result of colonialism. In Oruro, most of the people I interviewed, when prompted to talk about their own ethnicity, said that they considered themselves mestizos, including those in both the smaller troupes and the elite institutions. The term ‘Indian’, in the context of the Oruro festivities, was only used to refer to those who perform ‘autochthonous dances’ in the rural *entradas*, such as the Anata Andina, that are also staged in the city in contrast to the mestizo Carnival parade. These performers are envisaged as people from more remote communities, who dress and live in a parallel world of agricultural self-subsistence and colourful hand-made clothes, unlike the urban, worldly performers of the Carnival parade, who never identified themselves as ‘Indians’. Officially, the two ‘types’ of parades (that is, ‘autochthonous’ and ‘folkloric’) are placed at a considerable distance from one another, and the ‘autochthonous’ parades do not feature prominently in the extensive touristic literature. Oruro cultural and religious authorities, when speaking of the rural parades, tend not to refer to them in neutral terms. Instead, they focus on their ‘Otherness’, and on how as ‘Indians’, ‘they’ get drunk and spoil the city for tourists and for the ‘real Orureños’ (something I often heard people say), alluding to ideas of decency and propriety. In their view, the ‘Otherness’ of indigeneity appears both irrelevant and undesirable. Clearly, in the ‘staging’ of Oruro as a synecdoche of the nation, present-day indigeneity is absent, and the indigenous roots of the nation are placed in the past, distanced from the projected notion of a Bolivian shared subjectivity.

However, the negation of the Indian in the consolidation of Bolivian national subjectivities has prompted new processes of ‘self-production’ in the context of the Oruro carnival. By analysing these processes through the matrix of performativity (Butler, 1999) and acknowledging that identity is a socially-derived phenomenon, one begins to understand the subject not as having an intrinsic and fixed identity, but as the result of becoming. Performance offers the possibility to respond to ideological forces; those same actors that are ‘eclipsed’ in representation may also enter into contact with their ‘significant others’ through performance (Taylor, 1992, p. 25), reemerging to engage in a politics of recognition. In this light, the Anata Andina presents a valuable opportunity to reinstate an updated kind of ‘indigeneity’ to the nation’s map. The processes by which identities materialise through the festive, with the ‘indigenous’ Anata Andina parade participating in a politics of recognition, strive to reconfigure the indigenous basis of the Bolivian nation. This participation must be contextualised by recent articulations of resistance and performed authenticity, alongside the reconstitution of an indigenous identity



Figure 3.2. Elders performing libation rites on Oruro's main festive stage in preparation for the *Anata Andina*, 2008. Photo: Ximena Córdova Oviedo.

into a larger sense of community with internal structures and a common origin emerging, particularly among the Aymara.

Among the challenges to *mestizaje's* homogenising forces in religious, cultural and ethnic terms, Fausto Reinaga and the Partido Indio de Bolivia (founded in the 1960s) advocated a cultural and political reorganisation of indigenous people led by Indians. Reinaga's *indianismo*, crystallised in his 1973 Manifesto, presented a challenge to elite-led *indigenismo* by exposing school education and Christianisation as mechanisms designed to turn Indians into *mestizos* and instil in them a Western and capitalist ideology (Manifesto, 1973, cited in Canessa, 2000, p. 124). The Manifesto articulated the idea of the Bolivian nation as a historical and cultural continuum grounded in the ethics and tenets of an Aymara identity, which transformed into the 'Aymara Nation'.<sup>8</sup> This gave rise to *Katarismo*, a political movement that engaged in the 'recuperation of "long memory" obscured by the short memory of the Agrarian Reform' (Rivera, 1987, cited in Canessa, 2000, p. 126). *Katarismo* was inspired by the figure of Tupac Katari, who had led the 1780s uprising against colonial authority and promised its legacy would bring an Indian revolution, even after his death.

8 Canessa observes that although the idea of an Aymara Nation was based on an awareness of historical developments from a particular geopolitical perspective, it was at the same time a new invention (2000, p. 126).

According to a founder of the Anata Andina, the arrival of the parade in Oruro in 1993 was a new attempt to resist colonisation, and to once more channel indigeneity into discourses and actions that challenged power relations and epistemic legitimacies. As such, it brought with it a struggle with the Catholic Church, which

didn't want the Anata Andina entrada to take place ... Because ... we remembered vividly the five hundred years of resistance, the Spanish invasion ... There was a powerful confrontation with the Church, [by] the Aymaras and the Quechuas. We have made strong advances since 1993, we made our own priests. We researched and we have our own Aymara priests now. That's how we had our first Anata in 1993 ... We were able to identify our identity and see that we had been confused by the Spanish evangelising invasions.<sup>9</sup>

It is explicit here that the parade was a concerted effort by marginalised groups to appear on a 'map' that had previously denied their presence. Further, the call for participation for the first Anata Andina in 1993, which was distributed among rural communities, framed the parade as a *pachakuti* (Aymara word for 'revolution') and the start of a new era for indigenous people (Véliz López, 2002). Vladimir Véliz López's contribution to *El Carnaval de Oruro: Aproximaciones*, cited here, includes a photograph taken on the day of the first parade, of about ten people carrying a banner with the message: 'DAMN THE SPANISH RACE OF MURDERERS AND EXPLOITERS. 500 YEARS RESISTING COLONIALISM. JALLALLA KOLLASUYO MARCA' (ibid., p. 78, my translation).<sup>10</sup> Abercrombie refers to this rural storming of Oruro in terms of the 'invasion of Carnival', which corresponded to a broader indigenous 'call to arms' during the 1990s (2003, p. 207). This decade, punctuated by the 1992 Columbus Quincentennial, marked the reemergence of indigenous movements in Latin America. In Bolivia, Xavier Albó (1991) predicted the 'return of the Indian', as the previous decades had shown that indigenous movements were restructuring themselves to respond to global forces in a changing political and economic climate. The Declaración de Quito (Ecuador) in 1991 acted as a catalyst for political campaigns calling for the recognition of indigenous peoples' rights. This was followed by the UN declaring 1993 to be the International Year for the World's Indigenous People, and the start of a ten-year period to mark their recognition. Indigenous Guatemalan peace activist

9 Ivan Z., interview with the author, Oruro, 25 March 2008. All subsequent references to comments made by Ivan Z. relate to this discussion.

10 The last sentence in Aymara reads 'Long live Kollasuyo Marca', the name the Incas used for one of the four quarters of the Incan Empire, which covered portions of the Argentina, Peru, Bolivia and Chile of today.

Rigoberta Menchú won the Nobel peace prize in 1992, and two years later, in 1994, the Zapatista movement in Mexico led a political uprising against the government that received global coverage in the media.

The political developments of the last century have led subaltern groups to realise the urgency of a politics of recognition (Taylor, 1992, p. 27) and to assert their rights to be understood and respected as authentic. In the Anata Andina parade, Aymara participants establish the specificities of their culture through a public language of ritual drinking and animal sacrifice that demands recognition beyond the (contradictory) politics of universalism and difference that characterise the framework of mestizo nationhood. By enacting these otherwise rural rituals in the city, in front of urban Orureños and international TV crews, participants challenge urban notions of ‘decency’ and ‘propriety’ with displays of blood and death. These traditions are taken out of their original context to urge broader recognition of the ‘equal value’ of difference, that is, of different historical trajectories distilled through material and performed culture.

### **Performance, memory, imagination**

In 2008, I joined the Anata Andina organisers on one of their preparatory rituals to honour the Pachamama, which took place in the weeks before the parade. These preparations consisted of a non-Christian pilgrimage to the sacred shrines near Oruro city to perform reciprocity rites or *ch’allas* (see figure 3.3). On our way, the organisers explained that the shrines were ‘ancient’ ceremonial centres where people offered thanks for what they had received in the year, in terms of health, agricultural products, achievements and personal and communal wellbeing, and to request more good things to come in the new cycle.<sup>11</sup> On arrival at our first destination, a small open space adjacent to the beginning of the main road connecting Oruro to La Paz and Cochabamba, we went to a *wak’a* called the Toad, a big boulder surrounded by the remains of a previous ceremony. A *yatiri* (Aymara shaman) had come especially to lead the offering of libations to the deities and natural forces, and to occasionally orient the discussions of the group – including conversations about history, peppered with jokes and general chit-chat – towards the teachings of *cosmovisión andina* (Andean cosmovision). These moments also constituted social gatherings. People shared experiences regarding the duties of preparing the rituals, while drinking, smoking and chewing coca leaves. I was asked to join in.

The *yatiri* often spoke in a humorous manner. Everyone called each other ‘*jefe*’ (boss), but when the *yatiri* gave instructions, all complied, as he was the

<sup>11</sup> Ivan Z. had told me previously in interview that these sacred shrines were not identified until after 1982.



Figure 3.3. Andean *ch'alla* ceremony at the sacred shrine of Cerro Micaela, in preparation for the Anata Andina. Photo: Ximena Córdova Oviedo.

one really in control of our conversation and our attention. At each shrine, as we started to burn the offerings, the yatiri asked for good fortune. In between libations, he interspersed serious information with lighthearted comments on ethnicity and the participants' condition of subalternity as Indians. At one point he joked about the stereotype of Bolivians being 'backward', which in Spanish is *atrasado*, the same word that is used for 'delayed': 'Being Bolivian [means] being *atrasado*, that's just it. Always fifteen minutes behind. [You have] to be more punctual, you just have to get there earlier' (my translation). Whilst making us laugh and diffusing the tension inherent to any ritual performance, he was also passing comment on the insecure character of Bolivians. His joke, eliciting reflection from all present, echoed a critique of the impact of the 'myth of modernity' on the image that Bolivians hold of themselves, as exposed by philosopher, Juan José Bautista: 'we are not just "late" in world history, but Latin America has always been and will always be *atrasada* and dependent on Western Eurocentrism, and from now on North American modern Eurocentrism' (2010, p. 90; my translation).

It is significant that these narratives about being an Indian made reference to what others say about indigeneity. Narratives, as Bakhtin demonstrates (1987), are dialogical and often include external reflections that may not be explicit but which are nevertheless present. It became clear that, in the dynamics of the politics of recognition at play in the Anata Andina, my hosts needed to show

what had already been said about their identity in front of me, as an outsider and city-dweller, in order to represent what the community wanted to say and how they wished to respond to outside perceptions.

As to my presence there, I was asked to perform the rites and get drunk with the group, and to put forward my own requests 'with faith' to the deities. I had to 'walk the walk and talk the talk' with my hosts, in order to leave with my own 'experience' of the rites and practices. The yatiri kept asking us all '*¿cómo les parece mi ch'alla a lo andino?*' (What do you think of my Andean *ch'alla*?), inviting a new personal understanding of certain facets of indigeneity. As participants subjectively involved in the activities, all those present, urban and non-urban Bolivians, were experimenting with the permeable boundaries of our identity as Bolivians, as members of a generation which had been brought up to distance ourselves from any trace of indigeneity.

I later found out from the yatiri and others present that the day had been a historic event, the first time they had been able to complete a pilgrimage to the wak'as in preparation for the Anata reciprocity rituals. On previous occasions, I learned, they had all gathered in someone's house and had travelled 'mentally' to the sites, but the first time they had gone physically as a collective, with the purpose of making offerings and performing in reciprocity with the Pachamama and the other deities, had been on that Tuesday before Carnival in 2008. This made me reflect upon what Ivan Z. had told me earlier, that the Anata Andina gave participants the opportunity to develop their own knowledge, to *imagine their own identity*, to identify areas of learning and pursue them in the knowledge that every day was a step forward.

In my view, the Anata Andina is an explicit demand for recognition. It is an expression that asserts indigeneity in its difference (deconstructing *mestizaje*) but also in its worth (as carrier of a more 'authentic' heritage of the nation). My experience of indigeneity in 2008 suggests that it is no longer constituted in confrontational dialogue with a particular sector of society (as in the 1993 'Damn the Spanish race of murderers...'). Instead, using festive performance as a political tool, indigenous actors in the Anata look to challenge a persistent ideology that reduces indigenous identity to irrelevance. More than a nostalgic revisiting of the past, the Anata Andina offers the possibility for agency: by taking part in it, Aymara people are able to envision a future in tune with their own sense of subjectivity, rather than that imposed through the celebration of *mestizaje* and its disdain for indigenous subjects. Participation in the parade allows Aymara people to enter into dialogue with national systems of representation in the public arena, and the preparatory rituals lend the possibility of approaching memory as a work-in-progress with a sense of contiguity with the past. Thus, it becomes clear that 'peripheral' events such as the Anata Andina carry important political implications when

'read' against the nationalist framework of the festive period in Oruro. In this scenario, Carnival becomes a space to make visible alternative political projects and identity debates that concern not only distinct groups but also the nation as a whole.

## Conclusion

Processes of national representation and memory transmission, as experienced by certain performers of Bolivia's most renowned folkloric event, have been informed by the establishment of systems of symbolic difference that categorise social relations according to systems of domination. This symbolic difference has resulted in the projection of racial constructs on to some groups in order to render them invisible or irrelevant in processes of memory transmission at the level of national representation. Yet, an analysis of the dialogical dimension of performance has proved to be a good resource to interrogate how the Oruro Carnival offers its actors the possibility to contest ideological processes that reduce 'Other' identities to invisibility or malformation (Taylor, 1992). The recognition that identity is socially derived informs the choices that people make in the performance of the festivities, and can create spaces for self-realisation through the recovery of personal and cultural memories. The invasion of the urban by rural indigenous festive practices achieved through the Anata Andina challenges the view that mestizo heritage represents all voices, the true multiplicity of all Bolivians, or the 'everyone' in the official discourse that '*todos hacen el Carnaval*' (everyone makes Carnival). The Anata parades contest the notion that national heritage (inherited values, selected traditions and beliefs promoted as the embodiment of the nation) can be homogeneously represented by the performative actions and symbols of an increasingly exclusive group.

The emergence of the Anata Andina, as a postcolonial project, responds to the urgent task of recovering the cultures, languages and memories of indigenous and colonised peoples around the world. The Anata Andina also constitutes a shift away from earlier attempts in Bolivia to speak of the nation in terms of 'two countries': one for the groups approaching progress and wellbeing, and another for Indians (Reinaga, 1970). Instead, it works to reinstate indigenous memories but with the aim of weaving indigeneity into the 'official' body of the nation. The Anata organisers are explicitly engaged in the processes of memory recovery, while inviting participants to research and explore new meanings. In this respect, the parade has turned into a kind of laboratory of Andean Cosmivision and the cultural heritage of Aymara and Quechua communities, all enacted through the festival. These strategies highlight the changing face of indigeneity, whereby it can no longer be seen in terms of 'language', 'race', or 'culture', but instead as a place of enhanced visibility and political participation in the now and for the future.

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## 4. Crafting contemporary indigeneity through audiovisual media in Bolivia<sup>1</sup>

*Gabriela Zamorano Villarreal*

The turn of the millennium brought about significant transformations in Bolivia. From 2000 onwards, social movements comprising urban popular and middle classes, together with peasant and indigenous mobilisations, led two ‘wars’ against the privatisation of water and natural gas. Through these struggles, the movements managed to topple neoliberal President Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada in 2003 and his successor Carlos Mesa in 2004.

Alongside the consolidation of an oppositional movement initiated in the 1980s by peasant unions and coca leaf producers – later transformed into the *Movimiento al Socialismo* (MAS) – the so-called ‘wars’ over natural resources in 2000 and 2003 set the stage for the historic election of 2005. This was notable for being the first time a representative of the Bolivian indigenous and peasant unions – Evo Morales – had received 54 per cent of the vote. Although further historical developments would later raise new challenges for, and ruptures within, the MAS government and the unique alliances that emerged between 2000 and 2007, during his first years Morales focused on creating the conditions for ‘refounding the state’ by involving social groups – in particular, indigenous peoples – that had historically been marginal to it. Hence, a few months after his inauguration, Morales responded to the demands of indigenous organisations to install a Constitutional Assembly, a process which resulted in a new political constitution being written in 2007 which had a distinctive focus on indigenous peoples’ rights and redefined the Bolivian state as ‘unitary and plurinational’.

The prominence of indigenous struggles during this extraordinary moment of national redefinition has generated transformations that not only challenge political and legal practices, but also contribute to redefining the role of indigeneity within the new state. This chapter explores a particular aspect of this redeployment of indigeneity in contemporary Bolivia by analysing the work of a group of mediamakers who are creating audiovisual productions

1 I would like to thank Helen Gilbert, Charlotte Gleghorn, Andy Roth and Ricardo Macip for their insightful comments on previous versions of this essay.

to fortify recent social mobilisations.<sup>2</sup> The Plan Nacional Indígena Originario de Comunicación Audiovisual (National Plan of Indigenous Communication) is a non-governmental initiative coordinated by three entities: a group of indigenous and non-indigenous filmmakers who form the Centro de Formación y Capacitación Cinematográfica (Film Training and Production Centre – CEFREC); an organisation of indigenous mediamakers from different regions of Bolivia: Coordinadora Audiovisual Indígena Originaria de Bolivia (Indigenous Audiovisual Coordinating Body from Bolivia – CAIB); and Bolivia's five national indigenous and peasant confederations.<sup>3</sup> As Himpele (2008) argues, indigenous media within the Plan Nacional have been instrumental in producing and circulating contemporary images of indigeneity that attempt to challenge dismissive stereotypes of the Indian, while complementing recent efforts undertaken by the government and social movements to reimagine indigenous participation in national political life.

While it is true that indigenous mediamakers are actively creating and disseminating new, self-conscious images of indigeneity, my argument here is that these practices are simultaneously circumscribed by the structural and historical conditions moulding how mediamakers see themselves and their realities. These conditions include the visual repertoires that demarcate and inform indigenous film aesthetics and narratives; the ways in which image production is affected by different audiences' expectations of indigenous films; and how indigenous mediamakers learn to interact with varied publics and cultural brokers in film festivals and markets. Thus, contemporary depictions of indigeneity in Bolivia are not only structured by First Peoples' efforts in creating their own images, but also by the expectations and meanings that indigenous and non-indigenous audiences invest in these images, a process inevitably mediated by the cultural and economic dynamics of circulation and consumption. The tensions surrounding such depictions may be illuminated by examining the extent to which indigenous media production challenges, or contributes to, the commodification, exoticisation or spectacularisation of indigeneity.

- 2 Mediamaker or *comunicador* is the term that Plan Nacional members use to describe the collective and political nature of their work, as opposed to 'filmmaker', a term they associate with an individual artistic trajectory. Nevertheless, throughout this chapter I refer to Plan Nacional productions and activities as films and filmmaking, since they broadly describe a genre beyond specific formats (although all Plan work is produced in video format).
- 3 These confederations are: Confederación de Pueblos Indígenas de Bolivia (Bolivian Indigenous Peoples' Confederation – CIDOB), Confederación Sindical de Colonizadores de Bolivia (Union Confederation of Migrant Settlers of Bolivia – CSCB), Confederación Sindical Única de Trabajadores Campesinos de Bolivia (Bolivian Peasant Workers – CSUTCB), Consejo Nacional de Ayllus y Markas del Qollasuyo (National Council of Ayllus and Markas of Qullasuyo – CONAMAQ) and Confederación Nacional de Mujeres Campesinas Indígenas y Originarias de Bolivia 'Bartolina Sisa' (Bartolina Sisa National Federation of Indigenous and Peasant Women of Bolivia – FNMCIQB-BS).



*Figure 4.1. CAIB communicators shooting an indigenous march in the Bolivian Highlands, 2003. Photo courtesy of CEFREC-CAIB.*

After briefly summarising the Plan Nacional's history and method, this chapter will discuss three main aspects of media production: i) the ways in which films resist or reproduce the existing visual repertoire, which often draws on discriminatory or essentialising stereotypes of indigeneity; ii) how indigenous mediamakers emerge as spokespersons, and how their authority is mediated by their interaction with diverse audiences and by distribution politics; and iii) the kinds of tensions these mediamakers experience in relation to issues such as collective authorship, property, status and recognition of their work.

## **The development of the Plan Nacional de Comunicación Audiovisual**

Since 1997, the Plan Nacional has worked with indigenous communities and with the powerful peasant and indigenous confederations to produce and disseminate videos that build upon their social and political reality.<sup>4</sup> The Plan has always remained independent of state funding, since its main supporters

4 Following the changes brought about by the Constituent Assembly, the Plan Nacional redefined itself as a communication system, changing its name to Sistema Plurinacional de Comunicación Indígena Originario Campesino Intercultural (Plurinational System of Indigenous, Originary, Peasant and Intercultural Communication), and thus encompassing all indigeneity ascriptions acknowledged by the new constitution in 2007.

are international organisations, particularly the Autonomous Community of the Basque Country and Spain. All the mediamakers, self-identifying as indigenous peoples from different regions of Bolivia, have been appointed by their organisations to participate in the scheme. While many are leaders with an in-depth knowledge of, and wide-ranging experience in, organising within their regions, others previously worked as popular reporters in community radio stations prior to being involved with the Plan. These indigenous mediamakers are situated in a unique political space that demands previous knowledge and engagement with the struggles of indigenous peoples, an active involvement in debates led by community leaders, intellectuals and government representatives, and technical knowledge of media technologies such as video and radio. In addition, indigenous community members and organisations participate in various stages of video production such as scriptwriting, acting, staging and distribution activities.

In the early days Plan Nacional productions focused on documenting cultural aspects of indigenous life, sometimes creating fictional films based on oral stories, but since 2004, the Plan has concentrated on more explicitly political content, including documentaries and fiction films that recreate and dramatise political problems confronting indigenous communities and organisations. Responding to the socio-political moment, from 2006 onwards, the Plan started to foster a debate among communities and organisations from different regions of Bolivia regarding a series of proposals to be negotiated at the Constituent Assembly. For this purpose, it developed a special project called *Estrategia de Comunicación, Derechos Indígenas Originarios y Asamblea Constituyente* (The Strategy for Communication, Indigenous Rights and the Constituent Assembly).<sup>5</sup> The three-pronged approach of this comprehensive strategy includes: the political and technical training of mediamakers and promoters from different regions; the collective production of fiction and documentary videos that express the main demands of indigenous movements to build a plurinational state, addressing topics such as intercultural health and education, land and territory, natural resources, gender equality and self-determination; and distribution campaigns through touring workshops and itinerant video screenings among communities and in cities, as well as radio and television broadcasting at community, regional and national levels.

Owing to the communication strategy's emphasis on collective work and its ambitions for political transformation, film production and distribution generally involve a great deal of negotiation and disagreement among

5 After the Constituent Assembly had concluded, the training activities undertaken by the Communication Strategy became the basis for founding the *Escuela Integral de Liderazgo Indígena en Derechos, Género y Comunicación* (Integral School of Indigenous Leadership in Rights, Gender and Communication).



Figure 4.2. Production of Bolivia Constituyente television programme, Sucre, 2006. Photo courtesy of CEFREC-CAIB.

mediamakers, organisation representatives, trainers and professionals who participate in the Plan Nacional. The latter's permanent collaboration with national indigenous and peasant confederations, together with the fact that indigenous peoples in Bolivia constitute a demographic majority of over 60 per cent of the population, allows for a unique national scope, unlike other indigenous media projects based in Latin America, such as those developed in Mexico – especially those derived from the Transference of Audiovisual Media to Indigenous Communities and Organisations Programme, created by the Instituto Nacional Indigenista (National Indigenista Institute – INI) around 1989 in Mexico (Wortham, 2002), and the Video in the Villages project created in Brazil in 1987 as part of the Centre for Indigenous Advocacy (Centro de Trabalho Indigenista) (Turner, 2002; see also Aufderheide, 1995). Although these projects have achieved significant expansion and original, good-quality production, their regional developments within larger countries, and the fact that indigenous populations constitute a demographic minority in these nations, limit their potential to broker nationwide alliances and augment their reach.

Most Plan Nacional indigenous mediamakers agree that the technological possibilities of video to disseminate knowledge about indigenous struggles

have offered an invaluable contribution to the participation of these peoples in national political life. This sentiment gathered strength from the late 1990s, particularly in 2003 after the achievements of indigenous movements, which were followed by the electoral triumph of Evo Morales in December 2005. The opportunities that have arisen for the Plan to adapt itself to changing political situations are due, in part, to the fact that its members define it more as a 'process' than as a specific communication project, an aspect that underlines its unfinished, ever-changing and long-term character. Yet, despite their emphasis on present and future depictions of indigeneity, Plan Nacional productions remain influenced by an existing repertoire of discriminatory images of First Peoples.

### **Crafting 'new' images of indigeneity**

While indigenous films seek to resist and respond to the legacy of these images, they often (sometimes unintentionally) reproduce exoticist displays (Himpele, 2008; Raheja, 2011). In other words, when producing their films, indigenous mediamakers are constantly caught between portraying realistic, though problematic and contradictory, aspects of life in their communities and employing a visual repertoire characterised by what some anthropologists have termed 'Indigenism' (Ramos, 2001) or an 'American Orientalism' (Coronil, 1997). As Ramos argues in relation to Brazil, this repertoire is built from the vast collection of 'images, attitudes, and actions that both non-Indians and Indians have produced along the history of the country's interethnic front' (2001, p. 2). This scenario underscores the fact that the mediamakers' gaze is not autonomous from the social and historical context in which they live. In the Bolivian case, the visual repertoire is historically constructed through colonial, postcolonial and nationalist dynamics that have normalised certain imaginaries of indigenous peoples, for instance, through early 20th-century film, photography, mural painting and literature in the indigenista tradition. This ideological current depicted Andean peoples as 'telluric', that is, with a mysterious, opaque, earthy and untameable nature comparable to the rocky and rough geography of the Andean mountains (Sanjinés, 2006; Vargas, 2007). Other significant interpretations included the manipulation of images of the Indian to symbolise a miserable past, which, via the 1952 National Revolution, would be overcome by forging a single national mestizo race (Rivera Cusicanqui, 2003, p. 84).

From the 1990s, contemporary representations of indigeneity have been influenced by the reemergence of indigenous movements in Latin and North America, Australia and New Zealand. Images of Zapatista soldiers defending their autonomous territories with makeshift weapons in Mexican jungles,

or of native Canadian people protesting with drums and chants against the exploitation of natural resources, have circulated widely through international media mobilising an imaginary of indigenouness as intrinsically revolutionary, politically coherent, community-oriented and environmentally respectful. Since Evo Morales took up his presidency, Bolivia has become a focal point for projections of this imagery, which fetishises indigenous struggles, political successes and autonomy, along with specific approaches to resource sustainability. This depiction often overlooks internal stratification and fragmentation within communities and organisations, as well as the often-contradictory ‘indigenous’ practices relating to natural resources.<sup>6</sup> Following Alcida Rita Ramos, I would argue that this imagery, while effective for indigenous struggles, could be regarded as a means of essentialising and exoticising the romantic colonialist images mentioned above (Ramos, 2001, p. 9; Saldaña-Portillo, 2003).

### **Indigenous mediamakers as spokespeople**

Both when producing a film with specific audiences in mind, and when presenting their videos in public spaces and institutions, indigenous mediamakers are continually negotiating their political and artistic involvement in media production within already-established dynamics and markets. This apparatus in many ways dictates what their films should look like, or how an indigenous representative should dress, speak, or behave before a non-indigenous audience. The mediamakers who participate in the Plan Nacional are situated in a social space which demands that they act as spokespeople for indigenous struggles, or as intermediaries between their communities and organisations, and the various audiences who watch their films. As in the case of political leaders and other intermediaries, this position requires mediamakers to learn the existing mechanisms for displaying indigeneity, to act within them and to manipulate and mobilise ciphers of indigeneity accordingly.

As mentioned above, such mediamakers are usually appointed by their organisations, meaning that their work is not seen as part of a personal career but rather as supporting broader political structures in search of collective goals, for instance, those advocating indigenous participation in national politics. This orientation is also marked by the fact that they receive training through the Plan that is both technical and political. In this regard, both as authors and

6 The TIPNIS conflict in 2011 clearly illustrates such contradictory practices regarding natural resources and territory among indigenous organisations in Bolivia. Evo Morales’s approval for constructing a highway in the Amazonian region known as the Territorio Indígena y Parque Nacional Isiboro Sécuré (Indigenous Territory and Isiboro Sekure National Park – TIPNIS) led to a series of protests from both indigenous sectors that had originally supported the MAS government and other middle- and working-class sectors throughout Bolivia.

representatives, mediamakers learn to speak in a collective voice, which often involves exploring politics drawing from personal experience and the stories of people living through similar situations. Miguel Ángel Yalahuma, a Movima mediamaker from the Lowlands, offers a useful example of how he and his colleagues have approached political issues by basing films on experiences taken from their own lives. When presenting a script idea for *Renacer: historia de un Movima (To Be Born Again: The Story of a Movima Man, 2005)*, he proposed a story of exploitation located within the cattle *estancias* (ranches) in Beni's eastern department:

Then, I presented my script, a story based on the reality of my town ... Before, the cattle owners were Movima people, but not any more. Now Movima people are the employees, the exploited ones. So I based my story on that ... because my family lived through that, right? And I started writing. My dad's family owns cattle. My mother's too. But there were various deceits; that's how rich people took cattle and land away from them. That's when my family decided to leave everything and come back to town. That was in 1982. That same year my town also suffered a flood. So everything was lost, so we had to start over again. By 1988 we were in the *estancia* [hacienda] again working for the *patrones* [bosses] because there was no other job. That's where I grew up until I was ten or 12. I only started school when I was 12.<sup>7</sup>

While documenting the experience of his own family working for the *patrón* (boss) in the hacienda, Miguel Ángel's film also tells a story common to most Movima families of the region. Another film, *Venciendo el miedo (Conquering Fear, 2004)* brings together a series of personal experiences of domestic violence and gender discrimination into a fictional storyline about the gender tensions that families suffer in a tropical community in the north of the La Paz region. These examples illustrate how mediamakers value their own and other people's personal experiences for their potential to expose collective issues through fiction films. In this sense, depictions of indigeneity rely on the authority that mediamakers, as spokespeople or mediators of their realities, have gained to render their personal and community stories collective in a first-person voice.

Mediamakers' concerns about the appropriate representation of indigenous struggles and their awareness of potential audiences' responses to their films also affects their depictions of indigeneity. While many films portray internal conflicts within communities in terms of land distribution, gender discrimination or community justice, these conflicts are generally resolved on screen through peaceful dialogue and consent, which is not always the case

7 Miguel Ángel Yalahuma, interview with the author, La Paz, July 2006.

in reality. Furthermore, Plan Nacional productions have sought to omit or to negatively represent aspects of indigenous culture that could be regarded as 'polluting' influences or indicators of a loss of 'authenticity', but that are undeniable aesthetic references for most mediamakers and communities. These elements, widely consumed in peasant markets in provinces and cities, include *chicha* music;<sup>8</sup> comic TV shows, like the *Cholo Juanito*, that ridicule indigenous life; videoclips with folklorising indigenous music and dances from different regions of Bolivia; and American or Asian action films. Despite the interaction between indigenous and 'outside' communities and cultures, Plan Nacional videos rarely portray this dynamic. When such elements appear in a film, they are used to accentuate the construction of urbanised characters who are losing their identity. These examples demonstrate that Plan film production involves self-conscious negotiations over how indigeneity should be presented to different kinds of audiences, notably whether communities should be portrayed as harmonious and politically coherent, whether audiences should learn about their conflicts and possible resolutions, and whether identity contradictions should be depicted in ideal or realistic ways.

The dynamics of distribution, including both the mediamakers' negotiations with established film markets and their interaction with different audiences, also inflects the Plan's representation of indigeneity through film production. Plan Nacional members do not wish their films to circulate as commodities in themselves so the majority of their screenings are accompanied by presentations and debates led by mediamakers. This formula is adapted to different venues: while film screenings in rural communities are often developed as part of informational campaigns, those in cities are organised as debate forums in which after-film discussions about specific topics are encouraged. Alternatively, films presented at international festivals are usually followed by a question-and-answer session. This conception of films as motors for public debate prioritises their consumption as educational or informational tools, thus diminishing the importance of private or entertainment usage. This particular approach to film circulation, common to many projects with a political orientation, involves a great deal of negotiation with established film markets (even independent circuits), particularly in relation to their demand that copies be packaged and sold to viewing publics independently of discussions led by the producers. So, while educational institutions and film distributors have asked to buy or distribute Plan Nacional films, this remains a controversial

8 The popular *chicha* music distils and brings together traditional Andean rhythms like *huayno* with tropical rhythms such as *cumbia* and *guaracha*.

issue for the organisation's members.<sup>9</sup> Other anxieties surrounding distribution dynamics focus on pre-existing funding and distribution structures that prioritise individual over cooperative authorship; the risk of falling prey to piracy networks; the need to negotiate with funders to maintain control over themes and film circulation; and internal debates within the Plan about how to use the potential earnings generated from the sale of videos in ways that benefit all those involved in the production. I argue that the medimakers' continuous negotiations regarding distribution demonstrate that, far from allowing indigenous medimakers to remain autonomous from a capitalist market logic (Schiwy, 2009), current distribution mechanisms dictate the still-limited circulation of Bolivian indigenous films.

The images produced by the Plan Nacional films are also informed by an awareness of distribution dynamics, depending on their differentiated engagement with specific audiences, and may oscillate between communicating politically radical messages, reinforcing discourses on cultural identities, or adding to multicultural versions of nationalism. For example, *Aymaranakan sarawinakapa* (*Aymara Traditional Democracy*, 2003), a film on the potential for Aymara political and religious forms of organisation to challenge Western ideas about democracy, was originally intended to echo demands raised by indigenous peoples' mobilisations of the time, which, a few years later, became central to the Constituent Assembly debates. In the context of its production, the goal of this film was explicitly political because it called viewers to imagine alternative ways of understanding democracy beyond its liberal, individually-oriented principles. In 2005, it was screened at First Nations\First Features, a prestigious international showcase organised in New York City and Washington, DC by academic, artistic and cultural institutions and featuring representative indigenous films from various parts of the world.<sup>10</sup> Audiences at the festival venues in which it was shown comprised film specialists, academics and activists. In addition, Latin American migrant organisations invited Patricio Luna, the film director, and other Latin American participants, to screen their films at a community celebration. In this international context, although a section of the public was engaged with the political aspects of the film, most of the audiences, including the ones attending the community event, highlighted its cultural value and its contribution to understanding Bolivia as a culturally diverse nation. Attention was drawn to aspects representing

9 Only recently, the Plan Nacional agreed to sell, for the first time, a limited number of films to the Princeton University Library. For a list of the productions PUL has acquired, search for 'CEFREC-CAIB' on: <http://searchit.princeton.edu/primolibweb/action/search.do?vid=PRINCETON> (accessed 26 Sep. 2013).

10 The Festival-organising institutions were the National Museum of the American Indian, New York University and New York's Museum of Modern Art (MOMA).

Aymara cosmovision, including rituals, symbols, decoration and clothing, as well as to images that could pass as emblematic of Bolivia, such as Andean rural people and landscapes. The Bolivian Embassy functionaries who had partly sponsored the event were at the time representing a government confronted by indigenous struggles, and seemed to value the film more in terms of its national representation in a prestigious international event than for its foregrounding of the indigenous movement's demands.

This example demonstrates how the value and meaning attributed to images of indigeneity not only depends on the medimakers' intentions, but also varies according to the contexts in which the audiences consume the films. In this instance, the different screenings of *Aymaranakan sarawinakapa* shifted discussion of the film away from its overtly political claim for indigenous self-determination, recasting it instead as an official celebration of indigenosity as part of the nation's cultural diversity. This example is not intended to establish a dichotomy between culture and politics, nor to oversimplify the more complex interpretations audiences may make of the films. Rather, this case is a useful illustration of how a film, originally intended to support a series of mobilisations *against* the neoliberal Bolivian government of the time, lost its political potency when shown to audiences who prioritised its cultural content within a space created for presenting films of indigenous peoples as minorities, one which also, in some ways, permitted a spectacle of multiculturalism.

The differentiated ways in which indigenous medimakers and audiences engage with images of indigeneity are linked to the technological characteristics of audiovisual media. On the one hand, the possibilities of reproduction and transportation permit the circulation of films among the various audiences described above. On the other, as with photography, film mechanics are based on an 'indexical' record of what appears before the camera – people, objects and places featured in the film were actually there at the moment of shooting. Film and video images constitute, therefore, a trace of things that actually existed. Aside from creating a sense of reality, this indexical record allows for an 'excess' of visual information that escapes the context of production and allows audiences to concentrate on details that the producers do not necessarily intend.<sup>11</sup> For instance, if a film recreates the scene of a community celebration to emphasise local unity, the record of this scene might also show people dressing, preparing food or rehearsing dance steps, and it could encompass images of the place in which the event takes place, and even of improvised interactions or gestures among actors. All these details can be planned, or not, for the recording, but they will doubtless provide additional elements for audiences to generate their own readings. In this way, images of indigeneity are

11 I take the concept of indexicality from Roland Barthes's work on photography (1981), and the notion of 'excess' from Deborah Poole's work (2005).

not only crafted by their producers, but also by what audiences interpret from their focused attention to specific visual details in the context of their own cultural and/or political expectations.

Finally, the ways in which indigenous mediamakers learn to act as legitimate representatives of their communities and organisations when they have to present and discuss their films before different kinds of audiences also influence distribution dynamics. At such events, mediamakers act as experts of the realities presented either because they lived them directly or because, through their films, they are supposed to bring forward the voices of people acting in them. The audiences often expect to become enlightened and informed by these first-hand experiences. In this sense, these mediamakers' public presentations in these institutional and civil spaces are yet another form of negotiating with existing economies of display in which presenters are expected to 'look' or to 'behave' like an indigenous representative. Wearing traditional outfits, greeting the audience in a native language and of course explaining the film's content as an insider are some of the transactions that occur between mediamakers and spectators at national and international film venues.

Such displays of indigeneity are often combined with what some authors have called 'performances' of professionalism (Himpele, 2008; Turner, 2002) in which indigenous mediamakers publicly demonstrate their savvy operation of technological equipment. Film screenings, then, constitute an additional strategy for publicly mediating indigenous struggles. Here, the work of Ramos on Brazilian indigenous leaders illuminates the ways in which these mediamakers appropriate technologies while also emphasising their cultural differences:

Indigenous people in the country are now matching their traditional ways of expression to such Western channels as writing, video, tape recording, radio, and television. But it seems that these new media are not displacing old models of thought; rather, they are providing indigenous peoples with more effective means to conduct their struggle for recognition as legitimate Others. (1998, p. 139).

Ramos uses the figure of the 'interethnic Indian' to explain the mechanisms that indigenous peoples develop to collaborate and negotiate with non-indigenous agents so they can make themselves visible by simultaneously emphasising their national belonging and their difference (1998). Analysing the kind of issues that indigenous activists encounter when confronting the mandate of bureaucratic institutions, particularly indigenist NGOs, Ramos argues that they are pressured to perform 'the perfect Indian whose virtues, sufferings, and untiring stoicism have won for him the right to be defended by the professionals of indigenous rights' (1992, p. 9). Similarly, indigenous mediamakers are required

to develop strategies to both assert their legitimacy as artists and political representatives during their presentations at international events, and to signify their difference. In these spaces, the relationships that these mediamakers cultivate with international audiences, activists, film distributors, producers, funders, festival organisers, and even with state authorities such as embassy representatives, put into play issues of status, notions of personal and political achievements and actual political alliances, as well as unexpected interactions with political antagonists. While becoming conversant in all these different, and sometimes unexpected, scenarios, indigenous mediamakers might also foster, as Ramos would say about the Brazilian scenario, the 'effective means to conduct their struggle' (1998, p. 139). These processes of presenting themselves before different audiences are regulated by tensions surrounding their status among other mediamakers, who are permanently joking or commenting about how their colleagues learn, for instance, to dress as a 'real' Indian or to speak about the national situation when attending an international festival. This tension requires us to ask who is authorised to represent a specific community or situation, and what are the different scenarios in which this authority becomes possible or even necessary.

### **Ambiguities around collective authorship**

The emphasis on collective authorship is the most distinguishing aspect of the Plan Nacional's work. The Plan defines those in charge of productions as '*responsables*', and not as 'directors' or 'filmmakers', in order to highlight that the production process is cooperative and does not rely on a specific individual or author. Indeed, this conception of authorship seeks to prioritise collective political commitment over personal benefit. Although most teams comprise indigenous videomakers and non-indigenous *técnicos* (facilitators), who are in charge of productions and who offer their own aesthetic and narrative input, the contributions made by the communities and political organisations that participate in scriptwriting, shooting and distribution activities are also significant.

As positive as this notion sounds, the process of collective authorship is far from the friendly attribute that some mediamakers have described as 'the essence of indigenosity'.<sup>12</sup> There are numerous tensions concerning property, recognition and status, the mediamakers' relationship with funders and distributors, and authenticity. For example, although most of the former work according to the principle of collective authorship, the individual processes of learning they undertake and the satisfaction they feel when, for instance, a video is finished, or when it wins awards at international festivals, do not

12 Franklin Gutiérrez, CEFREC, interview with the author, La Paz, May 2007.

seem to sit easily with a commitment to all the people who made it possible. The emphasis on the principle also introduces the question of how much a cooperative production strengthens or limits the creative possibilities of specific individuals, and how much the collective label conceals the relationships that competition triggers between mediamakers. This issue is reflected, for instance, in the anxiety and tensions which emerge when it is being decided who will be selected to attend an international festival, or in the jokes and resentment expressed by some mediamakers against those who attract attention. Likewise, the notion of collective authorship conceals the individual quest of some mediamakers for recognition. While most of them acknowledge that they do not work for money, or to become 'film stars', some have expressed concerns regarding the scarce monetary compensation they receive for their work. Moreover, although most mediamakers garner recognition from their families, communities or organisations, the fact that their work involves international trips and funding, as well as handling expensive video equipment, sometimes generates suspicion among the groups they seek to represent. As Wortham notes in her work on Mexican indigenous media (2004), this phenomenon is common to other such community projects and even to wider peasant and indigenous organisations (Edelman, 1999). At the same time, international funding and grant mechanisms, in their attempts to acknowledge the mediamakers' talent, often contravene their collaborative and local commitments, for instance, when offering individual grants to indigenous producers involved in processes of collective authorship (Córdova, 2005). This aspect represents yet another instance of how the mediamakers' role as political representatives situates them in the middle of external and internal pressures that condition their ability to respond coherently to the different subjects involved in media production and distribution.

The emphasis on collective authorship is not merely evident at the level of discourse, however, as it has also influenced the formal results of films in terms of length, narration and quality. Such aspects are constantly negotiated not only within production teams, but also with the communities and organisations they seek to represent, as well as with the varied audiences and markets they are attempting to reach. On this point, CEFREC founder and trainer Franklin Gutiérrez noted:

I think audiovisual production results from the ability to negotiate and achieve consent on what we want to tell and how we are going to tell it. And this happens between different groups: the original owner of the idea, the production team, and the community with which you work. And then at a larger level there are still the Confederations, in the case of the Communication Strategy, who have to decide if the message is in tune

with their political goals. So, the Communication Plan is a permanent process of negotiation, coordination and planning.<sup>13</sup>

Gutiérrez explains that ‘negotiation’ and ‘consent’ are conditional aspects of collaboration within the Plan Nacional. The acknowledgment of these two elements elucidates the significance of power dynamics in this communication process. The intense negotiation that takes place regarding aspects of video production, such as aesthetics and narrative and stylistic innovations, proves that it does not represent a coherent and common practice for all its members. Nor does video production express a pre-existing root, essence or cosmovision that defines an ‘indigenous’ way of doing things. Instead, it is possible to identify numerous objectives and battles at the moment of defining, for instance, how the story will be told, how a character should dress, or how s/he should react to specific situations. Thus, far from being an essential feature of indigenous films – and of indigeneity itself – collective authorship constitutes fertile ground for interrogating this notion, as well as a productive strategy to stimulate negotiation, debate and consent concerning how indigeneity can ‘best’ be depicted, who should assume authorship of this process, and what audiences they are targeting.

### **Conclusion: commodify, exoticise, spectacularise**

My efforts to understand the kinds of tensions that inform contemporary depictions of indigeneity, produced by a group of indigenous mediamakers in Bolivia, has led me to question how such processes involve a two-fold relationship with varied film audiences, within which funders and distributors also play an important role. This relationship situates mediamakers in a conflicting position, in which they fight against – while sometimes unintentionally reproducing – the imagery and practices of display that commodify, exoticise or spectacularise indigeneity. By showing members of indigenous communities making decisions regarding the issues they face on a daily basis, the Plan Nacional films help to normalise an imaginary of indigenous peoples that did not exist previously in national politics. In this way, the productions contribute effectively to the forging of political pathways (Himpele, 2008). Scenes of community assemblies discussing the access of women to land ownership in films like *Venciendo el miedo*, images of a Moxeño community opposing a lumber company in *El grito de la selva* (*A Cry From the Forest*, 2008), or scenes recreating collective procedures to punish llama thieves in *Markasan jucha thakahuipa* (*Justice of our Peoples*, 2005) make visible daily life procedures that one decade ago did not form part of a national imaginary. Such scenes resituate indigenous peoples as politically active subjects who, drawing from their own experiences, are able to

13 Interview with the author, La Paz, May 2007.

play a part in the elaboration of laws and state policies, as occurred with the Constituent Assembly.

On the other hand, in their own representations, mediamakers engage with the aforementioned arsenal of (neo)colonial imagery: they are familiar with the ways in which First Peoples from Bolivia have been historically represented, as well as with stereotyped images of indigenously mobilised in soap-operas, music videoclips and comedy shows. Although mediamakers seek to distance themselves from these stereotypes, their films are often informed by the aesthetics and imagery that preceded their productions. Plan Nacional images of indigenous peoples as wise and 'of the earth', or its reiterative uses of icons of indigenous struggles, such as the coca leaf, regional diversity, the *wiphala* flag and demonstrations, are not, then, entirely disconnected from recent representations of indigenously that echo neocolonial forms of discrimination through new forms of exoticisation and the fetishisation of the struggles.

This chapter's emphasis on understanding circulation and consumption dynamics as critical aspects of indigenous film builds on the attention that anthropology has given to consumption 'as a constitutive part of commodity production processes' since the 1980s (Ferry, 2009, p. 59). The case analysed here highlights a paradox since the Plan Nacional is reluctant to circulate its productions as commodities and, therefore, to offer them to audiences in conventional ways, namely, by directly assigning films (products of their labour) an economic value. Yet, it is through circulation that films, as cultural products, acquire other kinds of value. Film screenings and the discussions that ensue provide the forum where mediamakers consider the different values that audiences attribute to their work, where they are asked to make their messages explicit and where they learn to speak for those they are expected to represent. Through their creative distribution strategies, mediamakers participate in the 'visual economy' of indigeneity, that is, in the process through which images and displays of indigeneity acquire value, recognition and meaning according to specific circulation dynamics and markets (Poole, 1997).

As the examples developed throughout this essay demonstrate, the legibility of politics – and in this case of indigenous struggles – relies to a great extent on processes of commodification, performance and spectacularisation. By becoming conversant in these particular modes of crafting indigeneity, these mediamakers, together with other representatives of Bolivian indigenous struggles, are effectively strengthening the presence of First Peoples in national politics. This presence builds its way through contradictions, a lack of coherency and the unintended reproduction of stereotypes, revealing that reappropriations of contemporary indigeneity in Bolivia are still struggling with, and are moulded by, the histories of inequalities to which they seek to

respond. In other words, echoing the long-standing debate about whether those in a condition of subalternity can 'speak' (Spivak, 1988) or 'be seen' (Grandin, 2004), the Plan Nacional raises questions about the extent to which contemporary displays of indigeneity paradoxically depend on the skills that mediamakers develop in order to become conversant with an already dominant language established by indigenous media circuits.

Contemporary images of indigeneity displayed in Plan Nacional films, despite being constrained by power relations and historical dynamics, result from an interesting political practice, namely, from a space that generates debate, negotiation and disagreement about reality in order to envision alternative national futures. In this space, those participating in the production of films – including community members, leaders, mediamakers and audiences – impress their personal experiences on fictional stories to bestow upon them both a sense of reality and their hopes concerning how this reality could be improved. In this way, films not only serve as sources for imaginaries but principally as sites for political intervention. By making reference to the political past, challenging the present, and imagining possible futures, fiction and documentary videos reenact the continuities and ruptures of national political projects in particular ways. The mechanisms through which indigeneity is being depicted in the Plan constitute political uses of history that are central to the demands that indigenous mobilisations have been making for over a decade of the emerging plurinational state in Bolivia.

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### **Filmography**

*Renacer: historia de un Movima (To Be Born Again: the story of a Movima man)* (2005), Miguel Ángel Yalahuma, Bolivia, 40-minute video, CEFREC-CAIB.

*Venciendo el miedo (Conquering Fear)* (2004), María Morales, Bolivia, 55-minute video, CEFREC-CAIB.

*Aymaranakan sarawinakapa (Aymara Traditional Democracy)* (2003), Patricio Luna, Bolivia, 29-minute video, Centro Saphi Aru.

*El grito de la selva (A Cry From the Forest)* (2008), Alejandro Noza and Nicolás Ípamo, Bolivia, 95-minute video, CEFREC-CAIB.

*Markasan jucha thakahuipa (Justice of our Peoples)* (2005), Sonia Chiri, Bolivia, 40-minute video, CEFREC-CAIB.



## 5. Nora Naranjo-Morse's 'Always Becoming': enacting indigenous identity on a museum stage

*Andrea Zittlau*

In 2007, the Pueblo artist Nora Naranjo-Morse created 'Always Becoming', a group of sculptures situated in the grounds of the National Museum of the American Indian (NMAI) in Washington, DC. The figures Father, Mother, Little One, Moon Woman and Mountain Bird, all consisting of natural materials such as dirt, sand and clay, are meant to dissolve slowly with the seasons. While the sculptures were being crafted, the museum grounds became a stage for Naranjo-Morse and her team, and also for museum visitors and staff, tourists and locals, who all participated in the creation process. In this sense, the sculptures materialised through a performance art project with the dynamics being documented and archived in video recordings. The museum stage that framed<sup>1</sup> Naranjo-Morse's project is inevitably haunted by the cultural history of ethnological representation, of showcasing ethnicity to legitimise power claims. But what happens if in good postcolonial fashion the subaltern takes over the stage? Can Naranjo-Morse challenge the notion of the museum Indian or even subvert it?

In her poem 'When the Clay Calls', Naranjo-Morse gives a language to clay and revises the common assumption that it is the potter who gives shape to the material. The clay here has a 'life of its own' and the 'fluid forms ... instantly become a child's face, a woman's skirt, or her husband's smile' (1992, p. 24). The poem's protagonist wishes to be released from the clay and yet is claimed by 'This earth / I have become part of / that I also have grown out of' (ibid.). Identity here is a struggle with the self, a continuous negotiation, a process – not a result.<sup>2</sup> The sculpture project visualises this process in the particular case of indigenous identity – with all the ghosts of the past encountered along the way.

1 Here, framing is meant in the sense of the process of inclusion and exclusion, as used by Judith Butler in *Frames of War* (2010).

2 Identity is commonly understood as an act of performance (and thus as fluid), most famously by Judith Butler in *Gender Trouble* (1990).

## ‘Digging’

The poem ‘Always Becoming’, which Naranjo-Morse wrote for her sculpture project, begins with ‘Digging’ (2008, pp. 61–70), the process of claiming space and material to shape. In that process things may be uncovered, as digging also represents the start of the archaeological excavations established during the 19th century in an attempt to save the remains of a romanticised past. In that spirit, ethnographic museums had the effect of ensuring Western dominance by promoting anthropological ideas of cultural practices different from those of museum visitors (see Bennett, 1995). As houses of the emerging academic discipline of anthropology, these museums were thought to preserve and store knowledge in the form of ‘authentic’ material artefacts whose display illustrated a narrative of disappearing peoples with simple beliefs and practices. With their focus on objects and display, museums became part of what Tony Bennett calls the exhibitionary complex (1988), those emerging facilities that celebrated objects (and indigenous cultures) as commodities, ‘organizing and institutionalizing visual experience’ in the spirit of consumer culture (Shelton, 2006, p. 480).<sup>3</sup> Indigenous artefacts, together with a narrative of the primitive and the vanished, were not only circulated in educated circles but also in world fairs, theme parks, zoos and department stores, where they attracted the general public. These objects – even when rearranged – fostered essentialist ideas of cultures. For example, tipis as popular museum items illustrated the housing conditions of peoples living in a geographical area termed the ‘North American Plains’ by anthropologists and geographers. The gigantic, portable, buffalo-hide tents quickly became generalised and eventually iconised as the homes of North America’s indigenous populations. Museum displays conjured up the romantic story of the brave hunter and warrior as projected by 19th-century anthropologists and novelists alike. Frozen in a fantastic past, such items have not only promoted a particular image of Native Americans but also manifested the possibility of materialising and exhibiting cultural practices.

This narrative became unacceptable over time, particularly in countries with significant indigenous populations, eventually resulting in challenges to curatorial practices that put cultures on display (see Phillips, 2005). With the Civil Rights Movement and the ensuing prevalence of identity-based discourses, scholars and the general public alike began to realise that indigenous cultures were (and are) neither static nor homogenous, and they certainly had not vanished. By the 1980s, it was obvious that museum objects had been collected in the first place to confirm, not develop, ideas about cultures (see

3 For further contextual information on 19th-century consumer culture see Veblen (1899) and the more recent source, Leach (1993).

Cole, 1985).<sup>4</sup> Narratives of loss and victimhood subsequently became as taboo in many museum environments as the notions of the exotic that previously so vividly inhabited the exhibition halls. Native American cultures were suddenly no longer a phenomenon of a distant past but instead part of a lively present; they were not geographically far away but in the midst of museum visitors, as Gerald Vizenor's concept of 'survivance' suggests with its insistence on an enduring and dynamic indigenous existence (1994).

While 19th-century anthropology has now been extensively cross-examined (see Fabian, 1983; Clifford and Marcus, 1986), its dusty outcome in museum halls was, until recently, still badly in need of radical reshaping. The most significant tendencies in the process of reshaping the ethnographic museum have been: an acknowledgement of contemporary culture (often done by contrasting past and present or by solely exhibiting present cultural practices); recognition of aesthetic expression (which had been denied previously and dismissed as primitive); and active involvement of indigenous participants in all processes of curation and museum administration. While the latter step has been taken in an attempt to minimise possibilities of offensive exhibition outcomes,<sup>5</sup> it is often mistaken for a renewed claim for authenticity. This perception results from a long tradition of exhibiting indigenous peoples in a spectacularised manner to 'authenticate' exhibits of their artefacts. The spectacle, in this context, is 'a series of social relations mediated by images' tying 'individuals into an economy of looks and looking' (Taylor, 2003, p. 13). Museum spectacles proved to be effective in the 19th century in authenticating (and advertising) the exhibited artefacts, especially when an indigenous person was shown making these objects. This particular history of museum performances is still very present in today's museum settings and difficult for performers to challenge.

## 'Planting'

In September 2004, the NMAI opened its doors to the public. Its location on the Mall in Washington, DC, its architecture by Douglas Cardinal and its approach to the exhibition of indigenous cultures were designed to celebrate contemporary indigenous lives on the public and politically significant stage

- 4 The term 'culture' here is used in the early anthropological sense of referring to closed entities, whereas the contemporary and more appropriate expression would be 'cultural practices', which stresses identity formation (and description) through non-static shared practices.
- 5 The best illustration of this point is the controversial exhibition, 'Into the Heart of Africa', curated by Jeanne Cannizzo, which opened in November 1989 at the Royal Ontario Museum in Canada, sparking numerous ongoing discussions. While the exhibition was intended to question Canada's colonial practices and attitudes ironically, the display was extremely offensive to African visitors (see Schildkrout, 1991).

of the capital city. Keeping in mind the previously mentioned expectations connected to old-style ethnographic museums, the NMAI openly tries to subvert any longing for the romantic stereotypes and adventure stories of the past and instead aims to educate visitors about a heterogeneous present. The canonical object of the tipi, for example, is clearly embedded in the historical narrative of a single community, and the classic pair of bow and arrow has been replaced by art installations of machine guns and pre-historic arrowheads.<sup>6</sup> The museum not only reverses common expectations but also challenges visitors to question their epistemologies (see Isaac, 2008). To further complicate this process, visitors are expected to pick up interpretive clues themselves, combining them during their tour by not only engaging with the exhibits but also experiencing the museum's retail facilities, the library, the café, the theatre and the building's surroundings.

While this concept was not particularly popular initially, the playful challenge to expectations soon set new standards for ethnographic museums. Yet the NMAI continues to labour under the established tradition of freezing cultures behind glass, a tradition probably most evident in the form of dioramas featuring static figures with racialised physiognomies frozen in a specific moment of time. Born in the late 19th century, together with panoramas and ethnic shows, the diorama satisfies the voyeuristic need to observe without being observed, to encounter without ever meeting. Originally part of natural history museums, the diorama allowed the representation of indigenous communities as part of their environments and thus as part of nature as opposed to civilisation. This mode of representation is a particular trap in the case of Native Americans whose connection to nature is perceived to be distinct and essential.<sup>7</sup>

While carefully avoiding old-fashioned dioramas, the NMAI stresses the elements of landscape and environment as part of the museum concept.<sup>8</sup> Guided tours around its grounds highlight the importance of the landscape<sup>9</sup> and a number of museum publications are entirely devoted to this issue (see, for example, Blue Spruce and Thrasher, 2008). The Mall provides only limited space for each of its buildings, particularly those created more recently. Therefore, the garden and its significance can easily be overlooked because it is

6 For further discussion of the displays mentioned here see Isaac (2008).

7 Ryan Redcorn's fantastic performance commentary on the museum is recommended, see the 1491s YouTube video: 'Ryan Redcorn takes a traditional Native American bath' (2012).

8 While not the focus of this chapter, the close connection made between indigeneity and environmentalism needs to be analysed as a construction of global markets, see Sissons (2005).

9 During my fieldwork in the NMAI (2006–10), I joined several tours outside to explore the grounds and found that while each tour guide had his or her own style, all stressed the grounds had higher educational value than the exhibition halls.

so small compared with the vastness of the Mall. And yet the museum garden unites different natural environments such as the wetland, meadow and forest – each of them more a fragmentary reminder of the landscape represented than an actual scene. So-called grandfather rocks and monumental direction markers create a ceremonial space, inscribing the land around the museum with spiritual symbolism. Furthermore, croplands have been added to cultivate traditional plants such as tobacco, squash and corn.<sup>10</sup> Planting and harvest ceremonies are performed publicly, and in summer other events such as poetry readings or music performances, all of which transform the garden into a stage showcasing indigenous identities.

### **'Always Becoming'**

Soon after the NMAI opened, it became clear that the landscape needed the imprint of a Native artist to illustrate different stages of human involvement with the environment (although as far as the museum grounds are concerned, human beings have already artificially shaped every single part of the landscape for exhibition purposes). While the scenery symbolises nature untouched, the croplands stress a symbiotic relationship to the land. The art project was to make yet another statement about humans and their environment when over 50 artists from all over the western hemisphere answered the call for proposals for a permanent installation. Nora Naranjo-Morse's suggestion for an ephemeral artwork called 'Always Becoming' was unanimously selected and work on the Washington site began during the summer of 2007.

A Pueblo poet, filmmaker and sculptor, Naranjo-Morse had previously been involved in a number of monumental sculpture projects (including the crafting of her own house), with her preferred materials usually being clay and bronze. Her suggestion for the NMAI grounds involved five sculptures called Ta dah (Father), Gia (Mother), Hin Chae (Little One), Po Khwee (Moon Woman) and Ping Tse Deh (Mountain Bird) – tipi, mould and mountain-shaped structures reaching for the sky. Made of organic material – clay, dirt, water, straw, wood, stone and sand – the sculptures are meant to change and dissolve over time. This act of transformation was especially designed to contrast with the permanence of Washington's concrete and steel central memorials, made to outlast time.<sup>11</sup>

10 Involving the grounds of a museum in its exhibition concept is not a new idea. The Museum of the American Indian, for example, created by George Gustav Heye in New York in 1916, cultivated the landscape surrounding it, croplands included (see Jacknis, 2008).

11 Indigenous ephemeral artworks have their place in the public western European consciousness, particularly in the case of the wooden Northwest Coast totem poles which, when positioned outdoors as intended, dissolve over time.



Figure 5.1. View of *'Always Becoming'*, 2009. Photo: Andrea Zittlau.

While much could be said about the symbolism of the characters Naranjo-Morse created, and also about the shape in which they appear, this chapter is devoted to the process of creation, which I perceive as an act of performance and a crucial museum event. Not only was the artist herself involved in the creation process, but her family and friends, as well as the general public, helped her on location. The creative process was staged, meant to be watched and jointly executed; everyone was invited to become part of *'Always Becoming'*. As such, it was an act of community building. In the podcast following the construction process, several team members frequently refer to themselves as family and emphasise the uniting effect of the artwork.<sup>12</sup> A sense of belonging also grew from the obvious fact that the result, the final sculpture, had become less important than the building process, since with time the five clay characters will disappear while the memory of their creation will be shared, living on elsewhere. There was nothing static about the sculptures – at any time.

12 Ten short (approximately three minutes each) podcast episodes document *'Always Becoming'*. They focus on different aspects of the sculptures such as *'Materials'* (2), *'The final coat'* (7) or *'The Earth/La Tierra'* (10). The episodes form a chronology contextualising the project within a linear narrative. For reference to community building, see episodes 3–6: *'Family'*, *'Community'*, *'Dialogue'* and *'Gathering'*.

Apart from contrasting with (and implicitly criticising) the surrounding eternal manifestations of politicians and events, the sculpture project also critiqued the stasis of museological representations, making the obvious statement that cultures and everyday practices are, by nature, changeable. By choosing shapes that were both familiar and unfamiliar to the museum visitors, expected and yet unexpected, Naranjo-Morse engaged actively with the curatorial discourse in which she and her team were participating. Yet her performance also revealed the powerful haunting of inappropriate museum practices (such as static and distanced representations of typified others) and the difficulty of actively challenging these practices on a meta-level. Eventually, Naranjo-Morse became part of an ethnographic museum, a notion she could not escape.

### **'With life of its own'**

In *Spectres de Marx* (*Specters of Marx*) (1994), Jacques Derrida developed his concept of hauntology (*hantologie*), which is almost a homonym of ontology. Hauntology basically assumes that besides being encompassed by the visible world, humans are also surrounded by the invisible world, populated with spectres, which also have a history, but work more as signs, reminders mainly, within that history because they keep coming back (from the past or the future). Hauntology is the sense of this invisible world, the notion of being observed but being unable to trace the observer, and revises the idea of the voyeuristic gaze. The mannequins of the diorama seem to be looking back at the museum visitors, although rationally the visitors know this to be impossible. Derrida argues that this strong discomfort in being watched is the spectre haunting us and that it should be given more attention. And once acknowledged, the ghosts turn out to be everywhere. They are the revenants, shadows of past and future actions that we dismiss by focusing only on the visible world.

In her book *The Archive and the Repertoire*, Diana Taylor applies Derrida's concept of hauntology to the field of performance studies. Not only are the spectres Derrida speaks of closely connected to spectators (as Taylor points out, both words have their root in the Latin *specere* – to see), they both only exist because of each other. Taylor suggests that ghosts appear in the act of performance and, more so, that act can be a method of making them visible and thus available for critical analysis. 'My view of performance', she states, 'rests in the notion of ghosting, that visualization that continues to act politically even as it exceeds the live' (2003, p. 143):

The way I see it, performance makes visible (for an instant, live, now) that which is always already there: the ghosts, the tropes, the scenarios that structure our individual and collective life. These spectres, made manifest

through performance, alter future phantoms, future fantasies ... The power of seeing through performance is the recognition that we've seen it all before – the fantasies that shape our sense of self, of community, that organize our scenarios of interaction, conflict, and resolution. (ibid.)

The NMAI's ghosts are deeply rooted in the history of dispossession, exploitation and repression that has underpinned the existence of ethnographic museums, a history disguised by the contemporary practice of replacing dioramas with recent indigenous aesthetic expressions, thus creating blank spots in Western epistemologies. Such absences conceal the troubled process of knowledge production and the uncanny moment when our gaze is irritated by the darkness of those voids. In other words, the cultural history of ethnographic museums allows for a large population of spectres since colonial history is not challenged in contemporary displays, but graciously avoided. Somehow museum visitors sense that history, even though it is not visible, and this is the moment when the ghosts start haunting them to be avoided or ignored – or openly challenged. Hauntology marks the always 'unsettled relationship between what we see and what we know', as Avery Gordon reminds her readers (2008, p. 24). By appearing on the museum stage, Naranjo-Morse engaged with ghosts that she believed long gone.

### **'This Earth / I have become part of'**

The creation of 'Always Becoming' was haunted by an archive inscribed with layers of cultural memory. To craft the sculptures, Naranjo-Morse employed some cultural practices of communities in the Southwest, drawing from traditional techniques practised in the construction of houses, with clay, dirt bricks and particular styles of art being used to coat the walls. These crafting techniques were not staged exclusively *for* museum visitors (as still often occurs when such displays are mounted) but were part of the creation process. The performance had memorial potential in remembering all the Southwest builders who came to life in Naranjo-Morse's artistic endeavours. The sculptures are likewise embedded in blessing ceremonies, since the creation process was completed with a blessing ritual, in this way providing another archive.<sup>13</sup> However, being part of a museum, the sculpture project is inevitably haunted by the history of indigenous people being put on display in human zoos, ethnological shows and Wild West events. The performance is implicated in the history of staging the other while looking for the self, the history of encounter without ever meeting. Quite a powerful history to be haunted by. Quite a difficult revenant to engage with.

13 The idea of the archive is primarily a textual one and yet a project such as the one under discussion shows that performance itself forms an archive, as Diana Taylor points out (2003).

By being part of a museum's grounds and insisting on the public performance of indigenous techniques in crafting the sculptures, Naranjo-Morse was recalling museum Indians like Ishi, who transformed into a living object on a museum stage. Ishi appeared at the beginning of the 20th century, a refugee out of the Californian wilds. He sparked the interest of local anthropologists who believed him to be the last of the Yahi Indians and thus a valuable subject for study.<sup>14</sup> In an act of charity, the University of California's Museum of Anthropology, Berkeley offered rooms to Ishi, where he performed crafting techniques, constructed a shelter and told lengthy traditional stories. And he was not alone. At the turn of the century, the basement of the American Museum of Natural History, located in New York City, was populated by six Inuit from Greenland who provided local anthropologists with valuable insights into human nature. These museum Indians represented the extremes of 19th-century popular ethnology. Culture was understood to be embodied and decodable by means of close observation and the museum seemed the perfect space for this kind of scrutiny. In the guise of creating a neutral ground within the museum, the exhibition halls were loaded with anthropological interpretations of the world that are still infusing ethnographic museums today.

By creating her sculptures in the museum grounds, Naranjo-Morse became a museum Indian herself, a process made obvious by some disappointed spectators' frequent accusations that the artist was not being Indian enough. Apparently, she was not meeting these visitors' visual and stereotyped expectations, and her project was hence deemed inappropriate in the museum setting (Naranjo-Morse, 2009). Others, to whom the clay structures looked like shelters, expressed interest as to who might inhabit them in the future (*ibid.*). Did these observers expect a population of museum Indians to arrive in the near future?

Naranjo-Morse was reminded of her own past as an Indian princess in a tourist scenario, an episode she recalls in her 2009 blog in an entry entitled 'Imagery and self-image reversals in a post-victim Indian'. It describes her work for the owner of a curio shop and motor lodge at the south end of Taos, New Mexico, which sold cheaply manufactured artefacts that would be perceived aesthetically as Native American. Each summer he ran an evening show for tourists and locals, during which indigenous men from the Taos Pueblo community performed war and hoop dances. At the end cowboy hats (!) were passed around to collect a tip for the dancers. Then Naranjo-Morse took to the stage in velveteen-pleated 'squaw skirts and shirts', as she writes, to advertise the products: 'This was one of my first and among the most informative experiences

14 The perception of Ishi as a valuable object of study is evident in publications by Robert F. Heizer and Theodora Kroeber, especially Kroeber (1961) and Heizer and Kroeber (1979). Theodora's husband, Alfred Kroeber, was the leading anthropologist of that time.

as a Native person and all I can clearly remember is that I felt exposed' (2009). This sense of exposure has haunted her on various other occasions and she has responded to it critically in her texts.<sup>15</sup> The creation of 'Always Becoming' had not been intended to involve inquiries into those discourses, yet she found herself unexpectedly confronted with a set of performance strategies that translated her artistic processes into articulations of indigenous identity. The questions and comments posed to Naranjo-Morse were as much part of the performance as her work.<sup>16</sup> They were haunting invitations provoking her to negate them consciously, reminding her of 'how America[ns] developed their perception of the American Indian. Interactions like the Jack Denver show [the show she describes] added to romantic notions of what a Native person should be and these perceptions persist in the American consciousness' (2009).

Every museum performance of indigeneity is haunted by such perceptions and their history. The ghosts lurk in the background, especially in places that feed on them, like museums. The human zoo, the ethnic show, the Wild West spectacle and the museum Indian are just embodiments of these perceptions. They illustrate and confirm fantastic narratives of the cultural other and help to transform ethnographic museums into exotic dreamlands. Naranjo-Morse not only created a work of art but also interacted with these histories of museum performance.<sup>17</sup>

### **'That also / I have grown out of'**

In keeping with the common (Western) practice of explaining works of art, the spectators are guided in their search for the meaning of this work. Museum material about 'Always Becoming' explains that the sculptures are grounded in Santa Clara Pueblo cultures, Naranjo-Morse's community. Their size and the materials used to construct them are listed in the Western tradition of classification that has become so crucial in discourses about art: 'They [the sculptures] range in height from 7.5 to 16 feet tall, and are made entirely of natural materials' ('Always Becoming' leaflet distributed by the NMAI). In addition, the NMAI website positions this complex artwork as a static result connected to a single creating source:

Artist Nora Naranjo-Morse (Santa Clara Pueblo) is making history as  
the first Native American woman to create an outdoor sculpture in

- 15 See, for example, several of the poems included in *Mud Woman* (1992), e.g. 'The Living Exhibit under the Museum Portal' (pp. 28–30) and 'Tradition and Change' (pp. 31–3).
- 16 This is usually the case in performance art. The comments James Luna received while performing 'The Artifact Piece' in 1987 in San Diego's Museum of Man continue to be used in his installations.
- 17 The museum-as-stage, with its hegemonic representation of indigenous communities, has been a major theme in the works of performance artists like James Luna, Guillermo Gómez Peña and the collective La Pocha Nostra.

Washington, D.C., titled *Always Becoming*. Built on site during the summer of 2007, the family of five clay sculptures is made of organic, nontoxic materials. Intended to erode over time, these ever-changing works of art will together reflect messages of growth, transformation, and Native peoples' relationship with the land.<sup>18</sup>

The museum announcement situates the work within Western discourses about how to see art (via artist/material/meaning) – an important framework in this case since indigenous art is still often presented to the public as mimetic expression.<sup>19</sup> Yet the attributed meaning of growth and transformation, connected to an apparently natural indigenous relationship with the land, again misses the art's complexity and denies the crucial process of its performative creation, reducing it to local concerns and thus only making it accessible ethnographically.<sup>20</sup> Moreover, the descriptions merely repeat visual impressions (as frozen moments in time). Readers are told, for example, that Moon Woman 'features hand-molded clay spheres representing moon-phases' to underline the importance of the lunar circle (NMAI leaflet). The wood-pole (*viga*), created by Naranjo-Morse's parents in the 1950s and placed in the centre of the tipi-shaped Father sculpture, represents the ones who came before us. Although still concealed by the clay walls surrounding it, the pole will eventually become visible when Father's exterior structure slowly dissolves; hence, the description anticipates a visual impression of the future. The hole in the Mother figure is said to be a window, pointing to the southern cardinal direction marker (NMAI leaflet), perhaps indicating the never-changing phenomena that exist while the sculptures and the world around us fall apart.

Naranjo-Morse's messages are not so dramatic as this, however. To her, the sculptures are a family and building them created an extended family uniting the people who helped in the process. We are always changing and adapting, she says in one of the podcasts available for 'Always Becoming'. This is a clear message subverting the powerful assumption that indigenous cultures are static and locked in the past. By refusing to constitute a static artwork, the sculptures also question our concept of art as being focused on enduring results. They are haunted by perceptions such as those that appear in the museum leaflets. They are not significantly different to those Naranjo-Morse engaged with

18 See the 'Always Becoming' website video.

19 The Ethnographic Museum in Berlin, Germany, recently mounted a temporary exhibition, 'Native American Modernism' (March–October 2012), in which paintings were arranged according to the geographical origin of the artists (Plains, Northwest Coast and so forth). Individual works were described solely by ethnographic assumptions about their communities. See the catalogue (Bolz and König, 2012).

20 This notion is in the process of changing; however, contemporary indigenous art is often still placed at the end of ethnographic exhibition narratives as apparently the only source available of valuable aesthetic and cultural expression (see, for example, the First Peoples Hall in Ottawa's Canadian Museum of Civilization).

in her performance. 'Always Becoming' reveals memory (and its common representations in the form of monuments) as a performative process because it is a changing act unfolding on a public stage. By performing the creation of a non-static work of art, Naranjo-Morse fundamentally questions our focus on results instead of processes. While at one level she remains a museum Indian on the ethnographic stage, she nevertheless powerfully engages with the ghosts that have haunted that stage to reveal the potential embedded in change, but also its slowness.

The introduction of the poem, 'Always Becoming', acts as an alternative way of approaching and framing the work of art. It speaks of the work's builders as children who come from all four directions to dig, to plant, to cover, to press, to wrap and to layer (Naranjo-Morse, 2008, pp. 61–3). It speaks of space as it changes at 'the crossroads of asphalt and fertile ground' (p. 70). It speaks of stories that weave into the clay (p. 67), of 'an idea made from passion' (p. 66). The sculptures and their builders are in continuous dialogue with each other, and with the past and the future. They are not newly created – they have always been there. The metaphor of planting dominates the theme – the clay does not matter – and as the sculptures gain shape, their community grows. The title 'Always Becoming' is in no way metaphorical. But it lacks the subject and object of its clause. What is transforming? And into what?

### **'Keep breathing as you become'<sup>21</sup>**

Naranjo-Morse's performance became part of the ethnographic discourse that haunts the NMAI, but also openly challenged this discourse. Not because the artist refused to be commodified (because she did not). Not because she refused to be a spectacle (because she did not). But because her performance was no longer about the sculpture or the museum or about spectators and expectations. It ended up being a ritual for and about herself:<sup>22</sup>

At its best, experiences like this (the creation of 'Always Becoming') can be grand opportunities that demand we define ourselves, not to an audience, but to ourselves. Like the sculptures, I was being molded, so that previous misconceptions were discarded and a sense of my true self was reclaimed. Anchored and empowered because of this grand opportunity, I became fearless. (2009)

In this sense, the project both visualised and enacted change at a profoundly personal level.

21 The final line of the 'Always Becoming' poem.

22 In that context Naranjo-Morse's work is similar to Roxanne Swentzell's sculptures, which also feature prominently in the NMAI.

Ghosts and apparitions we cannot ignore continuously point to the past and the future, replaying conceptions and misconceptions of cultures as trivialised commodities and classifiable specimens in the troubled history of museum representations. But instead of ignoring the ghosts, or refusing to see them, or hunting them, we should no longer be afraid. We should simply learn to live with them, Naranjo-Morse's manifesto concludes. After all, to be haunted one has to sense and identify the spectres first. If haunting is the uncanny feeling of being watched, to look for the observer, the source of that sensation, means one no longer has to hide. Naranjo-Morse succeeds in answering the gaze. She looks back. Her sculpture project is a statement haunted by exhibition narratives of the past. And yet she deconstructs those narratives, refusing to be on display and instead animating the visitors themselves to become actors in focus. Ta Dah, Gia, Hin Chae, Po Khwee and Ping Tse Deh are not commodity objects to take home; they are not to be separated and not to be turned into dusty icons of indigenous exoticism. Even as they remind us of past curatorial practices, they are pointing to the future of indigenous self-representation.

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### **Videos**

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## 6. Performance, gestures and poses in postcards of Ho-Chunk in Wisconsin Dells

*Sarah Anne Stolte*

Social-cultural anthropologist Arjun Appadurai writes that ‘persons and things are not radically distinct categories, and the transactions that surround things are invested with the properties of social relations’. Things, he states, ‘make the journey from commodity to singularity and back’ (2006, p. 1). Postcards – hand-scripted, illustrated, and addressed to and from named individuals – poignantly express these functions. As Appadurai suggests, social relations are performative acts. Marcus Banks and Richard Vokes note that images are ‘essentially labile and fluid artefacts, at once “at home” in any context, while at the same time in transit’ (2010, p. 339). Each printing, publication, display or resurfacing of picture postcards is akin to the performance of an intangible art object, such as a dance, moving fluidly through time and with human lives as its partner, ‘becom[ing] animated’, to use the words of Judith Hamera, ‘through consumption’ (2006, p. 62).

Multiplicities of performances are folded into any single photographic postcard. This chapter draws attention to mid-20th-century postcard images of the Ho-Chunk Nation taken in the tourist area of Wisconsin Dells, Wisconsin, USA, in which the individuals depicted appear conscious of being photographed. Through dramatic posing, costuming and uses of setting, the Ho-Chunk harnessed the postcard as a performative space for assertions of presence and thriving existence within a transforming, colonised world. Since the 1990s, the sense has grown in academic circles that images can be read in ways moving beyond or behind the photographers’ intentions to provide instead access to historical traces of the peoples depicted (Banks and Vokes, 2010, p. 337). The methodology employed in this chapter follows Banks and Vokes’s postulation that recent scholarship on photographic archives attempts to ‘unpick those [anthropological] stitches and reconnect the subjects with their personal and collective biographies’ (ibid., p. 338). No matter how staged or seemingly artificial, the postcard images selected here for discussion point to individual and collective historical narratives reconnected with their points of origin.

Discovered in anthropological, photographic archives, many of the postcards described here provided documentary images of Native American people and

celebrate ethnographic enterprises. My examination of the setting, poses and composition of the photographs themselves, and my conversations with individuals depicted in postcards from a later era, reveal that many were staged and distributed by Ho-Chunk 'actors' posing as theatrical caricatures explicitly for the postcard format. Formal analysis reveals an increase in dramatisation from the early to late 20th century, made manifest in exaggerated poses and gestures and performative settings (such as ceremonials) and accentuated by captioning. With the rising popularity of film, theatricality replaced a documentary-style postcard image, evidencing a sensitivity towards Ho-Chunk involved in composing images concerning what Paul Chaat Smith cites as non-Native photographers' 'endless fascination' with capturing still and moving images of indigenous peoples (1995, p. 7).

Changes in postcard imagery as a result of the rising popularity of film are noted in this study, not only because both media are mass-produced and widely distributed but also because both contain written and oral information that is valuable in interpreting the uses and meanings of American Indian images as viewed by the public.<sup>1</sup> Since the medium first began Native Americans have been intriguing subjects for photographers, a fascination that has continued into the world of filmmaking (Chaat Smith, 1995). Deloria deconstructs the ways in which Native American bodies are fetishised and romanticised by white filmmakers, creating an idealised fantasy 'Indian' as an expression of national, modern and personal identities (1998). Through still and cinematic images, non-Natives learned stereotypical visual signifiers of Native identity, racialised clues that indigenous peoples subvert, reject and employ increasingly on their own terms. The work of Choctaw artist Marcus Amerman serves as an example.

Layered with social commentary, some of Amerman's works, such as 'Postcard' (2001), explicitly engage with the postcard form. The phrase, 'Greetings from the Indian Country of the Great Southwest', is beaded in bold block letters across the picture plane and filled with 'Indian' stereotypes: stoic chiefs and dancing braves. Juxtaposed with these iconic images are depictions of an exploding atomic bomb, fighter jets and the moon landing (see Igloliorte, 2011, pp. 78–9). With this work, Amerman is deconstructing conventional symbols as signifiers of Native American identity while reclaiming and repatriating Indian imagery – postcards in this particular case – for a contemporary Native American audience.

The dissemination of visual stereotypes of Native American identity begins with key events that occurred during the 19th century in the United States, including the rise of commercial photography, the emergence of mass

1 For a discussion of the social saliency of postcards see Albers and James (1985). The topic of American Indian peoples in film is examined in Rollins and O'Connor (2010) and Diamond (2010).

tourism and the final colonisation of Native American lands. Successive federal governments' genocidal policies hastened the threat to indigenous lifeways. A statement in 1867 by merchant and entrepreneur George Francis Train emphasises the aggressive colonisation that Native Americans faced: '[E]xtermination is the frontier cry. Well, if commerce demands, then wipe them out' (1867). Consumerism, nationalism and aspirations of prosperity took precedence over the lives and humanitarian rights of indigenous peoples. Yet, the presumption of their imminent extinction manifested a romanticisation of Native Americans as part of a 'vanishing race' that was close to nature. This notion of an idyllic, fantasy 'Indian' constructed in the imaginations of Euro-Americans persists to this day.<sup>2</sup>

Disregarding nuances of cultural difference between various Indian groups, non-Natives identified 'Indianness' through a handful of symbolic icons: feathered bonnets, tipis and totem poles. Most of the symbols are part of the material culture of Plains Indian groups, a non-coincidental correlation. The final battles of the American Indian Wars primarily occurred west of the Mississippi river at the end of the 19th century, the period when photography was first utilised as a tool of visual documentation. As the first subjects of the newly emerging photographic medium, Plains Indian groups became signifiers of a homogenised Native American race (Albers and James, 1983, pp. 123–48). Although early postcard images tended towards documentary accuracy (generally depicting men, women and families as seen through the lenses of predominantly male, Euro-American photographers), by the mid-1900s, a large proportion of those destined for public consumption via postcard circulation were intentionally staged to dramatise an 'Indianness' that visibly romanticised Native American people. The aim was to appeal to the sensibilities of the rising numbers of Euro-American tourist consumers seduced by nostalgic images of 'noble Chiefs' and 'Indian Princesses' (Mihesuah, 1996).

The postcard images introduced here are attributed to the H.H. Bennett Studio in Wisconsin Dells. Famed landscape photographer Henry Hamilton Bennett (1843–1908) is often credited with making the Wisconsin Dells area the tourist destination it is today; from very early on his exquisite landscape photographs enticed tourists to the area. The studio he opened in 1875, believed to be the oldest operating studio in the United States, was still functioning in 1998, when the family donated the property to the Wisconsin State Historical Society (Alton, 2007, p. 7; see also Rath, 1979 and Hoelscher, 2008). The unique sandstone pillars of The Dells, a five-mile long gorge along the Wisconsin River in southern Wisconsin, were formed during the last ice age. They awed Bennett, who captured and distributed inspiring scenic images

2 Berkhofer (1979) offers a detailed account of how Euro-American images of the American Indian developed over time.

during the 1860s and 1870s, encouraging travellers to visit the area. Bennett was well aware of the marketability of images of local Native American peoples and intentionally contrived photographs that deliberately blended the scenic landscape with the 'exotic' Indian to encourage sales. Through this romantic performance of place, he built a successful commercial photography business that relied on tourism. Staged within the early commercial successes of his images of Ho-Chunk individuals is a dance between the photographer as adventurer, capturing images of Native people, and those who agreed to pose in this way. In this dance, the Ho-Chunk assert their presence while adjusting to a changing economy that remains sustainable today.

After the photographer's death, his daughters, Miriam Bennett (1891–1971) and Ruth Bennett Dyer (1895–1982), continued to operate the commercial studio, taking photographs and printing from, as well as conserving, his original glass plates. Eventually Ruth's daughter Jean and her husband Oliver Reese took over the business until the 1990s.<sup>3</sup> Indulging her interest in film, Miriam shot over 46 amateur documentary and fiction pieces between approximately 1930 and 1965.<sup>4</sup> She took 'Winnebago Indian Camp Dells of the Wisconsin River', the first of the postcard images included in this chapter.

### **The postcard image/object as stage**

Elizabeth Edwards suggests paying careful attention not only to the material practices of photography as an interpretive strategy but also to the potential uses that photographers envisaged for their images:

[T]he material practices of photography were not only performances by the photographers with their particular aspirations regarding the past, but the subjects of these photographs were themselves physical or material traces of the historical past. Understanding the saliency of these entwined practices for those involved is a way of exploring the potential of photographs as historical evidence, and is also a means of investigating the forms through which historical imagination might be made possible and be experienced (2009, p. 131).

Postcard images/objects are particularly salient in these terms due to their social context. The H.H. Bennett Studio was distributing images to promote tourism and its own commercial enterprise. Multiple copies of a single image were produced relatively inexpensively and were circulated across the region in the hope of attracting new audiences and consumers to the area. Additionally,

3 Wisconsin State Historical Society (WSHS), 'About H.H. Bennett', available at: [www.wisconsinhistory.org/libraryarchives/hhbennett/about.asp](http://www.wisconsinhistory.org/libraryarchives/hhbennett/about.asp) (accessed 3 Sep. 2013).

4 Conversation with Jennifer A. Graham, archivist, WSHS, 10 Jan. 2013. The Society has recently digitised many of Miriam Bennett's film reels.

the postcards functioned as bearers of short messages, evidence of the sender's travel to exciting new regions at a time before photography was ubiquitous and digital.

Henry Hamilton Bennett began printing his photographs as 'stereocards', three-dimensional images that brought the Wisconsin Dells River and the local Native American people to life in particular ways. Victorian-era non-Natives would view stereocards, tokens of travel in the time before rapid transportation of mail became the norm, while visiting each other in highly performative domestic spaces known as parlour rooms.<sup>5</sup> The popularity of these three-dimensional objects corresponds to the rise of Wild West shows and emphasises the popularity of sensationalism and live performances at that time.

Although more closely akin to live performances because of their realistic quality, the use of stereocards declined as postcards became prolific in America at the beginning of the 20th century. The United States Postal Service had held a monopoly in postcard circulation since 1873, when it began issuing pre-stamped cards. In 1898, President McKinley signed into law the Private Mailing Card Act, allowing private publishers to enter this market but regulating their postcards with specific requirements relating to size, colour and printing technique. These restrictions proved challenging for private postcard publishers as pre-printed stocks had to be reformatted, making the adjustment phase expensive (Friedman, 2003, p. 302). Some postal historians suggest that the government intentionally created strict formatting guidelines because they were competing for sales. Regardless, the Act was amended in 1901, following an outcry from businesses, putting an end to its restrictive clauses. The term 'post card' could be used by the private sector and the ensuing decade saw rapid growth in the creation, distribution and use of this particular commodity.

Anthropologists Patricia Albers and William James, in their study of postcard images of Minnesota's Ojibwe, note the decline in postcard use during the 1920s as photographic practices became ubiquitous among the general public. According to Albers and James, other media, newspapers and magazines were replacing the postcard as a major repository for documentary, local-interest images (1985, p. 235). Images of Native Americans in film also became commonplace at this time. By the middle of the decade, 50 million people a week went to the movies – the equivalent of half the nation's population (Mintz, 2010). Acting for a camera, both still and cinematic, became increasingly common among many Native American people. Cheyenne/Arapaho film director Chris Eyre commented in a 2004 interview that 'Indian people have been the longest-running subject of films out of anyone' (Abourezk, 2004). Simultaneously, postcards lost their ethnographic documentary style during

5 For more information on performance and the Victorian-era parlour room see Logan (2001).



Figure 6.1. H.H. Bennett. 'Winnebago Indian Camp Dells of the Wisconsin'. Postcard c. 1940. Wisconsin State Historical Society Collection.

the early and middle decades of the 20th century. No longer necessary for their ability to reflect reality, postcards became quintessential, dramatically composed, consumable markers of the tourist experience.

### Subjects/actors

'Winnebago Indian Camp Dells of the Wisconsin' exemplifies the early, documentary style (figure 6.1). This image of a woman sitting near a fire was probably taken around 1930. Heavy metal pots and stacks of fried bread surround her as she momentarily pauses from the mundane activity of cooking to have her photo taken. Her smile is, perhaps, for a photographer with whom she has a rapport, or perhaps it is a cordial response to a stranger. Taken as a scene from her everyday life, the photograph will multiply, eventually finding its way across the region in postcard form, to be retrieved from an archival folder at the Wisconsin State Historical Society in Madison, and later found in an archival collection at the National Museum of the American Indian.<sup>6</sup> The woman's activity, her clothing and the image's setting follow the documentary style that Albers and James found typical of postcards of the Great Lakes region from the early 20th century (1985). In general, early cards depicted Native American men, women and children wearing everyday attire appropriate to

6 There are copies of this image in postcard form at the WSHS in Madison and in the National Museum of the American Indian archives (NMAI). The museum also has it on display on the wall of its cafeteria.

the time and performing unspectacular tasks. As on this postcard, captions are useful to verify the image and often to note accurately the setting or activity, yet may generalise concerning the subjects, frequently omitting proper names.

The 'Indian camp' indicated by this card's caption was a seasonal village set up outside the town of Wisconsin Dells during the early to mid-20th century.<sup>7</sup> On the site, Ho-Chunk families would construct traditional dwelling structures, make communal meals and provide a living display of indigenous culture. In his work on tourism and photography in Wisconsin Dells, Steven Hoelscher notes, following Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (1998), that people in the village performed ordinary aspects of their everyday lives, such as cooking, tending a fire, washing and weaving. The participants benefited from the crucial economic as well as cultural role played by the camp (2008, pp. 29–30). Women would weave black ash baskets and intricate beadwork specifically for sale. Friends and relatives would meet, talk and enjoy summer festivities. The temporary camp occupants were aware of themselves as being on display and it is likely that this woman, given its setting and composition, knew her photograph would be offered for sale at the H.H. Bennett Studio.

Today, tourists continue to flock to the town of Wisconsin Dells, enticed by the river. Although the Indian Camp no longer exists, tourism there continues to be complexly interwoven with the lives of the Ho-Chunk. After years of transformations and changes engendered by colonisation, individuals and communities developed ways, such as the Indian Camp, of practising their traditions while adjusting to the new tourist economy. Like the staging of the Indian Camp, the distribution of images serviced performances of identity. Ho-Chunk members dressed in regalia would pose for photographs. Allowing distribution of these portraits as postcards asserted their presence to a global audience as rightful occupants of the area of Wisconsin Dells. Donning stereotypical attire, such as buckskin leggings and war bonnets, and posing in dramatically staged positions with anachronistic accoutrements, such as wooden bows and arrows, 20th-century Ho-Chunk were utilising performance and commoditisation as a means of economic sustainability that fitted into the tourist market.

It is not assumed here that all Ho-Chunk enjoy or even desire having their picture taken. As Devon A. Mihesuah points out, photography is a contentious issue for many Native American people who, since the inception of the

7 The camp is referred to as 'Indian Hill' in an editorial in *La Crosse Tribune*, 15 June 1930 and as 'Winnebago Indian Village' in Hoelscher (2008, p. 29). It was located on Highway 12 and specifically occupied by Ho-Chunk travelling from the area around Tomah, Wisconsin. Other 'Indian Camps' existed in the Dells area and were equally designed as tourist displays while remaining actual, temporary living sites. The degree of this separation varied between sites. See also the 'Modern Tourism' section of The School for Advanced Research 'Indians 4 Sale' website.

medium, have had to suffer the intrusion of having their pictures taken without their permission. The exceptions she notes in *American Indians: Stereotypes & Realities* (1996) often centre on tourist-driven areas, such as Wisconsin Dells, where some indigenous people have found it advantageous to pose as 'real Indians' for naïve visitors. From the 1920s, performances of Native traditions targeting a tourist audience regularly occurred at the Stand Rock Indian Ceremonial, an outdoor arena where Ho-Chunk and other Native American people performed a programme of dances and short skits in traditional regalia for a live audience. Within this space, photographing these peoples was not just acceptable, it was expected. Numerous postcard images of the performers at Stand Rock continue to circulate. Through their performances, Ho-Chunk played a part in the 20th-century trends that commoditised Indian identity for public consumption in America. These shows may be seen as exploitative insofar as they drew from the performance modalities of 19th-century ethnographic spectacles; however, because Ho-Chunk members were able to design the skits and choose the dance sequences, they were exercising agency in how they were presented. Additionally, they gained some financial independence and eventually owned and operated the arena.

The Stand Rock Ceremonial became one of the most popular attractions in Wisconsin Dells during its 78-year run from 1919–97. On the 'Indians 4 Sale: using culture as a commodity' web page, Kendall Tallmadge (Ho-Chunk) discusses the Ceremonial's history from its origins as a contact site between the Ho-Chunk Nation and tourists as early as 1916, when two Ho-Chunk men, Sanborn and Winslow White Eagle, used to dance on the beach as the evening steamer passed by and tourists would throw coins into a hat in payment. Captain Glen Parsons, a pilot and general manager for the Dells Boat Company, recognised it as a business opportunity. With the help of local entrepreneur and environmental activist, George Crandall, and a Ho-Chunk group headed by Russell Decorah, Parsons organised the first 'official' ceremonial performance at Stand Rock in 1919. By the late 1970s, the show was being run by a Ho-Chunk group, who eventually took control of Stand Rock Indian Ceremonial management until it closed in the late 1990s (Tallmadge, 2010). Many Ho-Chunk individuals participated in these performative ceremonies in the Wisconsin Dells area and were photographed by the H.H. Bennett Studio for use as postcards and other tourist ephemera.

'War Dance of the Winnebago' (c. early 1980s) exemplifies postcard images generated from the Stand Rock Indian Ceremonial (figure 6.2). Shot from an angle above the dancers' main arena, this photograph depicts a group of men in regalia at the Stand Rock dance grounds, a picturesque natural stage featuring pillar-like rock formations and views of the river. Many wear full feather bonnets, which are not traditional Ho-Chunk dress but rather objects



Figure 6.2. H.H. Bennett, 'War Dance of the Winnebago'. Stand Rock Indian Ceremonial, Wisconsin Dells. Postcard c. 1975. Sarah Anne Stolte's collection.

that have come to symbolise 'Indian' to a non-Native audience. Two tipis are depicted in the background to the right and left; a man, sitting in a seat reserved for the Chief, oversees the ceremonial from an elevated position.

Although staged and often using stereotypical tropes, postcard images of Ho-Chunk from Wisconsin Dells simultaneously record points in individual and collective lives, as Banks and Vokes suggest. When Marlon White Eagle (Ho-Chunk), editor of the *Hocak Worak*, viewed 'War Dance of the Winnebago', a smile of recognition slowly appeared. He recalled a time when he and his family members participated in the Stand Rock Indian Ceremonial. The postcard image of nameless dancers transforms into a memory, brought back to life through our conversation in a small-town café. White Eagle later recalled an experience when he and his family met with a group of Norwegian tourists at the Tallmadge Indian Museum and allowed them to take and print photographs, which he signed like a movie star. This experience was both objectifying and honourable; White Eagle was on display to satiate the desires of the foreign travellers, yet he was proud to share his culture.<sup>8</sup>

Over time and in daily interactive micronarratives, Native and non-Native people shared their cultures and traditions although the general public accepted only limited and stereotypical generalisations of 'Nativity' in their understandings of what it meant to be Native American (Berkhofer, 1979). Postcard purchases continued to decline during the years between 1930 and

8 Conversation with Marlon White Eagle, Black River Falls, Wisconsin, 10 Jan. 2013.

1940, seemingly replaced by the consumption of movies as a visual experience of the exotic 'Indian' and faraway places (Albers and James, 1984, p. 76). During this time, Native American characters in film were rarely given spoken lines. Frequently projected as unintelligent 'others', when they did speak, the script often gave them a 'mock' Indian language, as evident in Tonto's use of *kim-o-sabe* in *The Lone Ranger* series (Bataille and Silet, 1980, p. 117). Without verbal language, Indian characters utilised gestures to communicate but even these were limited, often to pointing while gazing off into the distance or standing with arms akimbo. Additionally, 85 per cent of the tribal identities represented in films until 1967 were of Plains equestrian societies (ibid., p. 87).

With the popularity of film growing through the 1930s, a new style of postcard emerged. For example, the colour-printed 'Winnebago Brave of the Wisconsin River' (c. 1929–30) exhibits caricature-like posing and colouration that distinguishes the photograph from the documentary style and instead aligns it with the narrow interpretive ranges characterising cinematic portrayals of Indians created by non-Natives (figure 6.3). Donning Plains Indians attire rather than traditional Winnebago dress, this 'Brave' stands austere in profile in front of a tipi, pipe under his arm, full feather bonnet on his head. He does not confront the viewer but looks away to casually scan an unseen horizon. The image's one-dimensionality is highlighted by a caption on the reverse reading: 'One of the Winnebago tribe, which still inhabits this region'. Such packaging denies the diversity of tribes in the Midwest and additionally erases the presence of indigenous women. This particular postcard also reveals how meanings became 'overwritten' through the use of captioning to produce a recognisable semiotics of colonial representation and power. A duplicate black-and-white print of this image is held in the National Anthropological Archives in Washington, DC, part of a group of photographs organised for a publication on Winnebago music. Written in cursive letters across the back of the postcard are the words, 'Henry Thunder Winnebago'.<sup>9</sup> Transformed into 'Winnebago Brave of the Wisconsin River', Thunder becomes a caricature that plays to the expectations and tastes of tourist consumers.

Staged and dressed like Plains Indian movie characters and depicted on objects that were reproduced in multiples and distributed across a broad geographical area, Ho-Chunk featured in postcards from Wisconsin Dells during this time are metaphorically severed from their unique traditions and self-ascribed identities. The understandings of Native American identities that this commerce generated among Euro-Americans were often at odds with the actual, daily lives of individuals and communities. A sample of images taken by one of America's first Kiowa photographers, Horace Poolaw, serves

9 Author notes from research conducted at the National Anthropological Archives while on a visiting scholars fellowship with the NMAI, 12 Nov.–14 Dec. 2012.

to illustrate this point. Hadely Jerman has framed Poolaw's work within film studies, arguing that his subjects were 'acting for the camera'. She relates images of Poolaw's family members to two early motion pictures filmed on the Southern Plains, *The Daughter of Dawn* (1920) and *Old Texas* (1916). Jerman finds that although Poolaw's portraits reference and subtly challenge existing filmic modes of depicting indigenous characters, other photographs in his collection suggest the aspiring photographer found the imagery of the film set aesthetically compelling (2011, pp. 105–23). As an artist, Poolaw was always influenced by movie production, engaging with performance and film as integral to his work. His brother and sister-in-law, celebrated in a *Mountain View Times* article of 1928 as destined for the silver screen, were vaudeville stars who played in leading East Coast theatres. Bruce Poolaw and his wife Lucy 'Watawasso' Nicola are significant, not only because Horace Poolaw documented part of their lives but also because their careers profoundly affected his work. Linda Poolaw, Horace's daughter, credits their self-conscious poses in her father's portraits to his meeting with Watawasso in the mid-1920s; this influence continued throughout his photographic career (*ibid.*, p. 107).

Poolaw also printed some of his photographs on postcard stock to sell at local fairs in the early to mid-20th century. Laura Smith argues that he composed his images and selected subject matter that fitted with conventional visual assumptions and expectations of Indian identity so that the postcards would appeal to the greatest number of consumers. She also contends that Poolaw was politically engaged in contemporaneous regional and national indigenous efforts to preserve their cultural histories and to correct inaccuracies and negative views (2011, pp. 125–46). Furthermore, he may have been negotiating the social salience of postcards through the performances of making and distributing the cards to a broader mass network. In control of the contrivance and distribution of his own photographs and their subjects, Poolaw is effectively honouring his people, disseminating images of them looking directly at the viewer with peace medallions displayed around their necks, blankets across their laps and feather fans in their hands.

Similar honorific images were in circulation in Wisconsin Dells after the 1940s as a postcard of John Bearskin (Ho-Chunk) demonstrates. Not caricaturised as a Plains Indian, Bearskin poses while seated for a distinguished, three-quarter-view portrait wearing a roach (a traditional Ho-Chunk headdress) and traditional-style beadwork, with a feather fan in his hand. Further research might reveal what Bearskin felt about how his portrait was disseminated. The Bennett studio made the image, but Curt Teich & Company – a printing business in operation from 1898–1978, famous for its bold style and vividly lettered 'Greetings From' postcards – printed the card.

No longer documentary in appearance, postcards of Ho-Chunk from Wisconsin Dells, created between 1955–85, were visually spectacular and theatrical. The subjects evoked Plains Indian characters in Hollywood films in bearing, accoutrements and costumes.<sup>10</sup> Posing looking away from the photographer and image viewer, the individuals' movements suggest an event, or an action, causing the viewer to wonder what is happening. The postcard 'Brave on the War Path' (c. 1950s) depicts Roger Little Eagle Tallmadge (Sioux), who, according to Hoelscher, is role-playing a staged image of his own design.<sup>11</sup> He is not named on the card; rather, he gives himself the title, 'Brave'. He is depicted in profile, wearing a full feather bonnet with ermine trailers, beaded necklaces, fringe leggings, silver arm cuffs and beaded moccasins. Shirtless, he rests his left elbow on his bent left knee, with the right leg extended behind him, as if about to start a race. Two large rings are displayed on his left hand, which is tilted toward the viewer. In his right hand, he holds a shield and spear. Paint on his face draws the viewer's attention to his eyes, which pierce a distant horizon. In this example, Tallmadge's image is overtly dramatised by accessories and captioning: 'On the War Path'. His wife, Bernadine Miner (Ho-Chunk), recalled that he used to joke about 'playing the part of postcard Indians' (Hoelscher, 2008, p. 69). Through such dramatically engaging postcards, Ho-Chunk actively marketed performative images that would appeal to the sensibilities of tourists. Hence, there is little doubt that those photographed exercised agency in choosing how they would adapt to a cash economy, strategically and often humorously producing images of themselves as viable economic commodities.

Capitalising on mainstream society's romantic fascination with the idea of 'primitive tribes', the Ho-Chunk Nation responded to 19th- and 20th-century socio-economic challenges. In Wisconsin Dells, there continued to be a ready audience for individuals willing to act out clichéd versions of tribal traditions. Riverboat guides, in particular, made money in this way. At the height of the 'American Indian as tour guide' phenomenon, which occurred

- 10 Although outside the scope of this chapter, the gendering of the images should be noted. Albers and James (1985) note a dramatic increase in the use of the Plains Indian warbonnet in the Great Lakes region in postcard images of Ojibwe men during the 1940s. A dramatic change in depictions of Indian females from this region also occurred, generally conforming with popular images of Native women in kitsch art and Hollywood movies. In general, I have noted a decline over the years of such images. When women appear, it is often with one man and/or children, reinforcing a persistent heteronormative ideology for a tourist audience. For further discussion of trends in representations of Native women in American culture up to the 1970s see Green (1975).
- 11 Roger Little Eagle Tallmadge, who was born into a Minnesota Sioux family, married a Ho-Chunk woman, Bernadine Miner. Over the years, he became a spokesman for Ho-Chunk concerns. Their children remained active in the tourist industry in Wisconsin Dells. See Hoelscher (2008, pp. 68–9).



Figure 6.3. 'A Winnebago Brave, Dells of the Wisconsin River'. Postcard c. 1929–30. Wisconsin State Historical Society Collection.

during the 1970s in the lower Dells region, many postcards were made of each guide wearing traditional regalia or ribbon shirts, which were sold to tourists for profit (Tallmadge, 2010). Set apart from their non-Indian counterparts, Ho-Chunk tour guides, often in traditional garb, were required to inform passengers of their Native heritage. The demand for Ho-Chunk tour guides has since faded and today tourists are unlikely to be able to tell the difference between a Native and a non-Native guide.

Tourists tipped well in exchange for a staged picture postcard of subjects such as Randy Little Eagle (Ho-Chunk) posing on the bow of the 'Chippewa', an all-steel riverboat vessel with the capacity to hold 150 passengers. Made in the 1970s, the postcard depicts the young boat guide dressed in a ribbon shirt as an assertion and performance of his identity. He utilised the image, autographed across the reverse with his name and a line drawing of an eagle, to distribute to tourists who may have prized this souvenir because it recorded their encounter with a 'real Indian'. The postcard, evidence of their experience, remains a desirable object because it contains the memory. Judith Hamera's discussion of Navajo folk art illuminates the performative nature of the commodity here. She states that the acquirement of objects in commodity situations is suffused with performance (2006, pp. 58–9). The object/image, the postcard of Randy Little Eagle, is synonymous with a story, relatable to an action and event situated within a specific moment in time.

## Conclusion

Although touristic schemes marketing Native American material culture still persist in the Dells, postcard images of Ho-Chunk dancers and performers are now increasingly rare, replaced by scenic photographs of the river and cartoon drawings of cows and cheese. The Indian Camp and the Stand Rock Indian Ceremonial are no longer active. The Ho-Chunk continue to assert their presence in the area, but individuals no longer rely on spectacular displays of dance or dramatically composed images for financial support. Ho-Chunk gaming opened in Wisconsin Dells in the 1990s and continues as a successful tourist-targeted business, freeing Ho-Chunk from exhibiting themselves as curiosities. Their presence as rightful occupants of the area is evident in the architectural features and placement of the large casino and hotel. Designed to be attractive to tourists and to the local community, the building is surrounded by sculpted rock formations that mirror the local landscape and the interior is decorated with Ho-Chunk traditional designs and material culture.

Successful tourist economies rely heavily on the creation and dissemination of fantasy. While photographs are often understood as visually indicating truths, these truths are layered within performances of identity that can

confuse a viewer's understanding of a people's everyday experiences. A large proportion of the photographic postcards created for public consumption in Wisconsin Dells do not portray Native American lives as they were lived when the pictures were made. Instead, photographs were intentionally staged in order to project images constructed to satiate romantic, nostalgic desires held in the imaginations of visitors to the area. Performance is central to the postcard commodity from the initial staging of the image, through its distribution from a sender/consumer to a recipient, and in its various exposures to viewers over its lifetime. Each of the images discussed here has circulated in and out of archival collections of various kinds, from commodity to singularity and back. This movement encompasses layers of meaning that shift the object from a quintessential photographic image of the 'other' to a marker of individual and collective memories.

Marketing for the tourist industry encouraged new dimensions in gesture and pose in the depictions of Native American people on postcards; with the rising popularity of film, more dynamic poses and dramatic scenarios replaced static documentary images. Taking ownership of their own images through reappropriation of cinematic stereotypes for use as commodities brought Native Americans financial benefits through tourism. The postcard Indian indexed a stage on which performative aesthetics found in other forms of indigenous art could be adjusted to the changing economic environments engendered by colonialism. Wisconsin Dells postcards of Ho-Chunk performances evidence these adjustments and continuities.

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### **Filmography**

*Reel Injun* (2010), Neil Diamond, New York, Lorber HT Digital.



## 7. Rethinking spectacle and indigenous consumption: commercial *huayno* music in Peru

*James Butterworth*

At weekends, dozens of venues across Lima open their doors to tens of thousands of Andean migrants who come to experience commercial *huayno* spectacles.<sup>1</sup> These are multisensory events where melodramatic songs boom out from huge PA systems, accompanied by choreographed dancing, comic routines, mesmerising light displays, smoke machines and sometimes fireworks. As audience members watch and listen over the course of several hours, they also drink, dance and socialise. Tickets are bought at the door and prices range from around 10 soles (roughly US\$3.95) to around 35 soles (roughly US\$13.75) for star-studded line-ups. Throughout the night, vans arrive carrying spectacularly dressed *huayno* stars who are whisked through the crowds to the stage by overbearing bodyguards, concerned managers and jealous partners. On leaving the stage, singers are ambushed by fans desperate to have their photograph taken with a *huayno* celebrity. The biggest stars often perform two or three times back-to-back in different parts of the city, and each concert may present up to a dozen different artists or groups.

In Lima, there are rarely any concerts during the week, so this is when performers typically journey north, south or east to perform in cities, towns and villages in the interior. Many artists travel for hours to Andean hinterlands to entertain rural indigenous audiences that are frequently just as familiar with commercial *huayno* as their urban migrant counterparts. Besides live performances, audiences primarily become acquainted with commercial *huayno* through the radio, but in addition vast numbers of music video discs are pirated and sold cheaply nationwide, along with a rapidly growing quantity

1 Most Andean Peruvians would refer to what I call commercial *huayno* simply as *huayno* or *folklor*. However, such terms rely heavily on context as they are also used to refer to a vast array of Andean musical practices, including distinct regional styles as well as genres perceived to be more traditional or more sophisticated. For the purposes of this chapter, commercial *huayno* can be read as more or less synonymous with what Tucker calls 'northern *huayno*' (2013) and Ferrier calls '*huayno con arpa*' (2010). I employ the term commercial *huayno* in a bid to be more inclusive of stylistic variations within Peru's massified and commercial *huayno* scene.

of material accessible on the internet. This home-grown music industry offers a rather different picture of Latin American cultural production and consumption from the one painted by García Canclini, who describes the 'endogenous production of electronic media' as underdeveloped (2001, p. 25), in part because of a transfer of 'economic and cultural control to transnational corporations' through 'the digitization and mediation of rural processes of production, circulation, and consumption' (2005, p. xxxix). This chapter explains how commercial huayno contests the uniformity of these trends, constituting a sphere of cultural production where local forms of folkloric spectacle, mass-mediated popular culture and business converge to produce a kind of indigenous agency.

Commercial huayno also offers an alternative to the view that folkloric spectacles are exterior facing, moulded by and for the attention of outsiders. Huayno stars do not inhabit a world of indigenous performance that is commodified and spectacularised so that it can be manipulated by the state and international corporations, or consumed by tourists and the middle and upper classes. Indeed, such groups may believe that huayno exhibits a commercial crassness and represents the bad taste of an inferior indigenous or *cholo* (defined below) take on modernity that is not in keeping with stereotypes of a timeless, 'authentic' Andean culture, New Age Andean spiritualism, or modern and sophisticated international 'cool'. Instead, commercial huayno presents a situation where commodity and spectacle are primarily created for and consumed by indigenous audiences, both rural and urban.

This chapter explores and problematises the perceived relationships between indigenous culture, folkloric representation and capitalism. In debates about how these different domains impact on each other, it is common for observers to highlight how indigenous agency is compromised in some way, whether through appropriation, essentialism, commodification or spectacularisation (Guss, 2000; Hellier-Tinoco, 2011). Familiar arguments critique the processes whereby indigenous cultural practices become repackaged as cultural products, performances and spectacles directed towards the needs and desires of non-indigenous groups or entities. While such cultural appropriations do not preclude indigenous agency or enjoyment altogether (Bigenho, 2002, pp. 111–2; Mendoza, 2008, pp. 33–4), they are frequently perceived to be conditioned by unequal relations of social, economic and political power, generating fears about the cooptation of indigenous culture for capital gain. This chapter argues, however, that the assumption must be resisted that capitalist logics are the natural and exclusive property of hegemonies and thus inherently non-indigenous. Commercial huayno presents audiences with commodified, spectacularised and massified musical forms that rely on the capitalist endeavours of indigenous entrepreneurs and the complicity of indigenous



*Figure 7.1. Dina Paucar is escorted to the stage at a performance in the town of Chupaca, Junín, during the San Juan de Bautista festival, June 2012. Photo: James Butterworth.*

audiences. How can we respect and give voice to indigenous difference, then, while not denying indigenous actors the legitimacy of participating in, and exploiting, particular opportunities afforded by capitalism and the language of spectacle? In considering the production and consumption of commercial huayno as a potential site for subaltern self-representation, this chapter destabilises commonplace assumptions regarding the hegemonic appropriation and commodification of indigenous cultures, offering instead an example of indigenous agency.

### **A note on indigeneity in Peru and beyond**

Today, the dominant intellectual framework for understanding Peruvian indigeneity is informed by a transnational discourse sustained by academics, activists, NGOs, governments, international bodies and indigenous groups. While the concept of indigeneity has almost global coverage, it is imperative that scholars contextualise it according to specific times and places. They must think critically before reducing the local meanings and contexts of diverse forms of autochthonous subalternity to a universalising discourse of the concept. Although over recent decades there has been ‘a globalization of the concept of indigeneity itself’ (Canessa, 2005, pp. 4–5, following Hodgson, 2002), sparking a host of transnational connections and contingencies, it seems that a ‘nationalised’ indigeneity model still dominates; that is, indigenous discourse, identification and mobilisation tend to be directed towards securing change and recognition at the national level (see Jackson and Warren, 2005, p. 554).

In the Andes the concept of indigeneity varies considerably from North American and Australian models, for example, where the categories of indigenous and non-indigenous appear less porous, due in part to the smaller-scale and less intense nature of processes resembling *mestizaje*. Even within the Andean region, however, the politics, rhetoric and nomenclature of the concept vary enormously. While indigenous Bolivian Andeans primarily self-identify as *originario* (roughly, originary) and their counterparts in Ecuador usually call themselves *indígena* (indigenous), Peru’s Andean indigenous populations tend to opt for the term *campesino* (peasant). This euphemistic term was introduced under the presidency of Juan Velasco Alvarado (1968–75) in an attempt to displace the toxicity of the term ‘Indian’, though it has largely maintained the same connotations. Moreover, *campesino* has a particularly rural ring to it, meaning it is a label with which urban migrants of indigenous origin rarely identify (Tucker, 2011, p. 393). Urban indigenous Andeans are often discussed as *cholos*, but this incredibly complex moniker tends to be more a term of ascription than self-identification and ethnic identities are primarily articulated with reference to particular Andean villages, towns and departments

(Paerregaard, 2003, p. 275). However, the diminutive form, *cholito/a*, is part of common Andean parlance and is typically used as a term of affection. This usage is, in turn, potentially problematic in the way that it conceals latent paternalistic attitudes regarding racial difference.<sup>2</sup>

Unlike in Bolivia where indigeneity plays a central role in mainstream media and political discourse (to the extent that the president labels himself as indigenous along with 66.4 per cent of the population), indigeneity as a concept in Peru is peripheral and fragmented. And while the discourse of the concept has political traction in Peru's Amazonian region, it is frequently absent or muted in the Andean public sphere. In a country where the politics of indigeneity is complicated by centuries of miscegenation, migration and the gradual unravelling of any neat categories of race, geography and culture, the issue of defining who is and is not indigenous is not only fraught with difficulties, but is also not a particularly enlightening line of enquiry. More useful and nuanced approaches might attend to the ways in which discourses and symbols of indigeneity are contingent and contested, and how these are mobilised and challenged through performance (Bigenho, 2002; 2012; Tucker, 2011; 2013).

### **Historical perspectives on Andean music and spectacle**

The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines 'spectacle' as a 'person or thing exhibited to, or set before, the public gaze as an object either (a) of curiosity or contempt, or (b) of marvel or admiration.' Leslie Kan, in a 'Keywords' essay on spectacle, also stresses its captivating qualities: 'much of the spectacle's appeal (or repugnance) derives from its visual power and ability to hold the gaze of the viewer' (n.d.). Beyond these elementary definitions, literature on spectacle tends to demonstrate that people are often suspicious about its authenticity; in other words, they may believe that spectacle is something other than 'real', despite its purporting to be so. According to such a viewpoint, spectacles obscure, distort and distract audiences from some kind of truth. While such a reading of spectacle as artifice sits comfortably within a long history of European thought about theatricality (Bush, 2011, p. 18), its distractive qualities are especially important to Marxist perspectives such as that espoused by Guy Debord ([1967] 1983). For Debord, spectacle is the material manifestation of an ideological framework rooted in capitalist accumulation and commodity fetishism. As the spectacle advances, it supposedly erases the traces of the human labour that brought it into being, generating alienation and blinding its audience to the structural inequalities created and sustained by capitalism. Although Debord's

2 For an in-depth discussion of the term 'cholo', see de la Cadena (2000); Seligman (1989); Weistmantel (2001).

observations remain apt for explaining many of the mechanisms of capitalism and spectacle, his totalising pessimism seems inadequate today in its inability to account for change or spectator agency.

During the 20th century, spectacle came to form an important element in the development of Andean music, particularly in relation to processes of folklorisation and commercialisation. From the late 1920s, Andean – and specifically Cuzqueña – music came to be included in official contests and public performances in Lima, the coastal capital (Mendoza, 2008, pp. 44–8, 59–63; Turino, 2008a, p. 100). Many of these performances took place at the Pampa de Amancaes, attracting huge crowds, with some sources reporting audiences as large as 50,000 (Alejandro Vivanco, cited in Mendoza, 2008, p. 45). Here regional (predominantly Cuzqueña) music was exhibited before the public gaze, which, via a process of extrapolation, came to represent *lo incaico* (Incaness) and *lo andino* (Andeanness). The driving forces behind these spectacles during the first half of the 20th century were the intellectual movements known as indigenismo and neo-Indianism. Indigenistas were concerned with safeguarding their ‘traditions’, not only in the face of the perceived threat of cultural imperialism from abroad but also, perhaps more importantly, as a means of forging a regional nationalism that would challenge the dominance of the coastal creole elites’ vision of the nation. This was effected by positioning Andean, and specifically Cuzqueña, culture as the basis for an emerging *peruanidad*, or Peruvian identity (Lloréns Amico, 1983; Mendoza, 2008). These activities led to a folklorisation of indigenous music, dance and theatre through which cultural expressions were formalised, stylised and presented as representative of regional and national identities. However, for the most part indigenistas were concerned with representing indigenous culture as a pure and unmediated continuation of Incan lifeways, and Incaic imagery and rhetoric were fundamental to their output. This amounted to the valorisation of a glorious Inca past, while they implicitly rejected present-day indigenous realities. Reflecting similar intellectual shifts among indigenistas in post-revolutionary Mexico (Hellier-Tinoco, 2011, p. 58; Knight, 1990, pp. 71–113), a connected, but distinct, movement of intellectuals known as neo-Indianists became sceptical about the indigenistas’ preoccupation with *lo incaico* and were much more concerned with cultural practices and knowledge pertaining to the lived experience of contemporary Indians. This meant recognising and even celebrating the already-hybrid nature of those populations and cultures. Notwithstanding, the process of folklorisation brought their music into the public sphere, mediated through staged performances and spectacular presentations that had been stripped of their ‘original’ ritual and participatory significance and aesthetically adapted to urban mestizo and elite tastes. While some indigenous musicians possessed discernible agency in the

design of such folkloric spectacles, they were still largely conditioned by mestizo aesthetic ideals and, later, by the effects of tourism. In the minds of Cuzqueño performers, Mendoza writes, spectacles were held 'as a way of proving their modernity and to outline national identities':

These spectacles, which try to simplify for the tourist – and therefore present in concentrated fashion – the otherwise complicated task of deciphering the intricacies of the everyday life of culture the tourists are approaching ... are essentially an attempt to establish what Kirshenblatt-Gimblett calls a 'touristic realism' in order to convey the illusion that these are nonmediated events. (Mendoza, 2008, p. 67; see also Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 1998, pp. 8, 59)

This outward-facing dynamic remains integral to a range of folkloric spectacles, yet, as this chapter will show, the more internal orientation of contemporary commercial huayno provides a rather different model.

From the 1950s onwards Andean music in Lima underwent further important changes, particularly in relation to the development of the commercial recording industry (Romero, 2001, pp. 109–21; 2002). Solo singers emerged and soon became stars, signalling the growing relevance of ideas about fame, performance and individuality, where there had hitherto been an emphasis in Andean music on community, participation and anonymity (2002, p. 221).<sup>3</sup> Here, in addition to elements of display and performance, the concept of spectacle resonated as a function of nascent celebrity culture. The phenomenon of stardom has continued to develop and is today at the heart of the contemporary commercial huayno scene. The initial move towards solo singers was facilitated by the introduction of the microphone. In the Debordian sense, the spectacular took on an aural dimension as a split emerged between representation and 'unmediated' reality via the technological mediation of the voice. Crucial to both these processes is what Turino identifies as a shift from participatory to presentational performance, where the value attached to community music-making during feasts and rituals is superseded by distinctions between audience and performer and a greater emphasis on achieving high aesthetic standards (2008b).

While the processes of folklorisation and commercialisation that began earlier in the 20th century have undoubtedly impacted on contemporary Andean music, commercial huayno is emblematic of more recent political, economic, social and cultural transformations in Peru. Since the beginning of the 1990s, neoliberal reforms, in addition to a rapid increase in the accessibility and affordability of new technologies, have encouraged the development of cultural

3 Mendoza argues that the trend toward popular soloists began as early as the late 1920s, even though soloists did not achieve widespread fame until the 1950s (2008, p. 102).

industries and aided the production and circulation of subaltern cultural forms – including articulations of indigenous experience – that would otherwise be largely ignored by the state and its apparatus as well as by ‘mainstream’ national media and international cultural brokers. It is in this context that commercial huayno has flourished. Although one of the strongest musical indices of the Andes in Peru, it has reached its current form and popularity principally through the development of a large music industry in the coastal capital, Lima. Its activity is primarily sustained by urban Andean migrants and companies based in that city, although there are also many studios, radio stations and disc vendors in provincial towns, and the voices of commercial huayno stars are likely to be found animating the remotest of Andean villages.

Most singers were born in the Andes (both rural and urban), but increasing numbers are now being born to Andean parents in Lima. This mix of rural and urban influences challenges the naturalisation of the link between indigenous peoples and the rural environment that was at the heart of indigenismo, ideologies of mestizaje and nation-building projects (de la Cadena, 2000, pp. 63–5; Bigenho, 2002, p. 116), and which still tends to be a default position for global imaginaries of indigeneity. To consider how commercial huayno further engages, feeds off and contests dominant and default characterisations of indigenous agency and spectacular performance, this chapter now turns to some of the sonic, visual and social intricacies of commercial huayno performance.



*Figure 7.2. Huayno concert in Chorrillos, Lima, June 2012. Photo: James Butterworth.*



Figure 7.3. Spectators at huayno concert in Chorrillos, Lima, June 2012. Photo: James Butterworth.

## Commercial huayno and spectacle

One Saturday evening in August 2009, a steady stream of people is arriving at El Huarcocondo, a music locale in the migrant neighbourhood of San Juan de Lurigancho, northeast Lima. Music and stage-talk boom out from the open-air venue but those congregating outside are unable to see in past the high concrete walls and vast iron doors. Spectators buy their tickets through a narrow hatch in the wall, little more than a foot wide, before proceeding inside through a small doorway. Over the course of several hours the crowd gradually grows and performers come and go, building up to the appearance of the headline artist, Rosita de Espinar, a huayno diva from southern Peru. Soon after 1 a.m., Rosita's entrance is announced by deafening, ethereal synthesiser sounds, hyperbolic exclamations from the *animadores* (compères), and flashes of light from the stage. The audience hears Rosita's voice but she cannot yet be seen. Then, heads begin looking up to the left where she suddenly comes into view. With fireworks exploding in the skies above, Rosita hovers high up in the air inside a carriage draped in silky, pink material. As she sings to the crowd below, the diva's carriage is gradually lowered to the stage by a mechanised crane. Still singing, Rosita steps out of the carriage before disappearing within a multicoloured explosion of confetti and clouds of smoke.

After performing several songs, the band strikes up a tune familiar to most of the crowd. Rosita and the animadores engage the crowd as the musicians

play, and audience members jump up and down, waving their arms in time to the music. Rosita hassles the women, encouraging them to pump their hands in the air before telling them to ‘get down’, demonstrating the manoeuvre by coquettishly descending into a squatting position. Then it is the men’s turn: ‘where are the men?’, ‘where are the single men?’ come the shouts from the stage. After a couple of minutes of build-up, Rosita launches into the song ‘Suspiros de Amor’ (Sighs of Love):<sup>4</sup>

A mi corazón le debes	You owe my heart
dos mil quinientos suspiros	two thousand five hundred sighs
A mi corazón le debes	You owe my heart
dos mil quinientos suspiros	two thousand five hundred sighs
Si alguna vez lo has pagado	If you’ve ever paid [your debt]
enséñame tu recibo	show me your receipt
Si alguna vez lo has pagado	If you’ve ever paid [your debt]
demuéstrame tus papeles	show me your papers
Acaso para que me quieras	Perhaps so that you want me
te puse puñal al pecho	I put a dagger to your chest
Acaso para que me ames	Perhaps so that you love me
te puse puñal al pecho	I put a dagger to your chest
Que te costaba decirme	What would it have cost you to tell me
‘cholita yo soy casado’	‘cholita I’m married?’
Que te costaba decirme	What would it have cost you to tell me
‘cholita tengo mis hijos’	‘cholita I have my children?’
Amantes somos amantes	Lovers we are lovers
tan solo fuimos amantes	We were only lovers
Amantes somos amantes	Lovers we are lovers
tan solo fuimos amantes	We were only lovers
Tu eres casado cholito	You’re married cholito
yo soy soltera que pena	I’m single, what a shame

In its romantic cynicism this is a fairly typical huayno. Most of the audience know the lyrics and many spectators – mostly women – sing and gesture along with Rosita as she pounds her clenched fist against her chest. Sometimes she sings directly to an individual near the front of the stage, creating a fleeting moment of intimacy that is necessarily short so as to maintain the interest of the

4 A video of Rosita de Espinar performing ‘Suspiros de Amor’, which was written by Julia Palma, is available on YouTube (2009).

crowd. Behind her, the dancers and musicians perform tightly choreographed and visually spectacular movements in synchrony. At one point the guitarist and a dancer bend backwards, while using one arm to bounce up and down on the stage in a series of humping gestures, a sight that draws smiles and laughter from sections of the audience. Throughout the performance a myriad of mesmerising lights spin, swirl and flash rapidly across the stage and out towards the spectators, reminding them, as if they had forgotten, where their focus should be. Machines continue to pump out clouds of smoke, shrouding the performers in moving veils that obscure the audience's view and generate a sense of mystique. High above the performers at the back of the stage, a huge illumination advertising Cristal beer conjures modern capitalism in a way that recalls religious iconography, preaching to the crowd about which beer they should buy at the encircling kiosks.<sup>5</sup> Most spectators duly oblige: sharing and drinking beer is a fundamental aspect of the social experience an event such as this entails. Below the Cristal illumination, Rosita moves back and forth from the main stage to the central walkway, which juts out into the audience, strewn with confetti, its edges adorned with flowers. Although the animadores occasionally move up the walkway, the space belongs principally to Rosita, serving to enhance her star quality and focusing the crowd's gaze even more narrowly on her performance as the spectacle's centrepiece.

The lovelorn narratives contained in Rosita's lyrics – like most commercial huayno acts – are brought to life through her gendered interaction with the male animadores. These performers act out the song scenarios in time with the lyrics, or the animador chips in with romantic reflections, advice and jokes that give light to a series of gender stereotypes, including *la mujer sufrida* (the suffering woman), *la mujer luchadora* (the struggling/fighting woman), *el hombre ingrato, traicionero y mentiroso* (the ungrateful, betraying, lying man) and *el hombre pisado* (the kept man), to name some of the most common tropes. Rosita jokes with the animadores about how she is looking for a new man. Drawing a parallel between romance and materialist desires, she cheekily insists she is not interested in anything 'second hand' (*cosa usada*) but, rather, wants 'something brand new' (*algo nuevecito*). Meanwhile, the animadores continue to encourage the crowd to keep drinking beer and perpetually shout out the names of audience members' home towns and regions in the Andes: 'Hands up Espinar!'; 'Where are all the people from Apurímac?'; 'Who's in from Ancash?'

5 Cristal occupies the greatest share of the Peruvian beer market and its branding is intimately connected to national identity. The brand is owned by Backus and Johnston, a company that also owns almost all beer brands in Peru except Bramha. Most Peruvian beer drinkers are unaware that Backus and Johnston is itself a subsidiary of the London-based SABMiller group, which is a prime example of the monopolistic tendencies and stealthy expansion of global capitalism.

Although some singers of commercial huayno are male, the majority – and the most successful – are women, meaning that they are the ones who most commonly play the protagonists of huayno's lovelorn and suffering narratives. A female singer's presence on stage is emphasised by the fact that the musicians, backing dancers and animadores are invariably all male. Female singers also tend to be the only performers wearing folkloric dress, albeit often heavily stylised. Unlike the majority of huayno divas who favour luminescent and elaborately embroidered costumes worn with high heels, Rosita de Espinar tends to wear more understated dresses based on typical patterns from her home region, along with her trademark black high-top boots and customary Andean braids. The stylised, folkloric capes worn by her musicians also go against the general tendency for male commercial huayno performers to wear plain monotone suits. This striking difference in the gendered use of folkloric dress has the effect of making the female singer a more powerful index of Andean custom and seems, at least in this narrow sense, to reinforce the maxim that 'women are more Indian' than men, as proposed by Marisol de la Cadena (1995; see also Crain, 1996). While the female singer demands empathy for externalising her inner emotional sorrows, and represents a respectable Andean girl who maintains some vestiges of tradition, the male backing dancers (dressed in suits) perform spectacular hybrid choreographed routines that bare minimal resemblance to any particular Andean tradition or international style. Thus, among the cosmopolitan influences and hybrid aesthetics, particular Andean symbols remain integral to the genre.

This description of Rosita de Espinar's show is partly based on a live music video, albeit supported by my own experiences of attending dozens of similar live huayno shows, including several by Rosita. With recording technology comes the possibility of the spectator becoming divorced temporally and spatially from the spectacle (Kan, n.d.). In Debord's terms, this may lead to a respective categorisation of the video as mere 'representation' and the live spectacle as unmediated, 'directly lived' experience ([1967] 1983, p. 1). This division, however, is problematised by the fact that technological mediation is already part of the live spectacle, with different layers of mediation combining to form a sort of meta-spectacle: the numerous cameramen filming on stage, from the crowd and from the mechanised crane above, become part of the very spectacle that they are trying to capture. At one point, too, Rosita looks firmly down the barrel of the camera lens in a close-up moment of heightened televisual intimacy, which is reserved for the video viewer and largely lost on the audience present on the night. The sense of emotional 'authenticity' that this technological channelling of intimacy engenders is manifested as a direct result of televised spectacle rather than in spite of it.

This performance event, then, constitutes a multilayered spectacle that makes little explicit reference to stereotypes of cultural authenticity or profound reified difference. Its appeal stems, instead, from visual excitement and high-energy performance as well as the intimacy and identification generated by dancing, drinking and sharing in a discourse of complicated romance and Andean roots. The ‘hybrid modernity’ that Tucker (2013) identifies in commercial huayno music is not in keeping with many historically dominant and internationally circulating representations of Peruvian Andean indigeneity. For middle-class detractors, traditionalists and, I suspect, many tourists too, commercial huayno fails to conform to commonplace perceptions of cultural authenticity, based on atavistic stereotypes of Andean culture almost frozen in time. Such views follow the logic of the phrase ‘*incas sí, indios no*’, which forms the title of Cecilia Méndez’s 1996 article, highlighting a tendency to legitimate only indigenous behaviour and aesthetics that seemingly perpetuate pre-modern ways of life. However, as Tucker convincingly argues, ‘little is achieved by reversing polarity, and pitching hybrid styles as palliatives for a dated, oppressive folklorism’ (2013, p. 64). Therefore, commercial huayno’s adoption of spectacular performance and hybrid aesthetics, which play with symbols of global sameness and Andean difference, does not necessarily make it any less a form of indigenous expression than performances of indigeneity that avow profound exceptionalism. This chapter argues, following Tucker, that diverging performance styles and corresponding discourses are best viewed as representing ‘different aspects of indigenous experience’ (p. 60).

### **Music, markets and contemporary Andean experience**

While commercial huayno music performance rarely entails self-conscious or overt performances of indigeneity, its star protagonists can be taken to represent a voice of contemporary indigenous experience in Peru. This has not gone unnoticed by corporate marketers, as evidenced by a TV advert for the mobile communications firm Movistar (owned by the Spanish company Telefónica) in which the company enlists huayno’s two biggest stars, Dina Páucar and Sonia Morales, in a bid to help sell (indigenous) Quechua and Aymara language phone services in the rural Andes.<sup>6</sup> Both of these stars are examples of a rags-to-riches narrative wherein their entrepreneurial spirit, struggle and hard work qualify them as successful Andean icons and neoliberal citizens. These qualities are arguably as – if not more – important to their status and image as their music, a point accentuated by the fact that instead of using the divas’ huayno songs, the advert features a reorchestrated instrumental version of the song

6 The advert, entitled ‘Movistar Quechua’, is available on YouTube.

'You Get What You Give' by the US rock band The New Radicals.<sup>7</sup> These performers are seen to have navigated a path through unforgiving economic realities, while being doubly marginalised on the grounds of ethnicity and gender. Dina and Sonia may have abandoned a range of practices and markers of indigeneity but they have also retained some and adapted others. This fact recalls Andrew Canessa's assertion that one can be indigenous in some contexts but not others (2005, p. 19). In the advert, Dina and Sonia both speak in Quechua with Spanish subtitles – a practice that remains very rare on Peruvian television. An English translation of the transcript reads as follows:

DINA: When I was young I had a happy childhood. However, I think everything would have been easier if more people had understood me when I was speaking Quechua.

SONIA: Happily, Quechua and Aymara peoples will not have this problem now, thanks to the telephone exchange in Quechua and Aymara at Movistar.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE VOICE: Once again, Movistar is the first mobile operator to unite Peruvians in the most remote places in their own language, putting communications at your service regardless of distance or language.

SONIA: And it's because for Movistar, you come first!

DINA: Therefore everyday that passes...

SONIA: There're more of us/we are greater! (*Somos más*)

DINA: There're more of us/we are greater! (*Somos más*)

CROWD: There're more of us/we are greater! (*Somos más*)

Alongside the foregrounding of Quechua language, it is also striking to see Andean faces presenting to camera as opposed to the ubiquity of the whiter faces that typically address the viewing Peruvian public. This refreshing visibility of indigenous language and Andean bodies is, one suspects, motivated largely, if not completely, by the potential financial rewards of an emerging market, rather than Telefónica's social conscience. However, even if increasing the market share and profits are the primary motives here, one cannot ignore the opportunities such spaces provide for the subaltern to be visible, to be

7 Whether or not the Peruvian public, or certain sectors of it, are aware of this musical reference is unclear. It may be that the use of commercial huayno music is avoided so as not to alienate middle- and upper-class audiences who are likely to find such sounds unpalatable.



Figure 7.4. Dina Paucar features on a billboard advertising Movistar outside the airport in Juliaca, January 2009. Photo: Marcos Granda Portilla.

heard and to feel included. In a restricted sense, capitalism is doing positive social work by increasing subaltern visibility, audibility and inclusivity – an achievement that successive hegemonic groups have failed to realise or even desire. This requires indigenous subalterns to buy into consumer culture and global capitalism, but does this *always* have to be something to be so anxious about?<sup>8</sup> There is something uncritical about the reflex that can prompt (non-indigenous) observers to identify the perpetuation and expansion of global capitalism as the ultimate, if implicit, system conditioning human action and, in turn, disavowing subaltern agency. Such a logic potentially naturalises the link between capitalism and non-indigenous people, which is in no way innate or inevitable. Furthermore, the default assumption arising from this position tends to characterise capitalism as an exploitative and cooptive force that undermines indigenous agency. As with most economic systems, there are winners and losers, but these cannot be mapped simply on to (pre-existing) social categories and hierarchies. While there remain real and present threats across rural Andean and Amazon regions from the encroachment of transnational resource extracting industries, the case of commercial huayno offers an example of Andean agency and a form of economic and cultural

8 This is not to suggest we should not be anxious about the effects of capitalism.

empowerment. Thus, just as a discourse of indigeneity needs to be understood in relation to specific times and places, it is important that one's understanding of capitalism is qualified by attention to issues of scale as well as its various manifestations and meanings in particular contexts.

The contemporary Andean-Peruvian situation is summarised perfectly by Jason Bush:

Urbanizing migrants have fashioned an alternative public sphere that increasingly contests exclusive articulations of the nation by the Creole aristocracy. As the imaginary of a new Peru has shifted from an oppositional vision of the national popular to the 'performative society' of neoliberal globalization, it has acquired a fragile hegemony that constitutes Andean subjects as citizens in ways they rarely experienced before. (2011, p. 33)

Bush successfully puts his finger on a tangible shift in the balance of power in Peruvian society that has been enabled, in part, through the emergence of a form of neoliberal multiculturalism (Hale, 2005). However, as a burgeoning literature on this topic attests, this shift does not constitute any absolute democratisation of access to the means of cultural production or the uniform emancipation of consumers. Indeed, 'neoliberalism's professed multicultural neutrality' has the potential to gloss over historically rooted forms of oppression and inequality (Jackson and Warren, 2005, p. 553). The market, too, has the power to distort performers' and consumers' preferences and the choices available to them. Tucker documents, for example, how performers can be led to certain types of aesthetics and performance based on what makes money rather than as a result of personal musical convictions or identitarian projects (2013). However, such dilemmas are in no way unique to indigenous performers and caution must be practised in relation to assuming any natural link between the power of the market and the interests of hegemonic groups. Similarly, this chapter argues for the need to resist any naturalised notion that capitalism – including its apparatus of commodity and spectacle – is incompatible with indigenous identity, expression and agency.

## Conclusion

The danger of critiques concerning the commodification and spectacularisation of indigenous culture is that they potentially cast capital and spectacle as inherently non-indigenous, and depict capitalist processes as having a distorting effect on an essential indigenous lived experience. The case of commercial huayno highlights that indigenous, capitalist and consumer are not mutually exclusive subject positions. Moreover, it helps to denaturalise any perceived relationship between the interests of hegemonic groups and the mechanics of capitalism. Assuming that capitalism is a coercive force,

indigenous people and culture may be absorbed by capitalism but they are not naturally or necessarily coopted any more than anyone else across the globe; in other words, the question of indigeneity may not always be relevant. Although there remain tangible and serious inequalities of power with regard to many indigenous communities, commercial huayno demonstrates that capital can also be a driving force behind increasing certain types of subaltern visibility and agency. The economic context for commercial huayno's hybrid aesthetics and spectacular performance should not exclude it from being an expression of contemporary indigenous experience, or an expressive form with which indigenous Peruvians identify and consider their own. If we only legitimate indigenous cultural expressions that are self-consciously about performing indigeneity as profound essential difference, and that supposedly exist *a priori* of capitalism and spectacle, we will be severely limiting what indigeneity can mean.

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## 8. Everyday work as spectacle: celebrating Maya embodied culture in Belize<sup>1</sup>

*Genner Llanes-Ortiz*

Maya Day celebrations in southern Belize have been characterised, since 2004, by new identity performance strategies deployed among different Maya groups and villages. Maya people have adopted different representations – condensed in this festival – of dynamic, strong identities intended to make cultural and political statements that contest their current marginalisation within the Belizean state. The Anglo-Caribbean *Kriol* establishment still largely perceives the Maya as being made up of immigrant groups from Guatemala and has only recently (and reluctantly) acknowledged their status as native peoples of Belize. This reluctance is, in turn, reflected in public debates, disputes over land rights and political participation, and in the lack of recognition of the Maya's historical importance in the formation of the Belizean nation. Organisation of the Maya Day festival addresses these issues both directly and indirectly while taking up the challenge of representing Maya identities in innovative ways.

The programme includes several rituals, traditional dances, sporting events, marimba and harp music, academic and information talks, and food stalls. One of the main attractions for both Maya and non-Maya attendees is the festival's range of competitions where Maya villagers perform a variety of everyday tasks, such as firewood splitting and corn grinding. These competitions convey widely accepted notions of 'Mayaness', such as physical strength and resilience, resourcefulness and family cooperation. This chapter will examine why these competitions have become so important for Maya activists in Belize and consider what happens when daily, embodied practices become spectacle. It will also highlight the festival's significance in promoting the Maya peoples' demands for political recognition and social inclusion.

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## Maya Day: history and significance

Tumul K'in Centre of Learning, an autonomous intercultural education project based in the village of Blue Creek, has been organising Maya Day for almost a decade. The school provides secondary education to Maya and non-Maya teenagers from different villages in the southern district of Toledo and beyond. Tumul K'in (TK), meaning 'new day' in the Mopan Maya language, is an educational project that some scholars describe as an 'experiment in postcolonial pedagogy' (Wainwright, 2008, p. 225). Established in 2002, when a group of teachers occupied the abandoned facilities of a failed development project to create a Maya school for the Maya people, the Centre sees its work as contributing to the struggles for recognition of Maya rights and culture in Belize and enjoys the support of other Maya activists and organisations.

As well as being the only secondary education institution in Belize to teach Maya languages, TK is the only one to teach Maya values, spirituality and arts. The school's pedagogy actively encourages students to learn Maya performance genres (marimba and harp playing, and dances). Teachers believe that students gain a sense of identity through exploring these traditions, as well as through reconstructing lost performing arts – for example, stilt dancing, described in a passage from the ancient *Popol Vuh* (the book of the Kiche' Maya), has been reintroduced (Tedlock, 1996). For these Maya activists, researching, teaching and recovering the arts, sports and science of ancient Maya civilisation is an important component in the decolonisation of minds and the empowerment of Maya villagers. This is why the stilt dancing, as well as *chaj chaay* (a sacred Maya ball game) and fireball games, have been incorporated into Maya Day.

Held annually, always on a different date, the Maya Day festival is scheduled according to the school year, and specific days are selected according to the



Figure 8.1. Stilt dancer – image from the Madrid Codex. Source: Vail and Hernández, 2011.

Figure 8.2. Stilt dancers' performance – Maya Day 2012. Video still: Genner Llanes-Ortiz.

Maya calendar kept by the Kiche' Maya. Involving several ritualistic, sporting and artistic performances, it began in 2004 as an open day showcasing the work of Maya students for parents and other people from the villages. The festival grew in scale and complexity after all those involved in the first event pronounced it a success and agreed its continuation. From the start, certain components have become synonymous with 'celebrating Maya culture'. Among these are traditionally choreographed dances – like the Deer, the Cortes and the Monkey – harp and marimba music, and the preparation of Maya food, such as maize tortilla, *caldo* or spicy soup, and *tamales*. Also important, as previously mentioned, are the competitions, the particular focus of this chapter.

The celebration of Maya Day acquires particular significance when considered within the context of Belizean cultural politics. The Maya in Belize (formed by three linguistic communities: the Yukatek, the Mopan and the Q'eqchi') are widely perceived as a group of immigrants from Guatemala and Mexico by the dominant Kriol – descendants of British woodcutters and former African slaves (Medina, 1999). The long history and presence of the Maya in Belize is often ignored and invisibilised by Kriol political and cultural establishments. The Belizean government only observes national holidays that celebrate the heritage of the Kriol (St George's Caye Day and Commonwealth Day) and the Garifuna (Settlement Day). This is one of the main reasons why the Maya decided to organise their own public celebration to assert their continuous presence in Belizean territory and their contribution to the nation – a festival that can be interpreted as a strategic symbolic gesture defying their invisibilisation.

### Staging Maya Day

The inclusion of competitions, the most anticipated performances of Maya Day, reflects the TK's understanding of Maya education and culture. Its curriculum encourages students to labour constantly in the field, the kitchen and the classroom. Hard work, the school board and Maya villagers believe, is what will make these youngsters Maya. The teenagers also enjoy free time though, during which they may choose to learn a craft, play the marimba or join in a football game.

Competitions were initially conceived to allow students to demonstrate what they had learned in school. However, so as to include other Maya villagers in the celebration, the number and nature of these activities grew. The organisers were keen to differentiate Maya Day from other festivals that had been initiated by hotels and other tourism-related businesses in the region, and which claimed to represent Maya culture. As Esther Sánchez, TK's managing director, explained:

We really wanted something that people from the communities could come and feel [was] theirs. That [they would] take ownership of the day, of the event and make them feel that ‘this is Maya’, ‘it makes me proud of who I am’, ‘of what I have’ ... We also talked about the competitions and how, again, we should make competitions that really highlighted what people in the communities are good at. They have a lot of skills, a lot of knowledge but it is in their own area. And if we do not have somebody who will promote it, then how will they be able to value and really appreciate what they know? All of [these questions were] in the discussion when we spoke about Maya Day. And that is why we’ve made it with the different competitions we have, which are always a highlight of the day.<sup>2</sup>

These competitions thus contribute to promoting a notion of Maya culture that is embodied and, at the same time, *performatic* – to use Diana Taylor’s term. Taylor uses the adjectival form ‘performatic’ to stress ‘the nondiscursive realm of performance’ (2003, p. 6), the realm of actions and interactions. She notes that philosophy, linguistics, dramaturgy and rhetoric, which have greatly influenced the field of performance studies, place a strong emphasis on language and normative practice in their analytic use of ‘performative’ as an attribute of reiterative acts. According to Taylor’s perspective, ‘performatic’ marks certain aspects of performance where subjectivity and cultural agency are not subsumed by discourse. In this particular case, I consider ‘performatic’ to be an appropriate description of the quality of these staged embodied displays that, while consonant with conventional discourses about Maya gender identities, disrupts them by virtue of the performances’ transformation into spectacle. This is because, while clearly based on traditional domestic roles, the tasks competitively performed on the festival stage simultaneously index alternative notions of Mayaness. Rather than simply cementing specific roles and hierarchies, the competitions acknowledge broader, cross-gender qualities, such as self-reliance and cultural expertise. Admittedly, more competitions are staged that give men the chance to display their physical and cultural competencies, but by including and celebrating the embodied performances of Maya women on the same stage, these activists contribute to a repositioning of women’s work, bodies and knowledge, making their contributions equally important as men’s in the continuation of Maya culture. Focusing not merely on the performativity of gender roles, but on the performatic quality of the competitions allows festival-goers and the wider audience to become spectators of Maya corporeal vigour and cultural dynamism.

Photographic records from earlier Maya Days show how these competitions have evolved – so to speak – ‘from the ground up’. In 2007, competitions

2 Esther Sánchez, interview with the author, Blue Creek, Toledo, Belize, 29 March 2012.



*Figure 8.3. Harp dancing competition, Maya Day 2007. Photograph: Esther Sánchez.*

like tortilla-making took place on a low wooden platform placed on the margins of a green field in the middle of TK's school compound. Spectators were able to inspect the competition closely and thus participate quite directly by encouraging and/or criticising the competitors. In the early stages of the festival, even harp dancing competitors performed at ground level (see figure 8.3). Later, in 2009, festival organisers decided to locate the platforms higher up, creating a stage that dominated the main green of the compound and which became a venue for some competitions.

This photographic record bears witness to the growth and diverse incarnations of the festival in its brief history. The third official Maya Day (2007), which took place on different dates and venues across the Toledo district, included a spiritual ceremony and the sale of Maya food in the main square of Punta Gorda (capital of the Toledo district) as well as a Deer Dance presentation, traditional marimba and harp music, and the staging of various competitions (marimba playing, tortilla-making, caldo eating, traditional dance and best dress) on the school compound. Maya Day 2010 repeated the same format. In that year, there were Maya spiritual ceremonies, a torch run starting from the archaeological site of Lubaantun, chaj chaay demonstrations in a Maya village, and the 'Lords of the Rainforest' bicycle race across different villages. A festival of dance, music and cultural performances 'depicting everyday Mayan life' was

held at Punta Gorda's Sports Complex. And the school compound hosted best dress, greasy pole, slingshot and firewood splitting and carrying competitions, along with La Chatona and Cortes dances and, again, chaj chaay and fireball game demonstrations.

Over the years 2007–10, the numbers of people gathering in the compound in Blue Creek rose significantly from one dozen to approximately two hundred. The Centre took advantage of this increase to showcase its educational work and to raise funds for future activities by charging a small fee to attend the festival. The showcasing took place in booths selling food, fizzy drinks and clothes. In 2011, TK was the host organisation of the International Encounter of Maya Peoples, an annual celebration where Pan-Maya organisations and activists from Mexico, Guatemala, El Salvador and Belize come together to discuss common topics of interest, share their knowledge and traditions and unite as one voice to demand greater recognition and respect for their rights. For the first time, Maya Day attracted – according to some eyewitnesses – nearly a thousand spectators, a real logistical challenge. In response to earlier complaints lodged by some Maya villagers and authorities about the entrance price, on this occasion attendees were asked only to make a symbolic contribution of one Belizean dollar (approximately 35 pence).

The remarkable development of Maya Day in less than a decade is perhaps indicative of how effectively it reflects the desire of Maya villagers in Toledo to see their identities represented and celebrated in the public sphere. Inevitably, Maya Day organisers have had to engage – although seemingly only minimally – with foreign tourists' expectations of authenticity when visiting remote areas like southern Belize.<sup>3</sup> These visitors tend to be of three types: cultural tourists, eco-tourists and, what are here called, 'solidarity tourists' – most being international workers for non-governmental organisations (NGOs), anthropologists and archaeologists. A significant proportion of foreign visitors to Maya Day are archaeologists, whose numbers have increased considerably since 2009 (again, according to the photographic record). Tourism scholars have demonstrated that a desire for 'spectacle' powerfully drives the engagement and interest of tourists, even those seeking unconventional experiences like eco-tourism (see Ryan et al., 2000). As the main agents behind the organisation of Maya Day, TK members do not reject the presence of tourists – in fact, it could be said that they encourage it since they also advertise Maya Day in hotels and other tourism service providers. They are aware of, and engage with, these audiences yet they continue to be primarily accountable to their original public, the Maya villagers, as will become apparent from a closer analysis of Maya Day competitions and performances.

3 For a discussion of how this has affected Maya villages see Medina (2003).

## Researching performance and competitions

I first made my proposal to TK members to study and document their festival during the summer of 2011. They agreed to participate and even enriched my original project with interesting recommendations. At the time they had big plans for 2012, a date that had become synonymous with a purported Maya prophecy of the end of the world (Sitler, 2006). Foreign fascination with the prophecy had been fuelled by the New Age belief that the contemporary Maya possessed a hitherto hidden knowledge about the future of the planet, about its catastrophic end or 'mystical' new beginning. There was little echo of these Western millenarian anxieties among Maya activists and even less among Maya villagers in Belize. All this attention, however, created an opportunity for TK to gain more visibility and support for the festival. They had envisioned an even more ambitious programme for the year, which did not take shape, since funds promised by state agencies never materialised and principally because the national government called for general elections during the month typically dedicated to the festival.

They went ahead, nonetheless, and as usual invited people from all over the Toledo district to attend the main celebration in Blue Creek. The Centre runs a local radio station with sufficient coverage to reach most of the Maya villages in the district. Aurelio Sho, a media-conscious Mopan Maya, directs this station, which is called Ak' Kutan (the Q'eqchi' phrase for 'new day'). His ideas and instincts about showmanship and communication have, in recent years, driven important changes in the way Maya Day is organised. Aurelio produced a radio advertisement clip for the celebration that was broadcast nationally by Love Television, a media company based in Belize City. The clip portrays Maya identity as linguistically diverse and different from, yet well integrated in, Belizean society. With background marimba music, the advert features the voices of TK's young Maya students encouraging people to attend the festival in four languages: Mopan, Q'eqchi', Kriol and English. Aurelio's voice then invites the crowd in English to 'come and experience a vibrant Maya culture: the food, the music, the people, the dance and arts and crafts. Witness the main stage competitions, such as: conch shell-blowing competition, corn-grinding competition, firewood-splitting competition, caldo eating, just to name a few'. The radio clip clearly frames the competitions as 'centre stage' performances in the festival. My experiences of Maya Day 2012 confirmed this impression. During the conch shell-blowing competition, for instance, all eyes were directed at the stage as participants waited to step into the (scorching) limelight while a TV crew recorded every detail for its national news programme. The corn-grinding contest also attracted intense interest. This time audience members,



*Figure 8.4. Corn-grinding competition – Maya Day 2012. Video still: Genner Llanes-Ortiz.*

particularly children and young people, climbed up and crowded together on the stage to get closer to the action (figure 8.4).

A closer look at the type and mode of the competitions further illustrates the ways in which they become framed as ‘spectacle’ during the event. For heuristic purposes, Maya Day competitions are classified here according to two broad categories: i) ‘traditional performance’, that is those that reward artistic talent and culturally appropriate performances of traditional genres, such as marimba and harp playing, dancing and the modelling of traditional dress; and ii) ‘everyday tasks’, the larger category which encourages ostentatious corporeal skills in the execution of everyday village activities. The latter tasks are judged according to certain cultural norms. Not only are these expressions of embodied cultural knowledge relevant for Maya economic viability, but they also represent highly valued traits of Mayaness. As noted earlier, such chores tend to be gender-specific. Predominantly male competitions are firewood splitting, palm knitting, sling shooting and bicycle riding, whereas female contests involve tasks like corn grinding and the making of tortillas and palm fans. Both sexes are accepted in a handful of contests, such as water carrying, cornshelling (this is, in fact, a family-based competition) and caldo eating. ‘Traditional performance’ competitions tend to have a more balanced gender representation: harp and marimba players are essentially men; women do most of the traditional dress modelling, while dance contests are based on the performances of mixed couples.

These two broad categories overlap to form a third ‘hybrid’ type of competition. Referred to here as ‘cultural tasks’, these activities are not executed daily, but nonetheless involve bodily skilfulness and strength. They are almost exclusively performed during socially and culturally important events and festivities. Among these competitions, which are nearly always enacted by men, are palm knitting, conch shell-blowing and greasy pole climbing. From this brief description, it becomes apparent that all the competitions index a celebration of Maya bodies within a context of discrimination and invisibilisation – something I have discussed elsewhere (Llanes-Ortiz, forthcoming).

Of all the activities upon which competitions are based, the performing arts (that is, music and dance) may be more ‘naturally’ recognised as ‘spectacle’. The same can be said of the traditionally choreographed dances – the Deer, the Cortes and the Monkey. However, from a strictly Maya perspective, they are understood as serving more important religious goals and are seen as forms of communication, devotion and storytelling that engage with supernatural forces and spiritual entities. I observed this spiritual element in 2012, when I witnessed the organisation of the traditional greasy pole competition – *tak'in che'* (money tree) in Mopan Maya. Music and dancing formed an important part of ritual preparations of the pole, yet these performances did not always require an audience. Other rituals involved incense smoking and praying on the spot where the tree selected for the competition was to be felled. Having been cut down and cleaned, the post was transported to the village outskirts. The festival organisers then called on the Deer dancers to form a procession to accompany the pole to the competition venue. Participants engaged in overnight prayers, incense smoking, marimba playing and dancing, and alcohol was consumed in a long succession of stages involving the preparation of materials and the mounting of the prize at the top of the greasy pole. These latter performances were not intended to be watched, but were part of a normative procedure to guarantee the favour of supernatural entities for a smooth-running and successful game. The actual competition, on the other hand, seemed to have a more explicit objective to entertain and thrill festival-goers. However, according to one Mopan Maya villager, in order to climb the greasy pole successfully, competitors needed not only good muscles but also appropriate traditional knowledge, namely to recognise and prepare a particular type of bark that, once dried, would allow them to climb even the most slippery tree trunk in the forest.

An emphasis on the right approach also shaped the ‘everyday tasks’ competitions. The key to success was not only physical strength and endurance, but ultimately the correct cultural knowledge, often explained as ‘tradition’ or the ‘traditional way’. As some scholars have elucidated – notably Ingold and Hallam (2007) – ‘tradition’ is more than just a static recipe to organise social

life; it is a creative and contradictory way of knowing and transforming the social, cultural and natural environment. 'Tradition' carries a set of solutions to problematic situations that are continuously tested and corroborated in the laboratory of everyday life. In many societies, including post-industrial and urban ones, 'tradition' as a form of knowledge is passed from one generation to the next through non-verbal means; that is, by way of demonstration, observation and practice, all of which are involved in performing arts and practices and which encompass the 'performatic' as conceived by Taylor (2003). Within the context of Maya Day, however, everyday-work-cum-embodied-knowledge-cum-'tradition' has experienced another transformation, recast from a mundane performance into spectacle.

### **Everyday work as spectacle**

Regarded as a whole, Maya Day may best be understood as a 'ramified performance type' combining ritual and games in a larger festival structure, a notion first used to characterise the Olympic Games (MacAloon, 1984, pp. 258–9). This mixture of performance genres has helped to transform this global celebration into 'the greatest spectacle on earth'. Interestingly, TK has in fact organised a 'Maya Olympics' event in the past. Like the Olympics, Maya Day integrates ritual, games/play, festival and spectacle genres, interconnected in a single performance system. Its organisers have altered and mixed these genres with the conscious aim of finding new ways to engage Maya villagers and Belizean society in a public conversation about what it means to be Maya in the 21st century. Yet, as with the Olympics, the act of bringing together performance genres that have thus far not been on a stage – let alone shared the same one – inevitably changes their appeal and effectiveness. As a spectacle, Maya Day demonstrates two key components: the presence of spectators seeking to be entertained and the grandiloquent scale and framing of the performances within the event. Some performances and competitions clearly resonate with this conception of spectacle. A closer analysis is needed, however, to unpack the processes whereby daily chores are transformed into spectacle.

When staging 'everyday tasks' competitions, it is the 'witnessing' component that effectively transforms a common practice – perhaps even a pedagogical performance – into something directed towards a detached spectator. The obligation to engage and participate that is inherent to ritual, festival, practical work or play vanishes, replaced by 'the spectacle's satisfaction with entertaining and pleasing the eye' (MacAloon, 1984, p. 264). The discursive packaging, the aggrandising commentary, which runs alongside these competitions as they unfold contributes to the sensation that one is witnessing a performance that is essentially spectacular, worth watching, deserving of handclaps and demanding

cheers. Consequently, something ordinarily constituted as a mundane activity, an almost unconscious daily task, is indexed as a crucial component of identity and culture. The central stage simultaneously separates the festival attendees from, and draws them towards, the participants' bodily actions, which heightens the spectacle effect in a performatic manner. In this sense, the transformation of everyday work into spectacle is clearly intended as a form of entertainment, an aspect that reinforces the qualities of game and festival that this event was originally envisioned to have.

The various performative components of the event come together in a celebratory dynamic focused on Maya bodies as the locus of physical strength and cultural practice, as I observed first-hand in 2012. On a hot and bright Sunday, a multitude of approximately 1,500 people gathered in Blue Creek to celebrate Maya Day. Most came from neighbouring and even quite distant Maya villages. There were also representatives from Maya organisations and NGOs working in southern Belize. Some tourism service providers regularly dropped off a few slightly disoriented tourists who spent a couple of hours roaming around the festival and taking pictures of the different performances and competitions, before visiting other sites of interest, such as nearby caverns and waterfalls. A small crew from Love Television came to do a news report and spent the entire day shooting video and talking to different participants and spectators. The audience, both present and virtual, was numerous and diverse, while the raised stage framed most performances in a deliberately spectacular way. Facing the stage was a covered area where people could stand to watch the performances and competitions. Between these two spaces, a white clearway, used at times as an alternative stage, allowed people to get closer to the action. Exhibition booths and food stalls surrounded the green area at the centre of the TK compound where the greasy pole for the *tak'in che'* competition was being perfumed with incense and prepared for erection. In the booths, representatives of the Maya Leaders Alliance and other Maya activist groups promoted their work among villagers and explained it to foreign visitors. US archaeologists and villagers working at the Aguacate Community Archaeological Project exhibited ceramic pieces and other objects found during excavations of a nearby ancient settlement. The festival started with a religious fire ceremony and an invocation in *Q'eqchi'* (later translated into Mopan and English). Then, the president of the TK advisory board, a man of Kriol descent, formally opened the Maya Day celebrations, highlighting that this was 'a day that lets us know that we [the Maya] were here yesterday, we are here today and we'll be here tomorrow'.

As anticipated, the competitions drew large crowds. Audience members had to be kept out of the way to allow enough space for contestants during most of the 'everyday tasks' performances, especially the corn shelling and corn grinding. Judges made their decisions based on rules that were not necessarily

spelled out in advance. Their rulings seemed to depend on implicit norms of what constituted a proper and 'traditional' procedure. As the competitions unfolded, festival presenters constantly reminded the audience that some of the most laborious tasks were an intrinsic aspect of Maya life and people were expected to take pride in them.

Competitors from four different villages signed up for the firewood-splitting contest. An emcee/judge explained the procedure: obtaining bark ropes to tie and carry the logs, getting them from a nearby location, cutting them into four equal pieces in front of the stage and, finally, transporting them to the 'Maya house' exhibit built for the occasion. During the competition, the emcees praised the strength and practical skills of these 'real Maya men', while also light-heartedly teasing and joking with them (and the audience). At one point they asked the leading competitor for his impressions. When he replied that he felt very proud of himself, the emcees chortled and there was also a hearty laugh from the audience, suggesting no one was taking the event too seriously. 'Tradition' was only invoked when it was ruled that the logs had to be carried 'properly', that is, tied and secured on the competitor's back with bark ropes, as was commonly done before the Maya had other means to transport firewood. A young competitor did not obey this rule and, in spite of his best efforts, ended up dropping all the logs, prompting the audience's laughter.

Another interesting example of this light-hearted style of celebration was the corn-grinding competition, which this time involved women from different villages. The rules for this contest were relatively simple: competitors had to grind the maize grains properly, using the traditional grinding stone and water, into a tortilla dough. It had to have the right consistency – thick but not too dry, soft but not too weak – and competitors were not to allow any grains to fall from the stone in the process. A group of elderly women would make the final ruling about the quality of the dough. The emcee for this event, a man of Kriol descent, again praised the hard, physical work and cultural talent deployed by the competitors, but in a rather amusing style resembling that of a sports commentator. While the emphasis was on tradition and self-reliance, the female presenter of the first prize (a hand-operated steel grinder) relativised the contest's apparent conservatism by declaring that the award acknowledged the winner 'could use the grinding stone'. This comment implied that 'tradition' should not prevent the hard-working Maya women from using 'modern utensils' like the steel grinder.

It follows that an emphasis on tradition does not necessarily translate into excessive earnestness since the competitions – as Aurelio explained to me later – were not only intended as canonical representations of Mayaness but also as an excuse 'to have fun'. Loud, hearty laughs were constantly provoked by mild references to sexual prowess symbolised by energy and forcefulness in the

accomplishment of tasks. In another example, during the conch shell-blowing competition, the emcee commented on a vigorous performance by an elder, stating that 'I see the lungs are well; the cheeks are well. I don't know what else is well!', prompting the public to guffaw. The body celebrated in Maya Day is thus a cultural muscle transformed into a dignified symbol of Mayaness. Yet, in a more light-hearted fashion, it also provides an occasion for laughter, by virtue of a culturally indexed – and unsuspected – sexual potency and desirability.

This ambivalent celebration of the Maya body, exalting and derisory at the same time, distinctly conforms to the 'gay relativity' that Mikhail Bakhtin defines as a key component of 'folk carnival humour'. Bakhtin sees this 'special idiom of signs and symbols' as a boundless source of subaltern and subversive aesthetic expression. 'All the symbols of the carnival idiom', he writes, 'are filled with [a] pathos of change and renewal, with the sense of the gay relativity of prevailing truths and authorities' (1984, p. 11). Festive laughter is not negative, individualist parody for Bakhtin, but positive and universal in scope. In Maya Day, laughter is not only directed at the competitors but reflects back to the laughing Maya villagers, thus forming a sort of utopian festival community. Bakhtin sees one of the defining features of spectacle in the conjunction of 'gay relativity' with the sensual celebration of the body in folk carnivals (p. 7), but perhaps the most interesting correspondence between Maya Day performances and Bakhtinian analysis lies in his 'material bodily principle'. For Bakhtin, images of the body in folk festive humour present it as 'contained not in the biological individual, not in the bourgeois ego, but in the people, a people who are continually growing and renewed. This is why all that is bodily becomes grandiose, exaggerated, immeasurable' (p. 19).

## Conclusions

The most spectacular competitions of the Maya Day festival focus on an embodied culture expressed in the skills and resilience that the Belizean Maya value and cultivate in their everyday life. The display of Maya bodies hard at work stresses their long presence and successful adaptation to the tropical forest's harsh conditions. In this way, Maya Day competitions performatively enact – by virtue of their recasting of Maya dynamic identities as culturally spectacular and socially relevant – an open challenge to the Belizean establishment's denial of Maya nativeness. Furthermore, by showing that Maya 'tradition' is about proper knowledge and use of the body in relation to the environment, Maya Day competitions redefine the notion of 'Maya identity' to focus on practice rather than essence. Whereas competitors are praised and dignified for their performance of physically demanding tasks, Maya Day competitions appear to be increasingly intended and framed as spectacle and entertainment. This apparent contradiction, however, turns out to be perhaps the festival's most surprising strength.

MacAloon notes that '[s]pectacle has destructive effects on genres like festival, ritual and game, genres that reduce in their various ways the distance between actors and audiences, that demand that all take active roles in the performance, and that all agree at some level on the typification and transcendental ground of their actions' (1984, p. 268). However, insofar as it belongs within a 'ramified performance type', spectacle can also become 'a recruiting device', 'a sort of servomechanism for the liminal genres nested within it' (pp. 268–9). This operation seems to be at play in the organising and staging of Maya Day competitions. For although the spectacle of everyday work may be seen as appealing to the expectations of visitors coming to the region for cultural solidarity and/or ecological tourism, it fundamentally responds to the needs and aspirations of Maya villagers and their organisations. This is reflected in the reactions that competitions provoke among festival attenders. It appears that tourists find the competitions amusing and entertaining but do not qualify them as 'spectacular'. During my research I did not get much opportunity to talk to foreign visitors about Maya Day, but from a handful of valuable blogs, online commentaries and photo albums registering the responses of US expatriates and other non-Belizeans, I get the sense that foreigners are more attracted to the most colourful and apparently 'traditional' performances, like the spiritual ceremonies, the choreographed dances, the chaj chaay and fireball games and the demonstrations showcasing the dresses and music of Maya women.

Maya villagers and local visitors also made abundant use of their mobile phone cameras during the festival, but I was unable to gauge how prominently competitions featured in them compared with 'traditional' performances. I did, however, witness the high level of participation in radio programmes and discussions about what competitions should be included and which ones appealed to Maya villagers. During a casual conversation, two representatives of Maya organisations in Blue Creek told me that the competitions were a true reflection of Maya identity, whereas other performances – especially the fireball game – were not. Judging by the amount of attention and participation the competitions attract, it would seem that the spectacle surrounding them has indeed functioned as a 'recruiting device' encouraging conversations about Mayaness and 'tradition' at grassroots level. As James Clifford observes: 'Tradition is less about preservation than about transformative practice and the selective symbolization of continuity' (2000, p. 100). This is certainly a strategy in which Maya organisations and activists have been invested for a long time (Wilk, 1987).

It would appear that Maya Day not only combines various performance genres but also diverse aesthetic sensibilities that allow it to engage with different audiences. The importance of spectacle may reside in its appeal to

tourists and potential allies, as well as to Maya villagers. Yet, as observed earlier, competitions are also staged and wrapped in a language of innuendo, mockery and competitiveness that might in fact be considered as corresponding to a more 'traditional', folk entertainment genre. By encouraging a sense of pride that celebrates hard work, resourcefulness, ingenuity and social practice as important elements of what it means to be Maya in Belize – while at the same time being able to humour and entertain others and themselves – TK and other Maya activists are reinforcing aspects of an open, yet selective, 'tradition', one that could potentially be crucial for the construction of new intercultural performance strategies to advance their demands for greater social justice and recognition.

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## 9. Spectacle and discourse of decommodification in the construction of subaltern public spheres: the P'urhépecha New Year and P'urhécherio<sup>1</sup>

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*There is nothing intrinsic to the Habermasian model that would prevent it from linking questions about publicity and language with questions about gender, class and ethnicity and about the power of markets and institutions to shape identities. The articulation of private interest in public was, after all, part of the historical development of the public sphere, as was the circulation of cultural products.*

(Piccato, 2010, p. 177)

The annual cultural celebration of P'urhépecha revitalisation, symbolised by the lighting of a new fire, began in 1983 when leaders and promoters of P'urhépecha culture met at the ruins of a pre-Hispanic site in the town of Ihuatzio and marched to the *yacatas* (pyramids) above Tzintzuntzan, the ancient centre of the Tarascan Empire.<sup>2</sup> Over the past 30 years, the preparation and staging of the P'urhépecha New Year has evolved through the appropriation of traditional spheres of ritual exchange associated with town ceremonies honouring patron saints. A selective tradition has evolved: the eve of 2 February (Candlemas) marks the start of each New Year with a celebration that consecrates the symbols of P'urhépecha ethnicity and which, more importantly, employs a postcolonial civil-religious system to organise the rotation of each year's host site, by which an ethnic space called P'urhécherio (the P'urhépecha homeland) is defined. The celebration has become a forum in which P'urhépecha cosmology and Mesoamerican traditions legitimate a system of reciprocity that recasts the commercial (specifically touristic) commodification of traditions and customs in the State of Michoacán's P'urhépecha heartland situated in the central west of Mexico.

1 This chapter has benefited greatly from the insightful and critical observations of Helen Gilbert and Charlotte Gleghorn.

2 Tarascan refers to the indigenous population in colonial times, while P'urhépecha is the contemporarily accepted term.

The New Year's structure and protocol permit the representation and possible construction of what Charles Taylor (2004) describes as a public sphere derived from a modern but complexly postcolonial social imaginary. This incipient subaltern public sphere is situated in a common space, which – in its ceremonial evocation as part of the Ireta P'urhépecha (P'urhépecha Nation) – serves to resignify a repertoire of the Nation's performance, music and dance commercialised during the 20th century (Helliier-Tinoco, 2011). This chapter examines how complex interactions between the state and the ethnic mobilisation of the P'urhépecha gave rise to the present-day New Year festivity, demonstrating how the organisers have adapted a religious system of reciprocity established in the colonial era to the Nation's cosmological symbolism.

This adaptation points to the need for scholars, as Pablo Piccato suggests, 'to revalue the connections between meaning and social structure', especially in terms of ethnic identification as a process intimately related to modern state formation (2010, p. 166). This recommendation is particularly pertinent when conceiving ethnicity as a mode of subalternity in Mexico, where there is a long tradition of scholarly debate over whether the indigenous population can be characterised by forms of identification somehow resistant to class-based social structures in society. Indeed, this connection between meaning and social structure challenges what Fredrik Barth described as the 'self-fulfilling character' of ethnicity as a 'constellation of categorization and value orientation' (1969, p. 30). Barth's view of ethnicity as a 'superordinant status', similar to gender and rank but with no fixed cultural content, was an important advance for the study of ethnicity at the time (*ibid.*, p. 17). Nevertheless, by situating categories of self-ascription and affiliation somehow outside of processes of social structuring and symbolic violence, Barth's stated constructivist position retains a troubling essentialist aspect, ignoring the transformative power of state formation (Roth-Seneff, 2008, pp. 55–8).

P'urhépecha ethnicity has developed over the past three decades and as such is inseparable from the state reforms associated with Mexico's insertion into a global economy. These reforms entailed a process of deregulating the project of national consolidation. As Gavin Smith argues, a shift away from a model of state formation described as a Keynesian National Welfare State to a neoliberal model powered by finance capital has occurred (2011, p. 4). Curiously, in Mexico this shift involved legislating stronger guarantees for human rights while at the same time removing many of the national regulations of the economy as well as the guarantees for indigenous and agrarian communities. A series of constitutional reforms, beginning in 1983 and continuing until 2011, has significantly changed the ethnic landscape in Mexico. As I will argue here, the P'urhépecha New Year celebration, which I associate with an evolving

ethnic subalternity, is an exemplary case, demonstrating the strong connections of neoliberal state formation to an emerging ethnic identity.

### **Towards an ethnic subalternity**

Between 1970 and 1982 the presidential administrations of Luis Echeverría (1970–6) and José López Portillo (1976–82) struggled to sustain the form of corporate political control that had characterised the Partido Revolucionario Institucional (Institutional Revolutionary Party – PRI) after it took control of Mexico's government in 1929. Politically, the PRI organised different sectors of the society into powerful voting blocks among which peasants or rural labourers and the indigenous population were included as an organised sector. During the 1960s and 1970s, this sector of the PRI was challenged by a growing, often revolutionary, opposition on the left.

Financed by international loans supposedly guaranteed by Mexico's petroleum reserves, both Echeverría and López Portillo introduced a series of initiatives to reorganise the rural indigenous sector. Echeverría created *Consejos Supremos Indígenas* (Indigenous Supreme Councils) for 56 indigenous groups and tried to integrate them within the PRI's major rural labourer organisations. At the same time, the Ministry of Public Education was restructured in the area of indigenous education and came to have the largest teachers' union in the world. The creation of a new office for indigenous education was part of an initiative to change the ideology from assimilation (dominant since the 1930s) to an approach that promoted bilingualism and biculturalism by training and employing indigenous teachers. These changes at the state level were accompanied by important efforts led by indigenous teachers to organise and promote bilingual education: an indigenous Congress was held in Chiapas in 1974 and a National Congress of Indigenous Peoples in 1975; the National Alliance of Bilingual Indigenous Professionals was formed in 1977; and the First National Seminar on Bilingual Bicultural Education was held in 1979.

Parallel to this national shift in educational policy, a *Consejo Supremo P'urhépecha* (Supreme P'urhépecha Council) was created in the state of Michoacán which began to engage in the region's factional politics. A Centre for the Study of P'urhépecha Culture was also established at the state's university and staffed with P'urhépecha teachers and intellectuals. At the same time, an inter-institutional initiative under the leadership of dependency theory anthropologists, Guillermo Bonfil and Salomón Nahmad, and the Náhuatl ethnolinguist, Luis Reyes, convened a short-lived Programme for the Professional Training of Ethnolinguists (1979–82). The programme was first established in the city of Pátzcuaro, Michoacán when 53 indigenous students were admitted to study a university degree, 12 of whom were P'urhépecha speakers.

While this programme in Pátzcuaro was, as one of the linguistics professors notes, 'producing agents of linguistic revalorization' (Rojas, 2005), other important events were mobilising members of P'urhépecha towns and villages around Lake Pátzcuaro. In one town, Santa Fe de la Laguna, a bilingual teacher, Elpidio Domínquez, had returned to his hometown to become a commoner and put into practice a revolutionary socialism aimed at transforming peasants into organised workers. Shortly after his return, he was elected leader of the village commons and commoners. From this position, he introduced and controlled a process of group decision-making through assemblies, and established alliances with regional and national organisations for agrarian commoners and workers. He also began to fight with the ranchers in the municipal seat in Quiroga to regain land they had occupied. In the struggle between the P'urhépecha commoners of Santa Fe and the mestizo ranchers of Quiroga, the key symbols of what would come to be P'urhépecha ethnicity were created and developed in the aesthetics of revolutionary socialism. The most important symbol to emerge was a P'urhépecha flag in the centre of which was a raised fist signifying the main slogan of the struggle, *Juchari Uiniapikua* (Our strength). Police intervened in the conflict in 1979, and the leader Domínquez and his closest supporters were imprisoned. The ethnolinguistic programme students in Pátzcuaro actively supported Santa Fe in their fight to free their leaders and recover their lands, as did the Unión Campesino Emiliano Zapata (UCEZ), a regional commoner movement organised as a union.

Santa Fe's heroic defence of its territory is now legendary and viewed by many as part of a continuing ethnic struggle for P'urhépecha autonomy. Nevertheless, between 1979 and 1981, both during and following the tensions that erupted between Santa Fe and Quiroga, the key P'urhépecha actors were clearly divided along lines of social class. Indeed, once freed and celebrating the successful defence of Santa Fe's territory, Elpidio Domínquez proceeded to support an initiative to construct a nuclear power plant on the community's lakeside lands. His support was congruent with his revolutionary socialism, his ties to the Nuclear Workers Union (NWU), and his desire to create a 'worker-peasant block' in Santa Fe (Alvar, 1985, p. 115, cited in Dietz, 1999, p. 252). However, a younger generation of villagers organised *against* the nuclear plant and openly opposed Domínquez. This group, the Student Cultural Committee of Santa Fe,<sup>3</sup> received the support of P'urhépecha intellectuals working in the State University and bureaucracy in Morelia, as well as that of some participants in the Ethnolinguists programme from Pátzcuaro. The nuclear plant was rejected by the Santa Fe assembly of commoners and the federal government withdrew the project when the newly elected governor of the state, Cuahatemoc Cárdenas, joined project opposition in solidarity, not only with P'urhépecha

3 El Comité Cultural Estudiantil de Santa Fe.

intellectuals and the Santa Fe students but also with hotel owners, foreign residents and several regional groups concerned with environmental issues in the Pátzcuaro basin (Dietz, 1999; Zárate Hernández, 2001). Both the Santa Fe assembly leader and the NWU accused this successful but socially diverse opposition of 'imperialist conspiracy' (Dietz, 1999, p. 254).

While the language of revolutionary socialism had articulated political solidarity between peasant communities and peasant and workers' unions for decades, in 1981 it failed to create a politically effective allegiance between Santa Fe's commoners and the NWU. Between 1979 and 1981 the terms of revolutionary socialism as applied to the struggles in Santa Fe began to be appropriated by P'urhépecha intellectuals and resignified and rearticulated into a trans-class idiom which would come to form the basis for the celebration of the New Year and the rising profile of P'urhépecha ethnicity.

### **Kurhikaueri K'uinchekua: the P'urhépecha New Year celebration**

P'urhépecha intellectuals who had actively participated in the events of 1979–81 in the Pátzcuaro basin, especially in the struggles in Santa Fe, came up with the idea of an annual celebration of P'urhépecha revitalisation. In addition, the Catholic priest and anthropologist, Agustín García Alcaraz (1941–2003), a professor in Pátzcuaro's ethnolinguists programme and scholar of P'urhépecha history and culture (who most probably researched the date of the New Year), was an important intellectual force behind the festivities. The founding organising committee was somewhat diverse but many participants were teachers in the bilingual, bicultural educational programme. Others were ethnolinguists or professors from the Centre for the Study of P'urhépecha Culture at the state university. Some were leaders in the Consejo Supremo or reporters for the P'urhépecha page of the regional newspaper, *Voz de Michoacán*, or workers at the radio station, Radio-Purhé. The founding group also included some mestizo advocates of P'urhépecha culture.

During most of the New Year celebrations' first decade of existence (1983–92), preparations depended on the individual ability of the founding intellectuals to organise its hosting in consultation with fellow members of their home communities. During these years a basic protocol for the preparation and structure of the event began to evolve. It is built on a complex series of associations between cosmologies, customs, the Mesoamerican calendar and the constellation Orion, creating the selective tradition that determined the date of the P'urhépecha New Year. The most significant of these associations is between Kurhikaueri, the P'urhépecha sun god, and the Mesoamerican calendar.

The calendar, called *huriyatamiyucua* in P'urhépecha, is literally a 'sun count': the word stems from *huiryata* (suns) and *miyucua* (count), thus symbolising the solar cycle and also referencing the sun as an object of veneration. The 'sun count', is a variant of the Mesoamerican calendar and comprises 18 months, each of 20 days, with five days left over annually ( $18 \times 20 = 360 + 5 = 365$ ). Each month is named after its ritual feast day. Numerous connections can be made between the Mesoamerican calendar and sun worship, as well as between Christian celebrations and the annual solar cycle: for instance, the winter equinox approximates the celebration of the Nativity, while 2 February marks two Mesoamerican months or 40 days (the Judeo-Christian's traditional 'quarantine' period after childbirth, followed by a purification rite for mother and child). In Mexico, that date is also the Catholic celebration of Our Lady of the Candles (Candlemas Virgin), when candlelight and fire are associated with purity. Through this association, the P'urhépecha new fire celebrates a cycle of rebirth and resurrection that culminates on 2 February.

The new fire is, then, the central emblem of the P'urhépecha New Year, and dominates the symbolism of the event, along with the calendar stone and P'urhépecha flag created during the Sante Fe struggle, although several other icons or images have also been incorporated into the celebration over the past almost-30 years. The other key P'urhépecha symbols reiterate and narrate the relationship between fire, sun and the god Kurhikaueri ('he that emerges making fire'), who is the principal god of the Uakusecha (eagle clan) and also the god of war associated with the sun.<sup>4</sup> Indeed, at least since the celebration of new fire took place in the island community of Xaracuaro (2011), the event has been referred to as Kurhikaueri K'uinchekua or Kurhikaueri's Festival. A large fire surrounding a white obsidian arrowhead (*ts'ina pu urápiti*), depicted on the P'urhépecha flag, represents the war god Kurhikaueri, thus connecting images of war with the dominant solar symbolism. The clenched fist at the flag's centre, representing Juchari Uinapikua, is framed like a coat of arms with four arrows that point cardinally to each side of the flag. The different colours of each quarter of the flag represent the four regions of the P'urhépecha homeland: blue for the Pátzcuaro Basin, green for the P'urhépecha Highlands, yellow for the narrow Duero River Valley called the Canyon of the Eleven Towns (La Cañada de los Once Pueblos, or Eráxami in Purhépecha), and red (or purple) for the Zacapu Basin.

Although each celebration of the P'urhépecha New Year reflects the ideas and creativity of the host town, the founders and former hosts of the event, who are now referred to in P'urhépecha as Tamapu T'erunchitiecha (the elder

4 The Uakusecha established the Tarascan state with its capital at Tzintzuntzan, under the leadership of Kurhikaueri's representative on earth, the Caltzontzin.



Figure 9.1. Kurhikaueri K'uinchekua – parade on the island of Xaracuaro, 2011. Photo: Aída Castelleja.



Figure 9.2. P'urhépecha flag on pilgrimage from Xaracuaro to Konguripu 2012. Photo: Aída Castelleja.

hosts), have formally recognised the form of reciprocity that evolved during its second decade. This organised cooperation now defines and sustains the event's protocol and the calendar stone engravings register this association. The calendar stone has an eight-inch-square base and a four-inch-square top with four vertical faces on which the symbols emblematic of each host town are inscribed, along with the year when the celebration was held in Mesoamerican numeration. Three faces of the stone are filled with the names of ten host towns, bringing the history of the event up to 2012. Thus, from the bottom to the top and moving clockwise, the calendar stone will eventually register 40 years of celebrations and reciprocity among host towns, and if the bottom and top faces of the stone are also used, the count could equate with the 52-year cycle in which the ritual day and sun cycles in the Mesoamerican calendar coincide.

The protocol revolves around the insertion of these new symbols (flag, calendar stone and the new fire emblem) of P'urhépecha ethnicity into the traditional ceremonial context of patron saint celebrations. At the same time, it reflects a certain tension between, on the one hand, the cultural celebration of P'urhépecha dance, dress, food, song, music and games and, on the other, a solemn ceremony of ritual respect for an ethnicity tied to Kurhikaueri and the annual rite of lighting a new fire. This respectful ceremony revolves around the dominant symbols of the new fire, the P'urhépecha flag, and the calendar stone; and the secondary symbols with their more local references to specific P'urhépecha communities or prominent personalities. As with the images kept in the homes of people responsible for a particular year's cycle of celebrations for a specific saint or church or hospital manifestation of the Virgin, in the year leading up to the event the dominant symbols are held in the homes and church of the host town's authorities. On the day itself – 1 February – they are placed on an altar decorated and filled with offerings of bread in the form of animals and fruit, and a local sugarcane alcohol called *charanda*. Since 1995 when the P'urhépecha New Year was celebrated in the town of Tarecuato, it has also become common to hold a midday Mass alongside the symbols. Afterwards, they are paraded through the town on the same route used for religious images during patron saint processions and accompanied by the authorities responsible for the event as well as by *wananchecha* (young maidens who decorate, dance with, and care for the symbols just as they do for patron saints and Virgins). Each person dresses in their town's traditional style and is adorned with ribbons, the colours of which represent the regions of P'urhépecherio, or the P'urhépecha homeland, as mentioned previously. It is common for the symbols procession to end with each participant solemnly

saluting the P'urhépecha flag by raising a clenched left fist to symbolise Juchari Uinapikua).<sup>5</sup>

The protocol also involves petitions from the authorities of towns aspiring to host the celebration the following year. A formal request must be made to all the former hosts at the beginning of their special assembly. It is also appreciated if a town's representatives offer a public greeting to the town hosting the event. They must demonstrate that they have the support of the local elected officials, and it is also considered correct for a town to make the request at least twice before being granted the honour. In addition, the town must have a history of participation in past festivities, which involves preparing and bringing traditional dance groups or musicians, a team to compete in the traditional game of *wárhukua*, individual players for a board game called *Kuiliche*,<sup>6</sup> or other cultural acts such as poetry and theatrical skits. These performances are recognised as a fundamental part of inalienable P'urhépecha cultural heritage but also constitute an important part of the performance repertoire in a growing regional tourist industry.

The selection process for each year's host has evolved over the years and has been a source of contention regarding the legitimacy and orientation of the celebration. In the early years, individual hosts were selected from among the festival founders owing to their local prestige and ability to gather support in their communities of origin. This was followed by a period when the promoters of the event, in particular several Catholic priests working in P'urhépecha communities, used their influence on respected members of their parishes. An example of this process is captured in the host's speech at the town of Cocucho in the P'urhépecha highlands:

Over there in Ichupio when we went there [refers to the Cocucho Choir participating in the celebration in 1992], the important people had a meeting and then they called us and said, 'Mister Luis, it's your turn, it's your turn to take the calendar stone' [host the celebration]. But I said, 'Father, you say that (I said this to Father Agustín), you say that the "elders" are who can take the stone, I'm nobody in my town, I'm just a commoner. But let me ask the girls in the choir.' And they told me, 'Mister Luis, well, they are offering us this and we will help, we will help you do the celebration.'

- 5 In Mexico, the national flag is saluted with the right-hand palm down crossing the chest.
- 6 *Wárhukua*, played with carved sticks and a ball made of natural rubber, is fairly similar to hockey. At the New Year celebration it is common to set the ball on fire. *Kuiliche* involves moving pieces over 52 spaces based on the throwing of slotted sticks that determine the number of movements according to the vigesimal system based on units of five. This gives the game its name in P'urhépecha; *kuiliche* refers to a configuration of five.

And God will repay you if suddenly I forget and can't speak. God will repay you, if suddenly I can't speak. But I'm trying to explain how the celebration came to our town. [applause]

[crying] I cry because I thought that our town wouldn't understand this celebration and that the people would say: 'Look at that, this "important person! He's a fool!"' And now I cry for joy because our people are so good.

(Luis Pasaye, host Cocucho 1993, speech in P'urhépecha, translated by Manuel Sosa Lázaro and the author)

The speech demonstrates both how the festival founders used their influence to recruit annual hosts, and how popular support for the event was growing. By mounting the festival in their respective towns, the hosts of the P'urhépecha New Year are entitled to participate in the assembly, which is an integral part of the programme, and to receive petitions from towns that aspire to host the event. The deliberations over who will be the next host, held during the evening, generally last two to three hours to the accompaniment of traditional dances, music, songs, oratory and, on some occasions, short theatre pieces performed by different P'urhépecha towns, villages, hamlets and urban *barrios* (districts). This festival also generates a space for speeches about cultural revitalisation and proclamations of inalienable P'urhépecha collective rights but, most importantly, it constitutes a cultural exchange between the host village and all P'urhépecha settlements through which they share formally their performance traditions, crafts and opinions. Close to noontime on 1 February, recent celebrations have included a bartering market called *Kejpaku Ka Mojtajperakua* for the exchange of the different artisanal crafts associated with specific towns. This is consonant with the formal requirement, imposed since the first festival in 1983, that the host town reduce its commerce to a minimum during the times when the hosts are providing midday and evening meals. The consumption of alcohol is also prohibited (as far as is possible).

The celebration culminates in the lighting of a new fire. As it begins to blaze, the hosts for the following year are publicly announced and the P'urhépecha symbols are formally exchanged along with gifts of bread, fruit and sometimes small pieces of pottery tied to ribbons and hung around the necks of the new hosts. They and all the former hosts must then dance with these symbols. Several speeches are delivered, including the new hosts' public expressions of gratitude for the recognition received, pledges of support for the upcoming celebration by the Tamapu T'erunchitiecha, or former hosts, and acknowledgement of the help received during the current celebration.

## An evolving subaltern public sphere

By the start of the 21st century, the celebration had evolved into a collective event in which the principle of organised reciprocity that had traditionally sustained the ceremonial cycle of every P'urhépecha village or town over almost five hundred years was recognised as applying to the four regions of the P'urhépecha homeland. Just as the barrios and moieties in each village organise the celebration of patron saints and virgins, the communities of the four regions would rotate the responsibilities of hosting the New Year and all would reciprocate by bringing music, dance, theatre, poetry, sport and speeches to share with their fellow P'urhépecha from the different localities situated within the homeland.

Indeed, the celebrations for patron saints and virgins in P'urhépecha villages and towns during the colonial period in Michoacán revolved around ritual orders formed by brotherhoods and organised by kindred groups residing in barrios and moieties. These brotherhoods, led by named officials, administered the properties of the saints and virgins, using the income to organise the annual ceremonial cycle of devotion and celebration of the images housed in the village and town churches and Marian hospitals. The Bourbon reforms of the second half of the 18th century,<sup>7</sup> followed by Mexico's independence (1810) and a period of liberal reforms, led to the properties of patron saints and virgins being officially confiscated and redistributed, and promoted local strategies to retain and sustain each ceremonial cycle. The system of ritual orders described above was translated into one of *cargos*<sup>8</sup> associated with the hierarchy of officials in the colonial brotherhoods, transforming them into local spheres of exchange still sustained by the kindred groups described above (Chance and Taylor, 1985; Chance, 1990). Through the New Year celebrations, or Kurhikaueri K'uinchekua, in the period between 1993 and 2000, the organisation of reciprocity at village or town level in the cargo system was extended to establish a new sphere of ritual exchange between the four regions constituting P'urhécherio. In so doing, the festival came to represent a P'urhépecha public sphere. For example, when the 2002 celebration was held in the town of Carapan, two leaders of the commoners from the island community of Janitzio in Lake Pátzcuaro travelled there directly upon being

7 Various kings of the House of Bourbon introduced these legislative reforms (*Reformas Borbónicas*) in both Spain and Spanish America. In the latter they were designed to make the administration more efficient and promote economic, commercial and fiscal development in the hope of boosting Spain's economy. The reforms were also intended to limit the power of Creoles and reestablish Spain's primacy over its colonies.

8 The cargo system (also known as the civil-religious hierarchy, fiesta or *mayordomía* system) is a collection of secular and religious positions held by men or households in rural indigenous communities throughout central and southern Mexico and Central America.

released from imprisonment after serving 19 months for violating the state's ban on fishing in the lake. The commoners had been granted a presidential pardon and were received as heroes by the council of former hosts. It greeted them publicly in the name of the 21 communities from the four P'urhépecha regions who had hosted the New Year and celebrated their release from prison, yet it still protested about the presidential pardon proclaiming that:

From here, la Cañada de los Once Pueblos, we, the members of the Council of the *Petámütis*, from the Four Regions, from the Four Winds of Michoacán, see that the traditions, customs, and practices of the indigenous peoples of Mexico continue to be abducted. The house of our ancestors, the lands, forests, rivers and the spirits of justice, health and education, just like many other brothers of humanity and nature, are still imprisoned (*Cambio de Michoacán*, 2002, p. 7; author's translation).

In short, a presidential pardon only proved that respect for the P'urhépechas' inalienable right to their costumes and practices in their homeland was not yet recognised. However, through this process, recognition of a new subaltern public sphere, where the inalienable rights and possessions of the P'urhépecha Nation could be proclaimed, reaffirmed and revitalised, appears to have begun among former host community members from its four regions. Acceptance from regional and national media and many of the neighbouring mestizo towns and cities followed later.

It was no coincidence that the presidential pardon was issued on 2 February, nor that the newly freed local leaders of the island community of Janitzio came to proclaim their inalienable rights at the P'urhépecha New Year Celebration. Not only had it become an important media event, both regionally and nationally, but Janitzio was already a nationally recognised locus of indigeneity. Indeed, as Hellier-Tinoco (2011) documents, it was in Janitzio that a major and prolonged process commodifying the P'urhépecha All Saints celebration ('The Night of the Dead') and also dances like the 'Dance of the Old Men' had begun. This commodifying agenda was initiated in the 1920s as part of a national programme for assimilating indigenous culture into a national project through which indigenosity was to be celebrated as a foundational source for Mexican nationalism, and could also be performed, represented and consumed. At the same time, the folklorists, musicologists and government officials who came to Janitzio to observe, register and reproduce local performances in new nationalist and often commercial contexts communicated a deep recognition of the village's authenticity as well as the villagers' cautious reception of efforts to folklorise their ritual practices and creative performances (Hellier-Tinoco, 2011, p. 78). Hence, in 2002, leaders of Janitzio came to celebrate their freedom and proclaim their inalienable rights at a new P'urhépecha celebration

where these commodified practices of song and dance were now recast as authentic acts of reciprocity between members of the Nation. The New Year or Kurhikaueri K'uinchekua had become an authentic collective P'urhépecha event in which previously commodified performances could be resignified in a celebration of ethnic revitalisation.

Likewise, at the 2012 celebration staged in the community of Conguripo, the Council of Petámutis, now formally recognised as the Council of Tamapu Terunchitiecha (elder hosts), publicly recognised the city of Cherán's achievements by inviting its leaders to narrate their heroic resistance and acts of self-determination in the previous year and bestowing a staff upon them, a common symbol of leadership in the hierarchical system of religious cargos in the P'urhépecha village ceremonial cycle. In April 2011, residents in several of the original village barrios had heroically defended the city from a criminal group that was illegally logging Cherán's communal forests.<sup>9</sup> Since the problems with this criminal group were tied to factionalism between different political parties, representatives of Cherán's four main barrios petitioned to be allowed – on the basis of their customs as an indigenous community and in accordance with reforms of the Mexican Constitution – to create a municipal government based on P'urhépecha traditions of governance without the representation of political parties. The courts upheld their petition and in January 2012 a government based on custom was created.

### **Purhécherio, celebration and decommo-ditisation**

The orientation of the celebration, as symbolised by the lighting of the new fire, has revitalisation at its core, but at the same time several contending forms of participation and reception (Roth-Seneff, 2010). Fundamentally, the new fire symbolises P'urhépecha revitalisation and the festival honours the pre-Hispanic sun god Kurhikaueri but, again, the growth in spontaneous popular participation in the celebration evolved from the expansion of village or township spheres of ritual exchange to one represented by the host-sites and their relationship to the four regions of P'urhécherrio. The symbols of the Kurhikaueri K'uinchekua are treated as patron saints in annual village celebrations: they are placed in altars, a mass is given for them, and they are taken on processions accompanied by wananchecha. New Age movements have also become actively engaged, bringing their own interpretations to the lighting of a new fire by the P'urhépechas, who are celebrated as a millenary cultural group speaking a language with no known living related languages. But

9 Communal in the sense that the forests, while generally belonging to individual commoners, are treated as patrimony of the indigenous community.



Figure 9.3. Taking the old fire (*Ch'upiri Tamapu*) to Nahuatzen, 2013. Photo: Aída Castelleja.

there is also a popular secular emphasis on ethnic revitalisation and a subaltern critique of the dominant capitalist Western and mestizo Mexican societies.

Within this subaltern critique, the festival is proclaimed to be an example of the cultural display of P'urhépecha creativity, not as commodity but as an offering of one village or town, city or barrio to the P'urhépecha Nation. The New Year, or Kurhikaueri K'uinchekua, has evolved by expanding the logic of this village reciprocity to a new sphere of public discourse and spectacle. Within this, performances of fragments of the traditional dances that accompany the rituals and ceremonies in towns and villages have become part of the Kurhikaueri K'uinchekua celebration. Many of these fragments were extracted from their original ceremonial context to be performed for international visitors in the region's hotels, restaurants, tourist venues or colonial cities, designated 'Magical Cities' by the state and federal tourist boards. Similarly, P'urhépecha bands and trios who have performed all over the region, in migrant communities in the United States, and in several national and international films, participate in the Kurhikaueri K'uinchekua as representatives of their home communities and as members of the P'urhépecha Nation. Many of these have a catalogue of

recordings and are widely followed by both P'urhépecha speakers and fans of world music. The festival decommodifies these performances, now presented as culturally inalienable, and is a spectacle that legitimises the performers as authentic ethnic members of their hometown communities in P'urhécherio and, therefore, part of the Nation.

Since the 2005 celebration in Caltzontzin, the 'old' fire (*Ch'upiri Tamapu*) about to be renewed has been carried in embers and in procession from the town of the last year's celebration to the community that will light the new fire (*Ch'upiri Jimbani*). The idea is to walk the P'urhépecha Nation's old roads and trails. Recent years have also seen migrant communities in cities in California, Washington or Illinois celebrating Kurhikaueri K'uinchekua at New Year, following an abbreviated version of the protocol established by the council of former hosts or Tamapu Terunchitiecha. These developments underscore the significance of the ceremony to the P'urhépecha people and illustrate how it allows them to identify with and participate in the New Year rituals.

## Conclusion

As Charles Taylor notes, 'the public sphere was a mutation of the social imaginary, one crucial to the development of modern society' (2004, p. 85). Most importantly, however, the public sphere is a peculiarly secular metatopical common space. Taylor argues that topical common spaces are the focused, purposeful gatherings of 'deliberative assembly: a ritual, a celebration, or the enjoyment of a football match or opera' or, in general, a '[c]ommon space arising from assembly in some locale' (ibid., p. 86). In contrast, a metatopical common space could be termed a node of 'non-assembly' constructed out of all these topical spaces. As Taylor recognises, this metatopicality is not new. Max Weber offered important descriptions of the church and state as common metatopical spaces that emerge from social relations in some way guaranteed through constitutive political or hierocratic actions (1964, pp. 5–45). What is new, however, is that the public sphere is secular and not constituted by 'something' that transcends 'common contemporary action' (Taylor, 2004, p. 93). The public sphere does not emerge by divine consignment nor by political constitution but through common action in the construction and operation of symbols as mediums of communication and through access to the world by reasoned communicative exchange (Habermas, 1991).

In the villages, towns and barrios of municipalities in the state of Michoacán, populated by P'urhépecha speakers, the civil-religious ceremonial cycle comprises a series of common topical spaces for ritual and ceremonially focused gatherings, organised around a complex system of reciprocity within and between kindred groups. In these celebrations, the traditional cultural

performances are carried out in their original devotional context and speak to the common metatopical spaces of church and state. However, as argued in this chapter, a new, more secular form of celebration has emerged in the region in the last three decades: instead of civil religious cargos that rotate between the barrios of one community, it is the villages and towns of the four regions of P'urhécherio that reciprocate in hosting and mounting Kurhikaueri K'uinchekua. In this festival, fragments of the ceremonial performances devoted to patron saints and virgins (the same ones that constitute the touristic repertoire of dance, music, song and craft) are decommodified, with the New Year serving as synecdoche for authentic P'urhépecha culture.

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## 10. Performing and disputing indigeneity in the Fiesta del Coraza in Otavalo, Ecuador<sup>1</sup>

*Sergio Miguel Huarcaya*

The Fiesta del Coraza is a Kichwa festivity specific to the canton of Otavalo in the province of Imbabura in the Ecuadorian northern Andes.<sup>2</sup> The festive character, the *coraza*, is acted by the *prioste*, the celebration sponsor. In a spectacular costume, he represents majestic and beneficent authority:

[He wears] shiny white pants and a shirt decorated with sequins, appliqués, buttons, gilt trim, fake pearl necklaces, and a plumed cocked hat hung with costume jewellery chains, beads, and pendants that hide the Coraza's face and head. He rides a horse, wears shoes, and carries an umbrella, all status symbols associated with whites in an earlier era. (Meisch, 2002, p. 260)

*Indígenas*<sup>3</sup> (indigenous people) of the rural civil parish of San Rafael de la Laguna, who to this day form the majority of its population, have celebrated the Fiesta del Coraza since the late 17th or early 18th century (Ares Queija, 1988, p. 128). In the early 1980s they temporarily abandoned the event and, in 1986, non-*indígenas* of the town of San Rafael, the parish's administrative centre, took up the Fiesta, claiming they were saving it from dying out. Since then, they have celebrated Coraza wearing indigenous attire and dancing as *indígenas*. Meanwhile, *indígenas* elsewhere in the broader canton of Otavalo began reviving the Fiesta del Coraza and other festivities in the mid-1990s, in parallel with their newly political mobilisation. In June 1990, Ecuadorian *indígenas* broke into the national political arena by staging a major uprising

- 1 This research has been funded by the European Research Council as part of the interdisciplinary project, *Indigeneity in the Contemporary World: Performance, Politics, Belonging*, led by Professor Helen Gilbert at Royal Holloway University of London.
- 2 The state of Ecuador is administratively divided, from higher to lower tiers, into provinces, cantons and rural and urban civil parishes.
- 3 Considering that processes of social categorisation are contextual and relational, I refrain from translating the labels *indio* (Indian), *indígena* and *blanco* (white) into English. Individuals may self-identify as members of a category but have had another foisted upon them. Thus, a *blanco* in Otavalo may not be identified as a white person in English-speaking countries. I use the analytical term '*non-indígena*' to refer to those who self-identify as *blanco* or *mestizo*, unless the analysis warrants the use of these labels.



Figure 10.1. The coraza at the inauguration of Ariruma Kowii as the Undersecretary of Education of Indigenous Peoples, 22 August 2006. Photo: Sergio Miguel Huarcaya.

that paralysed the country for 12 days. During the 1990s and early 2000s, they constituted one of the strongest indigenous movements in Latin America. As part of this political and cultural revival, the Federation of Indigenous Peoples and Peasants of Imbabura (Federación de Indígenas y Campesinos de Imbabura: FICI) has staged a *Fiesta del Coraza* every year since 1995 in a different sponsoring community. Both versions of the *Fiesta* – by *san rafaeleños* (people from San Rafael) and by indigenous FICI activists – have taken it out of its original context, transforming it from a traditional *fiesta patronal* (in honour of a patron saint) to a performance event in an overarching contemporary festival. The original *Fiesta del Coraza* was celebrated on 19 August to commemorate the feast day of San Luis Obispo, Otavalo's patron saint. *San rafaeleños* currently stage the *Coraza* around 9 June, as part of a week-long celebration of the foundation anniversary of the San Rafael de la Laguna civil parish. The indigenous activists from the FICI, in contrast, celebrate the *Coraza* around 22 September as part of the *Kuya Raymi* (*fiesta of the Inca's wife*), which honours women and the fertility of Mother Earth during the autumn equinox.

The performance of the same festivity by indigenous and non-indigenous constituencies raises several important analytical questions. What exactly are they celebrating and does that differ from what they are commemorating? How do their political interventions differ? To what extent do these interventions

rely on the commodification and spectacularisation of indigenous culture? This chapter, after tracing the history of the Fiesta del Coraza, will compare the non-indigenous version of the San Rafael festivity with the indigenous version staged by the FICI. It aims to demonstrate that these celebrations are neither cultural appropriations to promote national unity nor strategic performances of authenticity for economic benefit. Rather, they respond to local and dialogic configurations of 'being and becoming'<sup>4</sup> indígena and non-indígena in the quotidian contest for local power. Non-indígenas in San Rafael have commodified the Fiesta del Coraza to add symbolic value to their own localised identity within the Ecuadorian imagined community. By contrast, the FICI activists have turned the festivity into a spectacle to promote indigenous culture as worthy of global recognition, implying that indígenas have a genuine culture while non-indígenas do not.

Anthropological studies of indigeneity in the Andes have long drawn attention to the prominent role of fiestas in constructing and reproducing indigenous cultural identity. Research based on fieldwork conducted before the late 1970s – when the centuries-long servile relations of production bonding indígenas to the haciendas finally ended – offers diverse views of the fiesta. While some scholars focus on the fiesta's potential to construct community, preserving historical memory and maintaining tradition (Crain, 1990; Moya, 1995), others emphasise its exploitative aspects: the ways in which the fiesta naturalised ethnic inequalities through ritual (Crespi, 1981; Guerrero, 1991; Thurner, 1993). More recent scholarship considers the ways in which indígenas construct alternative notions of citizenship by means of festive performance. Making tangible a sense of cultural continuity in spite of the pressures to assimilate into mainstream non-indigenous culture, indigenous festive performance emphasises concrete relationships to place and values rather than abstract categories of national belonging (Butler, 2006, p. 374; Lazar, 2008, p. 143; Goldstein, 2004; Wibbelsman, 2005). Research on indigenous performance in Ecuador beyond the scenario of the fiesta underlines the ways in which indígenas enact authenticity to demand differential concessions from the state (Tolen, 1999), to access development funds (Bretón, 2003), or to cater for tourists (Gómez-Barris, 2012; van den Berghe and Flores Ochoa, 2000; Ypeij, 2012). The latter has led anthropologist Andrew Canessa to suggest that indigenous authenticity has become commodified (2012, p. 109). Existing literature, however, has paid little attention to the ways in which

4 'Being and becoming', according to John Comaroff, is 'the mapping of those processes by which social realities are realised, objects are objectified, materialities materialised, essences essentialised, by which abstractions – biography, community, culture, economy, ethnicity, gender, generation, identity, nationality, race, society – congeal synoptically from the innumerable acts, events, and significations that constitute them' (2010, p. 530).

processes of commodification and spectacularisation of indigenous culture relate to the dialogic constitution of indigenous and non-indigenous identities and alterities.

### **The Fiesta del Coraza across history and anthropology**

'Coraza' in Spanish means a piece of armour covering the chest and back. However, indigenous intellectual Enrique Cachiguango argues that the word derives from *kuraka*, the Kichwa term for hereditary lord.<sup>5</sup> There is as yet no empirical evidence to demonstrate convincingly either a Spanish or a Kichwa origin for the term. The Fiesta del Coraza is a hotchpotch of performances that baffle anthropological interpretations attempting to reveal a coherent underlying symbolic order. The festivity's principal feature is a parade towards the plaza or community in which the celebration takes place. In contemporary renditions, female dancers make way for the parade holding a long cord tied to coins. They are followed by the *pendoneros*, male dancers carrying red flags. The coraza and his companion ride along on horseback, and the *yumbos*, two men who dress in blue costumes and paint their faces white, bring up the rear on foot or horseback.<sup>6</sup> Yumbo in Kichwa is a pejorative word that refers to the natives of the eastern lowlands. In the Fiesta del Coraza, however, the yumbos resemble European buffoons rather than Amazonian natives. At the tail end of the parade, a mestizo band plays brass and drums and a multitude of people follow along. Until the early 1980s, the festival included a chase on horseback or foot in which the yumbos threw hard sweets in the coraza's face. The chase ended when the coraza started to bleed. According to Ares Queija, the enacted battle reflected cultural conflict, but neither the coraza nor the yumbos could be said to clearly represent conqueror or conquered (1988, p. 124). When the parade arrives at its final destination, a boy recites a poem in Spanish from memory, praising the moral integrity and leadership of the coraza. The boy is called the *loa*, the Spanish term for a panegyric poem.

Catholic lore asserts that the fiesta started three centuries ago with the discovery by an indígena of a statue of San Luis Obispo next to the church in San Rafael. More sceptical accounts argue that it was actually the parish priest who entrusted an artisan with sculpting the statue. The priest then buried it close to the church wall (Ares Queija, 1988, p. 128; Buitrón and Collier, 1949, p. 105). After the statue was found, according to Elisabeth Rohr,

the parish not only had its own patron saint, so the parishioners did not have to go on pilgrimage to the neighbouring town, but more than anything, the parish could keep the offerings that before had flowed to

5 Personal communication, 29 Sep. 2011.

6 In some stagings, the coraza may lead the parade rather than follow the dancers.

Otavaló. In this way, the annual Fiesta del Coraza honouring San Luis Obispo turned the formerly insolvent parish into a truly prosperous one. (1997, p. 63)

Until the early 1980s, the Fiesta del Coraza included two events: the Fiesta Chica (small fiesta) at Easter, in which one or more corazas were presented to their communities, and the main celebration on 19 August, in which the corazas and their entourages paraded from their communities to San Rafael. After attending Mass in the church, they carried the statue of San Luis in a procession through the town.

Like other fiestas patronales, the Fiesta del Coraza was part of the *cargo* (position of responsibility) or fiesta system, the institutionalised rotation of community offices and sponsorships of colonial origin and common to Mesoamerica and the Andes. By assuming the sponsorship of the Fiesta del Coraza, indígenas gained prestige and political influence among their peers, and simultaneously demonstrated respect towards their forefathers. For recently married indígenas, sponsoring the festivity was an obligatory rite of passage by which they obtained adulthood and respect (Walter, 1981; Rohr, 1997). According to Susana Oyagata, the first indigenous president of the civil parish council, parents pressured their sons and daughters into sponsoring the festivity, and community members reviled those individuals who were yet to do it, calling them *mocosos* (snotty-nosed kids).<sup>7</sup> Older and wealthier couples might have taken on the sponsorship several times, in order to increase their social networks, at times in competition with rival factions (Walter, 1981, p. 183). At the level of interethnic relationships, however, the festivity was coercive and exploitative, funnelling indigenous economic resources into non-indigenous hands. The following comment, voiced by an indigenous woman from the community of Huaycopungo, typifies critiques of this aspect as widely expressed today:

The chief of the civil registry named the sponsors each year, forcing them to undertake the position. The band, food, drink, everything was very expensive. The indígenas spent a lot and continued to live in poverty. To cover the expenses, they took out loans from the mestizos, pledging animals and land as debt securities. Many were unable to repay the loans back and lost their animals and lands.<sup>8</sup>

The sponsors also covered the fees for the Mass, the rental of costumes and horses and the cost of fireworks. Since non-indígenas monopolised not only the provision of most of the goods and services for the celebration but also

7 Personal communication, 29 Sep. 2011.

8 Personal communication, 2 June 2012.

the civil parish's political administration, they often swindled the indígenas. The money spent by the indigenous sponsors amounted to the equivalent of several thousand dollars and constituted a tremendous financial burden for them and their families. As an economic coup de grâce, the non-indigenous women who hired out coraza costumes charged exorbitant fees if any of their cheap adornments were lost during the celebration, arguing that they were made of gold. These adornments were counted one by one when the costumes were returned (Ares Queija, 1988, pp. 49–50).

## Demise and renewal

Indígenas stopped celebrating the Fiesta del Coraza in 1985. Reflecting the prevalent mood of the time, non-indigenous intellectuals lamented that a festivity that was 'associated with the cultural heritage of the indígena of Otavalo' had been buried (Valdospino Rubio, 1990, p. 11). The Ecuadorian journal of musicology, *Opus*, claimed that the celebration had come to an end because of the intransigence of San Rafael's parish priest, who insisted on observing the event without music and alcohol (ibid.), but the main cause of its demise was the lack of indigenous individuals willing to bear the sponsorship costs. According to a male indígena from the civil parish of San Rafael de la Laguna: 'my parents sponsored the festivity. They told me to undertake the sponsorship, but I did not. Two of my brothers did it. Another brother and myself did not. Of course, this created great problems among us'.<sup>9</sup>

Factors contributing to the unwillingness of the indígenas to sponsor the festivity included the demise of the old hacienda regime, the rise of labour migration to other parts of Ecuador, the expansion of access to schooling, and the conversion of significant numbers of indígenas to evangelical faiths. Proselytisers of the latter condemned the fiesta as an act against God's will, and converts renounced drinking and dancing altogether (Huarcaya, 2003). Because of their literacy skills, young adult indígenas became the new community leaders and, yet to undertake the sponsorship of festivities, they criticised the lifestyle of their parents and grandparents as burdened by excessive drinking and economic exploitation.

In the civil parish of San Rafael de la Laguna, indígenas stopped celebrating not only the Fiesta del Coraza, but also the Pendoneros, a separate festivity held in October, and the Fiesta de San Juan (Saint John) in June.<sup>10</sup> Observing that these traditions were disappearing, a group of young non-indígenas from the

9 Personal communication, 9 June 2012.

10 The Fiesta de San Juan coincides with the summer solstice. Since the 1990s, indígenas have called it Inti Raymi, the Festival of the Sun.

town of San Rafael got together and decided to revive them. William Oña, the non-indígena who drove this revival, outlines what happened:

In general, these customs are clearly indigenous, right? When other religions or religious sects came here, the traditions of our peoples, of our indígenas, were getting lost. When I was around twenty years old – I was still attending secondary school – I met with fifteen or twenty boys of my age, all from here, from this neighbourhood, the parish centre. I proposed that we, as san rafaeleños, should rescue the traditions that we had had. We decided that five persons would organise the [festivity of] Pendoneros; five, the Coraza; and five, San Juan. We drew lots to assign who would organise each festivity, and we paid for them from our own pockets. From then on, the customs of the Coraza and Pendoneros started to undergo a revival. Later, other people who might not live here but were from here, who were of an older generation and had more power, started to volunteer to sponsor the festivity. Since then, the tradition has continued and now the indígenas want to recuperate the customs that they have lost.<sup>11</sup>

Having started in 1986, this ‘new’ tradition is now more than a quarter of a century old. The young san rafaeleños merged the Pendoneros into the Fiesta del Coraza to build a celebration of the anniversary of their civil parish. The resulting festival, of which the Fiesta del Coraza is the main event, includes a pageant for indigenous women, a coronation of the festival queen – a non-indígena woman who is selected beforehand – a race of reed watercraft across Lake San Pablo, a gastronomic fair, a football championship and a ball with live



Figure 10.2. Non-indígenas celebrating the Fiesta del Coraza in San Rafael, 11 June 2011. Video still: Sergio Miguel Huaracaya.

11 Personal communication, 5 Oct. 2011.

music. According to Oña, indígenas who are interested in celebrating the Fiesta del Coraza must choose a date that does not conflict with the celebrations of the civil parish's anniversary.

For their own part, indígenas have been resurrecting the Coraza in various forms since the mid-1990s, as part of what Barbara Butler calls a 'self-conscious indigenous revival' (2006, p. 393), the strengthening of indigenous cultural identity that has accompanied their political movement. Until the 1980s, the Fiesta del Coraza was mostly celebrated by the indígenas of San Rafael de la Laguna. However, from the mid-1990s, it has been staged in other indigenous communities across the canton, either on their own initiative or by FICI activists as part of the Kuya Raymi celebration. The activists developed the Kuya Raymi as a 'true indigenous festival' in response to the Fiesta del Yamor, a festivity organised by the Otavalo municipality since 1968. In addition to bullfights, parades and musical performances, the Fiesta del Yamor included choreographed indigenous rituals and separate beauty pageants for non-indigenous and indigenous women. The activists saw that the fiesta "whitened" their cultural contribution' and reproduced exploitive and asymmetrical relationships between the indigenous communities and the non-indigenous elite (Rogers, 1999, p. 61).

From a historical perspective, the Kuya Raymi could be considered an invented tradition (Hobsbawm and Ranger, 1992) because there is no evidence that the indígenas in Otavalo celebrated it before the FICI's interventions. The organisers of the Kuya Raymi emphasise that the festival has a strong spiritual component at its core, and that it is not an event for mere tourist consumption.<sup>12</sup> With the present budget for the event bordering on US\$ 40,000, the Kuya Raymi is funded mostly by corporate and state sponsors. In September 2011, it was celebrated in the community of El Cercado and the city of Cotacachi. The festival included a ritual ceremony in a sacred spring by a *yachak* (healer) on the Monday, a traditional bonfire in El Cercado on the Friday, a full-blown beauty pageant featuring prominent artists on a stage in Cotacachi on the Saturday, and the Coraza as the concluding highlight on the Sunday. Activists from FICI call this last event '*tantanakushpa ripashunchi*' (let's go all together). The coraza and his entourage paraded several kilometres uphill, from Cotacachi to El Cercado's football field. Upon the parade's arrival, the pendoneros burst spontaneously into a run, the loa recited a poem exalting the community from a stage, the coraza passed a staff to the president of the sponsoring community – selected through a draw – for the following year and bands played indigenous music throughout the evening and night. The event included a child singing on stage and many groups of girls and young women performing choreographed dances

12 Personal communication from Auky Anrango, 3 Oct. 2011.



*Figure 10.3. The coraza arriving at the community of El Cercado, 25 September 2011. Video still: Sergio Miguel Huarcaya.*

in the field. In contrast to the non-indígenas in San Rafael, who engaged in brash behaviour, binge drinking and group singing, the indígenas were more subdued, dancing in circles as is traditional and following sharing rituals when drinking.

Activists from FICI have encouraged indigenous communities across the canton to organise and continue the celebration of the Kuya Raymi by themselves, but they have preferred to stage only the Fiesta del Coraza. Indígenas are currently organising the Coraza not only where it was celebrated before, in communities close to Lake San Pablo, but also where it was not, in communities such as Ilumán and Carabuela, north of Otavalo city (Meisch, 2002, p. 261). Contemporary celebrations are held on various dates. Huaycopungo, for instance, stages the Fiesta del Coraza in January, when newly elected authorities take possession of the community council, while La Compañía mounts it in June as part of the festivities for Inti Raymi.<sup>13</sup>

Current community renditions of the Fiesta del Coraza are very different from those of the recent past. Today, there are no exploitative authorities, priests or costume renters. Sponsorships no longer deplete the economic resources of the priestes. Most of the funds come from a small fee paid to community councils by their members, which are responsible for organising the festivities. This revival has not only given indígenas a sense of pride but

13 In 2011, when I attended the Fiesta del Coraza in La Compañía, indigenous participants honoured Saint Rose of Lima, disregarding the Catholic calendar of saints' days. Saint Rose's day is on 23 August. The availability of a big, framed image of Saint Rose determined the villagers' choice of saint.

has also strengthened their solidarity. A case in point is the community of Huaycopungo, where the Fiesta del Coraza was staged anew in 2000, after a 16-year hiatus. The celebration was organised in part by a major leader of the Evangelical Church, who three years before 'had singled out the traditional Coraza fiesta as a reason for the local Protestant revolt from the Catholic Church' (Butler, 2006, p. 342). The organisers called the event '*Hatun kuraka tikramuy*' (The return of the great lord). In addition, they made some important changes to the format, deciding that the poem traditionally recited by the loa should exalt the powers of the landscape rather than praise the beneficence of San Luis Obispo, as it did in the past.<sup>14</sup>

Performances of the Coraza are also increasingly evident in official ceremonies in Otavalo. In these instances, elected and appointed indigenous authorities incorporate a small parade and/or a dancing troupe into state rituals. In 2000, Mario Conejo, the first indigenous mayor of Otavalo, brought a coraza to his inauguration. His brother, Ariruma Kowii, also did so when he was inaugurated in 2006 as Undersecretary of Education of Indigenous Peoples, a new post in the Ministry of Education and Culture. Accompanying the indígenas in their newfound political power, the Coraza in Otavalo has become a symbol of a renovated indigeneity, worthy of respect and recognition.

### **Interethnic cultural criticism**

Among indígenas across the canton, contrasting perspectives on the non-indigenous celebration in San Rafael distinguish the activists from the non-activists. Whereas non-activists do not disapprove of the celebration, activists are extremely critical, qualifying it as a folkloric event that is inauthentic. Indigenous activists are hyperconscious of the workings of racism and are much more likely to pinpoint and denounce its dynamics. In June 2010, Susana Oyagata hired Samia Maldonado, an indigenous activist and video producer from the city of Otavalo, to shoot the event. A year later, Maldonado gave me her impressions:

For me, it was shocking. The mestizos were very racist. They ignored the president of the civil parish council, who is the first indigenous president. On stage, they did not consider her properly. They displaced her.

During the parade, an old teacher gave a speech about the important families of San Rafael. Of course, none of them were indigenous. In addition, when referring to the indígenas, he spoke of 'our indios', as if he or they owned the indígenas. I also was surprised by their display of joy. They felt exuberant joy representing themselves as indígenas. But those

14 Personal communication from Susana Oyagata, 29 Sep. 2011.

representations were stereotypical. The men imitated drunken indios and the women waved their skirts in seductive ways. No indigenous women would ever dance like that. This is just folklorism.<sup>15</sup>

For indigenous activists, the point of reference is the way in which indigenous subordination was naturalised until sometime in the 1980s. Non-indígenas often addressed indígenas as '*mi hijito*' or '*mi hijita*', my little son or daughter, framing the interaction within a paternalist framework in which indígenas could not demand respect as adults. At times, non-indígenas ignored the indígenas as if they were invisible. At others, they mistreated them to remind them of their inferiority. This performance of dominant identity naturalising inferiority was part and parcel of the quotidian and institutionalised appropriation of indigenous labour and products. For non-indígenas, indigenous inferiority was not only part of common sense, a shared understanding without any need for debate, but also the means by which they constructed their own dominant identity as Ecuadorian nationals. As Andrés Guerrero argues, citizenship was constructed upon the prerogative of executing 'immediate and everyday strategies of power' to constantly recreate indigenous subordination (2000, p. 13). For present-day activists, who have demonstrated political strength and effective mobilisation, any traces of the explicit discriminatory behaviour of the past are unacceptable.

In 1986, when non-indígenas started to celebrate their own Fiesta del Coraza, indígenas in the Ecuadorian highlands were yet to achieve some degree of what Randolph Lewis calls representational sovereignty, 'the right, as well as the ability, for a group of people to depict themselves with their own ambitions at heart' (2006, p. 175). From colonial times until the emergence of contemporary indigenous activism during the late 1980s and early 1990s, structures of domination across public and private spheres had curtailed the possibility of indígenas having a voice (Lucero, 2008, p. 25). Rather than speak for and represent themselves, they were represented by non-indígenas at both local and state levels (Guerrero, 2003, pp. 299–303). These representations coalesced into the stereotype of the indio as a miserable being lacking initiative and prone to drunkenness. Indigenous activists only started to criticise the non-indigenous celebration of the Fiesta del Coraza when they gained a voice through their political mobilisation. Their challenge to non-indigenous common sense is however a work in progress. When I asked William Oña how he would respond to that criticism, he resorted to stereotypical assumptions:

If we dressed as mestizos, we would not be rescuing the old customs. It would not be the same. We are rescuing those customs, acting them as they were in the past. If you imitate a clown, you have to dress like a clown. If I

15 Personal communication, 6 June 2011.

imitate, let's say, a beggar, I have to dress like a beggar. If I imitate a beggar, I won't use a suit. There are people that have criticised [the festivity] and others who have not. I think that if the criticism is constructive, I accept it, but if the criticism is malicious, if it is against the customs ... We have had malicious criticism. On a few occasions, some people have insulted us, but all I can say is that we have to move forward doing the best we can. If not, the custom [in San Rafael] would end.<sup>16</sup>

Significantly, among the eight indigenous communities in the civil parish of San Rafael de la Laguna, only one, Huaycopungo, has revived the Fiesta del Coraza.

According to Susana Oyagata, in 2010 when indígenas participated for the first time in the parish's anniversary celebrations, relations between the two groups were particularly strained:

Racism is still alive here. During the fiestas of last year, 2010, the mestizos criticised everything we did because we were indígenas. There was also a clear separation between the groups. I fought for the participation of the communities. I argued that the civil parish belonged to everyone, not only to the urban centre. When indígenas started to participate in the cultural and sport events, the mestizos said 'how is it that they are going to participate? This is solely ours'. In a meeting (of the civil parish council) we analysed and reflected on this situation. This year [2011], the communities participated for a second time. I think that the mestizos are getting used to our involvement because this time, they did not criticise us. Before, they did not respect us. They said that because we were indígenas, we did not have the capacity to organise the celebrations. Now, after seeing the good work that we have done, they greet us. Before they did not even greet us.<sup>17</sup>

Of course, not all non-indígenas in San Rafael, or for that matter in other places, share the same predisposition towards the indígenas. Analyses that treat indigenous and non-indigenous populations as 'unitary collective actors with common purposes' (Brubaker, 2002, p. 164) hide not only the complex heterogeneity of both populations but also the multiplicity of individual interactions across the ethnic boundary. Yet the non-indigenous families who have historically monopolised political power in San Rafael are not going to cede their status easily. As Susana Oyagata continues, 'in the past, they acted as the owners of the parish. They always wanted to control the fiestas. They thought that they had control over all the population of the communities'.<sup>18</sup> In

16 Personal communication, 5 Oct. 2011.

17 Personal communication, 29 Sep. 2011.

18 Ibid.

the struggle for the political control of the civil parish, indígenas face not only the challenges of electoral campaigning but also the lingering naturalisation of indigenous subordination. They have to subvert long-held discriminatory beliefs that indígenas are not as capable as non-indígenas in intellectual and administrative work. In San Rafael, indígenas have increased their participation in two domains from which they were previously excluded: the political administration of the civil parish and the events celebrating its anniversary. However, they do not participate in the specific part of the broader festival that stages the Coraza, which has remained a non-indigenous affair. Instead of joining this celebration in June, indígenas have opted to host their own Fiesta del Coraza in January, in the community of Huaycopungo across the Pan-American Highway.

### **Performing indigeneity in the Fiesta del Coraza**

Reflecting on the ways in which folkloric festivals have become part of the Andean cultural landscape, Stuart Rockefeller argues that festivals are not fiestas. The latter 'refer to celebrations, normally in some sense religious', whereas festivals 'consist largely of representations of what are taken to be the most significant performative elements of the fiestas' (1999, pp. 120–1). Fiestas might represent the social relations of the participants, but festivals aim to represent a culture, or cultures, as something of worth to an audience, even in those scenarios when performers and audience members might be from the same group of people. In addition, festivals objectify chosen elements of the fiestas, placing them in another context, that of spectacle, a performative event of a certain scale structured around the distinction between performers and audience (*ibid.*, p. 125).

By taking the Fiesta del Coraza out of its original context, both stagings, by the san rafaeleños and by the FICI activists, objectify it. According to Ruiz-Ballesteros and Hernández-Ramírez, 'objectification turns experience and the cultural and environmental elements naturalized in daily practice into objects of reflection and, potentially, into resources for the tourist market' (2010, p. 213). The objectification of culture makes possible its commodification, understood as 'a process by which things come to be evaluated primarily in terms of their exchange value' (Stronza, 2001, p. 270). Yet neither of those festivals is profit driven. What organisers and participants get in return is not money but symbolic capital (Bourdieu, 1986) in the context of the dialogic construction of their identities and alterities.

In June 2006, local and provincial authorities unveiled a monument to the Coraza, a three-metre statue of the character mounted on a horse, at the entrance to the town of San Rafael. The erecting of the monument was enabled

by an initiative of the priestes of that year and received financial support from the Otavalo municipality. In an article covering the event, the newspaper *La Hora* claimed that the Coraza is a 'symbol of the cultural identity of the *pueblo* of San Rafael' (2006, 14 June). In Spanish, *pueblo* may be translated as 'people' or as 'town', but to define *who* is the *pueblo* of San Rafael is not a straightforward task. The *san rafaletños* living across Ecuador reunite to celebrate the only symbolic resource that makes the town recognisable at the national level: the Fiesta del Coraza. They are performing for themselves even though a few *indígenas* from nearby communities come to watch the parade. While non-*indígenas* of San Rafael commemorate the anniversary of the civil parish, they celebrate the condition of being *san-rafaletño*, a condition that is until this day ethnically exclusive. *Indígenas* do not self-identify as *san rafaletños*. In quotidian usage, the term *san-rafaletño* designates a member of the non-indigenous families that have lived in San Rafael, a town of only a few blocks, in contrast to the rural inhabitants of the surrounding indigenous communities. This division has reproduced a long-standing ideology that has correlated *blanco-ness* (whiteness) with urban space and indigenesness with the countryside. *Indígenas* do not participate in the non-indigenous celebration of the Fiesta del Coraza because they cannot celebrate the condition of being *san-rafaletño*, nor share the joy of celebrating it. This condition relates to the *san rafaletños'* traditional local dominance, which has lately been challenged by the increasing power of the *indígenas*. In a national context in which provincial individuals have been stereotypically stigmatised as *chagras*, an Ecuadorian expression that designates people as unsophisticated because of their rural and/or provincial origin, the *san rafaletños* have commodified the Fiesta del Coraza to add symbolic capital to their identities as a local elite. Most of the festivity sponsors have successful military and police careers. Spending from 3,000 to 5,000 US dollars on the event helps them demonstrate to their peers that they have succeeded in the world beyond San Rafael.

Daniel Goldstein argues that spectacles attempt 'to make certain things dramatically visible', constituting symbolic models and mirrors of cultural reality. They have 'a powerful resonance as instruments for maintaining social order and producing social change' (2004, p. 16).<sup>19</sup> Whereas audiences and performers in the non-indigenous staging of the Coraza are from the one group, the audiences for the indigenous presentation of the Coraza in the Kuya Raymi are much broader. Always initiating the parade in cities, either in Otavalo or Cotacachi, the FICI activist-organisers have turned the Coraza into a spectacle. These cities attract considerable numbers of tourists from abroad. The Kuya Raymi also gets attention from the press and the numerous websites

19 Goldstein uses Don Handelman's terms (1990).

run by *otavaleños* (people from Otavalo) abroad.<sup>20</sup> As Auky Anrango, the main organiser of the 2011 Kuya Raymi, argues, their ambitions go beyond the local: 'the recovery that we are doing, revitalising the festivities, is in fact successful. And we want to make this visible not only at the provincial level but at a global level'.<sup>21</sup> The Kuya Raymi is also a didactic performance, a vehicle for teaching indígenas the value of their culture. Emphasising the common patrimony that binds together indigenous performers and audiences, the festival empowers the indígenas as agents of representational sovereignty (Rockefeller, 1999, p. 123–4; Lewis, 2006, p. 175). Contemporary indigenous renditions of the Fiesta del Coraza are driven by a self-conscious indigeneity. Whereas in the past racial/ethnic difference was upheld by non-indígenas, constructing the indio as the negative mirror image of the blanco (Butler, 1981, pp. 245–6; Colloredo-Mansfeld, 1998, p. 186), difference is currently sustained by indígenas, who underline that they have something that the non-indígenas supposedly do not: a genuine culture grounded in place and millenarian tradition. Thus, Marco Guatemal, the FICI President, argues:

I think that all people have culture, but if we focus on the traditional, on what is our own, we have our own festivities. In our worldview, these festivities related to the *Pachamama* (Mother Earth), the sun, the moon, to the whole to which we are linked. In contrast, in the mestizo world this is not valued in the same way. What is valued is man and nothing else. In their festivities, they celebrate the Spanish conquest, the foundation of a parish. In contrast, indigenous festivities have to do with the space in which we are walking. For instance, now we are in the time of sowing and we celebrate the Kuya Raymi.<sup>22</sup>

Self-conscious indigeneity involves a search for, and an articulation of, a defiant political identity, making culture explicitly political to challenge the naturalisation of the social order in terms of indigenous subordination and non-indigenous dominance. Activists also emphasise that indigenous festivities are not theatrical performances. According to Cachiguango, 'Andean celebrations are not mere commoditised folklorisms but celebrations that have a real context, a real world and a real spirituality in which they move and develop'.<sup>23</sup>

Following Rockefeller, it could be argued that the Fiesta del Coraza, as celebrated either by san rafaletños or by FICI activists, is no longer a fiesta. Those

20 The term *otavaleño* may refer to indigenous and non-indigenous people from the canton. In most contexts, however, the term refers to the former, owing to their global visibility as traders and musicians.

21 Personal communication, 3 Oct. 2011.

22 Personal communication, 3 Oct. 2011.

23 Personal communication, 29 Sep. 2011.

stagings have become part of festivals, which are intentionally orchestrated to convey a political message. As far as that is concerned, this chapter is not looking to argue that these performances of indigeneity or non-indigeneity are simply a matter of rational choice or strategic essentialism (Spivak, 1988). Rather, performance here constitutes a fundamental way of being and becoming indígena and non-indígena. It is through performance that community and culture become tangible expressions of ethnic difference. The dynamics of belonging and exclusion encompassed in the indigenous and non-indigenous celebrations of the Fiesta del Coraza, and the interethnic criticism surrounding them, dialogically construct indigenous and non-indigenous selves and others. Staging the Fiesta del Coraza, san rafaletños commemorate the civil parish's anniversary and celebrate themselves as a local non-indigenous elite. Staging the Fiesta del Coraza in the Kuya Raymi, indígenas commemorate the agricultural ritual cycle and celebrate their culture. The self-conscious revival that indígenas have put into action is not a direct outcome of primordial traditions and a pre-existent ethnic consciousness; rather, it is a work in progress. As Susana Oyagata argues, indígenas only started to revive the Fiesta del Coraza once they realised that it was theirs:

Indígenas from here already have the vision of somehow re-appropriating [our culture]. A few years ago, the Fiesta del Coraza was very discredited. People did not want to hear anything about it. Some asked, 'Do we want to revive the Coraza? What for?' The evangelicals said that those were pagan festivities. Others asked, 'How are we going to revive a festivity in which we suffered discrimination, humiliation and, at the same time, exploitation? We do not want that'. But then we realised that the festivity belongs to us, that it is our own. From then on we have resumed the celebration.<sup>24</sup>

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## 11. Indigeneity, law and performance on the Atlantic Coast of Nicaragua

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The legal battle of the *Mayagna (Sumo) Community of Awás Tingni v. Nicaragua* culminated in 2001 when the Inter-American Court of Human Rights (IACHR) acknowledged the communal ‘property’ rights of Indigenous communities<sup>1</sup> lacking legal land titles and mandated that Nicaragua recognise these rights. The IACHR’s judgment solidified the entitlement of Indigenous peoples to the use and enjoyment of their ancestral land as human rights to be honoured and protected. Recent constitutional reforms in Bolivia, Honduras and Colombia have also affirmed the establishment of Indigenous rights to property (Bryan, 2009; Finley-Brook, 2007).

While this outcome is important for representing the first time that an international tribunal has recognised Indigenous communal property rights, some questions have arisen from the case. Specifically, how are indigeneity and property rights interrelated? How does neoliberalism shape global performances of indigeneity? Building on the work of critical geographers and anthropologists who have drawn attention to the ways in which Indigenous mapping has become a site of neoliberal intervention in Latin America, this chapter examines how the ‘coming into being’ of indigeneity in law is connected to the promotion of green capitalism in Nicaragua. It argues that although territorial rights and Indigenous legal systems are constitutionally recognised, the stabilisation of Indigenous property rights is inscribing new sources of possession that only exist within the rights framework and which are rescaling natural resource management. Through a process of re-regulation, Indigenous territories become ‘property’ and Indigenous peoples’ relationships to such territories are commodified. From this perspective, it is not only nature that becomes constitutive of economic life but also the relationships established between the human, spiritual and non-human realms. The insertion of Indigenous peoples’ worldviews into a global economy, where conservation and natural capital is an advantage, conjures the idealised ‘noble savage’ as the basis for the production of new commodities. As Clarke notes, when neoliberalism

1 I capitalise the term Indigenous as it refers to a political identity but not the concept of indigeneity, which in my view refers to a broader process of producing Indigenous identity.

produces difference it does so by fragmenting existing meanings and enabling new possibilities (2004). By privileging specific types of knowledge, certain cartographic representations and particular ways of seeing and relating to the world, this field of governance places a grid of intelligibility on indigeneity (Hale, 2005).

This chapter invites discussion across disciplines and combines postcolonial theory and critical geography with political economy in its approach, adding to the discussion of how Indigenous places are reconfigured by 'proper' performances of indigeneity. By exploring the production of the noble savage in relation to the green economy, the chapter reveals how a naturalised understanding of Indigenous peoples' relationships to their territories is, in turn, commodifying them. The term indigeneity is understood here as a dynamic field of governance, constituted by legal and political configurations and produced at different scales in which knowledge, discourses, power, and identity are constructed and contested (Altamirano-Jiménez, 2013). First, the chapter explores how law measures difference and how such difference is represented cartographically. Second, it discusses how the Indigenous neoliberal subject is produced in relation to the environment. Next, it provides some background context on the long history of land conflicts along the Atlantic Coast. Finally, some implications are discussed of the commodification of Indigenous peoples' relationships to place.

## Mapping rights and indigeneity

The IACHR's 2001 decision in the *Awas Tingni v. Nicaragua* case, which recognised the communal property rights of Indigenous peoples, has triggered processes and studies to demarcate, legalise, define or otherwise consolidate Indigenous property. International conservation organisations, pro-human rights groups and international financial institutions have all promoted the use of mapping among Indigenous communities in Latin America. Although an expensive process, the number of maps made by such communities has steadily increased (World Bank, 2002; Offen, 2003).

Interest in the power of maps as legal tools to secure territorial rights, manage resources and strengthen cultures is not new, having started in northern Canada and Alaska in the 1960s. Intellectual products such as multi-volume studies, atlases, guidebooks and historical-analytical pieces have emerged since then. Examining early mapping projects in the Canadian Arctic, Milton Freeman (1979) explores the advantages of involving Indigenous peoples as environmental researchers in the process of linking social and ecological impacts. Similarly, Robert Rundstrom emphasises process over product, noting the importance of long-term negotiation processes among residents (1995).

Thus, land-use research has provided a necessary visual articulation of existing and potential conflicts between Indigenous land-use patterns and resource development projects (Natcher, 2001).

Despite the potential for land-use studies to provide Indigenous peoples with more opportunities and power to protect their lands and resources, critical examinations have questioned both the methodological limitations and the cultural misrepresentations inherent to these approaches. Chapin et al. (2005) question the extent to which mapping projects empower Indigenous peoples, while Offen notes that mapping has been driving environmental agendas (2003). From a postcolonial perspective, Wainwright and Bryan (2009) point out that maps are tools to settle land claims but that they do not necessarily guarantee justice for two reasons. First, maps are not accessible to all; usually older men are considered the bearers of such knowledge. Second, this cartographic-legal strategy is based on Western knowledge and visualisation, not Indigenous knowledge that could potentially counteract hierarchical power relations (Bryan, 2009, p. 25).

These critiques deserve further consideration. This chapter is particularly concerned with how difference is represented cartographically and measured by law, and how this measurement of difference is connected to the emergence of new practices evident in the implosion of commodity forms such as environmental services, ecotourism and Indigenous knowledge, among others. It argues that these practices entail the commodification of 'affective' relationships (Nast, 2006) to nature and also transform what counts as environment. Thus, the commodification of nature involves a variety of practices and is simultaneously cultural, social, emotional, spiritual and economic (Bakker, 2010). Moving beyond nature as a resource to indigeneity as a set of recognised practices, provides insights about how Indigenous relationships are valued.

Both international law and cartography are based on Western knowledge and assumptions. Knowledge systems are cultural products, and are therefore performative. They are both produced and productive, shaping and conditioning the world (Bowker and Star, 2000; Waterton, 2002). Attention to practices and performativity helps one to explore how identities are formed and to analyse how a particular meaning of indigeneity is universalised through law. If knowledge is a social product and is place-specific, then it is possible to argue that there are other ways of seeing and being in the world.

In maps solicited by Western law, Indigenous 'property' is understood as a set of practices that are culturally regulated and which are performed in specific ways. These practices are central to enabling recognition as an Indigenous subject through a process in which difference becomes intelligible to non-Indigenous others. A visual representation of the 'continuity' of such traditional practices requires that indigeneity be triangulated like points

plotted on a map in accordance with Indigenous peoples' close relationship with nature (Bryan, 2009, p. 25). As Bryan notes, Indigenous mapping and the effective legal mobilisation of Indigenous identity is measured in terms of its ability to occupy the 'savage slot', a given idea in which Indigenous peoples are conceived as living outside modernity (ibid., pp. 25, 27). This representation of indigeneity as a 'single, unambiguous class of entity that can be differentiated from other alternative life forms ... transcends spatial and temporal trajectories' (Lien and Law, 2010, p. 4). According to Goett, '[a]ny rupture, discontinuity or mobility in the history of community settlement and any evidence of cultural change or transformation ... provides an opening for the delegitimation of Indigenous territorial claims by the state' (2007, p. 291). Thus, the 'savage' living outside modernity is enacted as a universal reality that nonetheless represents a particular ordering of the world.

While this fixed representation is recognised as 'authentic', Indigenous laws and dynamic relationships to place are reduced and transformed into certificates of title. As Wainwright and Bryan note, 'when indigenous communities and their allies produce maps and lawsuits, they do so under conditions not of their choosing. These struggles unfold within an already-mapped world where one cannot elect to live outside of state sovereignty, territory, or the law' (2009, p. 156). One complication of this analysis, however, is that while these processes universalise a specific performance of indigeneity, it may appear that Indigenous peoples have no room to reclaim alternative ways of being in the world. Exceeding the constraints imposed by the grid of intelligibility may involve enabling difference in order to remain particular without aspiring to be recognised as the same (Lindner and Stetson, 2009, p. 42).

### **Producing the neoliberal Indigenous subject**

A rich body of literature on neoliberalism has developed over the past decades. Neoliberalism has usually been treated as an economic project. However, it exceeds the economy by shaping the constitution of identity and the commodification of difference (Laurie et al., 2002). Studies theorising the neoliberal subject have concentrated on how subjectivities are constituted and policed in public space, as well as on the reconstitution of the citizen into consumer (Sorrells, 2009, p. 1). In his analysis of Indigenous peoples in Central America, Charles Hale notes that neoliberalism has involved a reorganisation of society along the lines of decentralisation, the reduction of the state, the affirmation of basic human rights, the attempt to redirect social policy, and the development of civil society and social capital (2005).

As a form of governance, neoliberalism also has a complex connection with the transformation of the environment and the struggles associated with that

process. An emergent literature in critical geography sheds light on the ways in which neoliberalism shapes the constitution of the Indigenous other 'in nature' (see McAfee, 1999; Perrault and Martin, 2005; McCarthy and Prudham, 2004). I would argue that the performance of indigeneity as fixed difference simultaneously reinforces local identities and global forms of governance. Specifically, it imposes a form of 'green development' (McAfee, 1999), or 'green neo-liberalism' (Hanson, 2007), which facilitates the commodification of Indigenous peoples' relationships to their territories. By recognising Indigenous peoples as legitimate forest users and by universalising a meaning of indigeneity, neoliberalism brings previously untradeable entities such as affective relationships and cultural practices into the market.

Since undeveloped ecosystems are often found within Indigenous peoples' territories, these peoples are confronted with tensions between local needs and global wants (Castree, 2004, p. 137). Tensions and contradictions are negotiated through discourses of identity, rights and the environment, which serve to define and normalise certain embodied experiences (Sorrells, 2009, p. 4). Through the linking of indigeneity and the environment to the market, neoliberalism has shaped forms of recognition and systems of environmental governance mediated by international financial institutions, which emphasise accountability and compliance. For example, resource-based communities are simultaneously considered accountable for their ecological degradation and subjected to intensive capital schemes to produce environmental services for export.

While under neoliberalism there is an increasing recognition of difference, there are clear limits to what constitutes acceptable difference. According to Hale, the recognition of cultural difference and the granting of collective rights as compensatory measures for 'disadvantaged' social groups are not in opposition to neoliberalism but integral to it. These cultural rights, along with socio-economic components, distinguish neoliberalism as a specific form of governance that shapes, delimits and produces difference (2005, pp. 12–13). With a vision of indigeneity as a form of human capital, neoliberal governance has focused on rigorous testing and accountability mechanisms that see difference as a source of wealth. In Latin America, financial institutions such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) have actively promoted the recognition of a permissible difference, which is accompanied by large-scale territorial reorganisation, titling and cadastral surveys, all aimed at building a more dynamic market in the global south (Deininger, 2003). The argument is that stability in property regimes increases the value of land, improves credit and attracts investment.

Demarcation and titling are part of the World Bank's 'green conditionalities' in which borrowing states such as Nicaragua are pressured to restructure their

resource management agencies as well as their land-use regimes (World Bank, 2002). The World Bank has targeted tropical forests located in the Atlantic region of Nicaragua, home to the majority of the Indigenous population, and has acknowledged the importance of including Indigenous communities in the country's forestry sector management (World Bank, 2003). In 2001, according to the World Bank, 45 per cent of the Nicaraguan population lived in rural areas (2010). Sixty-four per cent of these were considered poor due to the unequal distribution of land (Maldidier and Marchetti, 1996). Moreover, decades of ineffective state-led constitutional reforms and failure to fully implement Indigenous rights have produced ambiguities regarding Indigenous lands (Toledo Llancaqueo, 2004; Díaz Polanco, 2006). The IMF's *Nicaragua: Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper* (2005) establishes six lines of action Nicaragua can follow to attract development: i) modernise property registry; ii) title all property; iii) create a rural land market; iv) create the legislation to activate the land market; v) demarcate and title Indigenous lands; and vi) create a national programme to administer land.

Environmental organisations have also supported the idea that unclear property regimes and ineffective land-use regulation are connected to high levels of poverty and environmental destruction. From this point of view, Indigenous property rights are not only about protecting these communities but also about protecting the 'assets' contained within their lands. During the *Awas Tingni v. Nicaragua* trial, the International Human Rights Law Group and the Centre for International Environmental Law issued an *Amicus Curiae*<sup>2</sup> to the Court in which they noted that this case represented 'an important opportunity for Nicaragua and the Inter-American Human Rights system to promote national and regional interests by fostering an appropriate balance between human rights and environmental and economic interests'. They further noted that forests are conceived as 'important long-term national assets, whose true value to Nicaragua is in jeopardy if the court does not grant an adequate and effective protection to the Awas Tingni community' (The International Human Rights Law Group and The Centre for International Environmental Law, in Picolotti and Tallant, 2003, Appendix 1). Forests are considered natural commodities whose protection requires the recognition of indigeneity and Indigenous property rights. The connection between environmentalism, property and indigeneity is central to the creation of new commodities and areas of economic activity, including climate-change mitigation in which the noble savage becomes an 'ally'.

2 *Amicus Curiae* refers to a legal opinion used in international law, specifically in reference to human rights, which introduces a concern ensuring that the legal effects of a court decision do not depend exclusively on the parties involved.

The idea of the noble savage is hardly new. It was central to older forms of colonial violence in which romanticised depictions of Indigenous peoples as 'living in harmony with nature' (or the 'vanishing Indian') facilitated the dispossession of their lands. Under the logic of current green capitalism, the production of wealth is sustained through the recognition of a type of cultural difference that 'preserves' forests or natural capital intact. This combination of market forces and cultural rights has disciplinary effects on resource-dependent Indigenous communities, which are pressured to participate in a global environmental governance process. The noble savage is recognised to the extent that his naturalised traditional economic practices, such as hunting, fishing and trapping, are bound to an idealised stewardship of the land. This simple yet enduring classification of Indigenous populations conceals the complexity of their economies and histories. Moreover, as Baldwin notes, through this process the imperial doctrine of *terra nullius*, or lack of human presence, is reenacted through a global environmentalism, which universalises a given definition of indigeneity (2009, p. 241).

As in other regions of the global south, demarcation and titling policies in Nicaragua aim not only at 'regularising' property rights but also at rescaling the governance of natural resources. To spread this new eco-governance, northern financial agencies have invested in building capacity and creating an environmental framework. When the Nicaragua government titled Awas Tingni's land, the management of forest resources was also transferred from the central government to the administrations of the autonomous regions. Neoliberal environmentalism has explicitly targeted the decentralisation of the state's administrative authority as well as its restrictive structures to promote democracy. While decentralisation has been justified on the grounds of increasing public participation and good governance, it has been shaped by the scalar differentials of power and accountability between the global north and south (Kohl, 2002).

Ineffective laws, war, migration, and the state's failure to address these issues have been constructed as facts that have created a complex, legal and 'insecure' framework. In her study of peasants in rural Nicaragua, Broegaard (2005) finds that this complex situation has been characterised by farms that lack formal title, lands that have multiple documents, and land tenure that has historically drawn on other sources of legitimacy, including Indigenous laws. Broegaard's study concludes that perceived tenure security has drawn on social relationships and Indigenous normative systems, which have been more important to people than officially-issued legal documents.

Thus, the complexity of land tenure in Nicaragua not only results from 'uncertain' property regimes, but is also an expression of Indigenous peoples' diverse legal systems, recognised in many Latin American national constitutions.

Although Nicaragua provides constitutional recognition of customary land tenure rights, in practice such recognition has not been accompanied by effective mechanisms to demarcate and title. Moreover, Nicaragua has not provided an effective judicial remedy to contest the violation of Indigenous constitutional and human rights (Alvarado, 2007, p. 616). Arguably, this was the argument for Awas Tingni to take its case to court. But does changing the source of law grant justice? This question will be discussed later in the chapter.

## **The Atlantic Coast**

The Atlantic Coast of Nicaragua has had a history of land conflicts originating from the imperial competition that developed between Spain and England. The Spaniards colonised the Pacific Coast and the English the Atlantic Coast, effectively creating two different geographic regions that barely interacted with each other. On the Atlantic Coast, the English established a relationship of commercial and political cooperation with the Miskito people. The appointment of the first Miskito King in 1687 consolidated Miskito dominance over other Indigenous peoples, including the Mayagna, and guaranteed unrestricted English access to natural resources and slaves in the region. Forced African migration as well as intermarriage between Indigenous people and Black Caribs resulted in the existence of ethnic groups that rejected the Nicaraguan state's project of a monocultural mestizo society (Thompson, 2004, p. 21). By the 19th century, the Atlantic Coast had become the focus of competing British and American interests. In 1870, fearing an American invasion, the Nicaraguan and English governments signed the Treaty of Managua, in which Nicaragua established sovereignty in the region and committed itself to creating an Indigenous reserve in the Mosquitia region (*ibid.*, p. 25).

However, once the treaty was signed, the Nicaraguan state took advantage of a legal ambiguity regarding the definition of communal lands and instead tried to advance a mestizo, centralist policy that had devastating effects in the region. Feeling legitimised, mestizo farmers colonised and invaded Indigenous lands while the government attempted to integrate Indigenous communities into mainstream society. The Miskito resisted the central government's integrationist policies but the movement was repressed (*ibid.*, p. 27). Indigenous resistance opened the space for the signing of another treaty between Nicaragua and Britain, the Harrison-Altamirano treaty, which recognised usufruct rights (rights of enjoyment) for Indigenous communities. Although legally binding, this treaty mostly benefited Creole communities, while the Miskito and the Mayagna were often ignored (Instituto de Estudios Políticos para América Latina y África, 1986). In the 1970s, mestizo peasant encroachment into Indigenous lands fuelled new conflicts that were addressed by titling land for

a few Miskito and Mayagna communities (*ibid.*). To the Nicaraguan state, the Atlantic Coast was inhabited by 'savage tribes' who could not govern themselves and who needed to be reconquered (Pérez-Baltodano, 2003, p. 397). As Hale et al. argue, Indigenous communities within the Atlantic Coast have revolted against the dispossession of their lands and the assimilationist state project (1998).

The conflictive relationship between the Nicaraguan state and Indigenous communities was further exacerbated by the Sandinista Revolution in the early 1980s. The revolutionary movement, concerned with overthrowing oppressive class relationships, ultimately undermined the relevance of Indigenous identity. The economic causes that precipitated the fall of the Somoza dictatorship in the Pacific region eventually reached the Atlantic Coast as industrial agriculture and cattle ranching displaced thousands of poor mestizo peasants, who began to invade Indigenous lands (Gordon et al., 2003, p. 375). The Sandinista government's nationalist approach to fighting American imperialism clashed with an emergent Indigenous nationalist consciousness that emphasised conceptions of territory and self-determination (Hale, 1994). In this context, coastal peoples interpreted the Sandinistas' 'progressive' land distribution for poor peasants as being yet another wave of colonisation.

Resentment and discontent incubated the conditions for recruiting Miskito militia and creating the 'contra revolution' movement financed by the United States against the Sandinistas. Lasting almost ten years, from 1980–9, the civil war influenced the creation of the North Atlantic Autonomous Region (NAAR) and the South Atlantic Autonomous Region (SAAR) on the Atlantic Coast of Nicaragua. These regions represent approximately 42 per cent of the national territory and contain important marine and terrestrial resources, including major forests (Kaimowitz, 2002). Established in 1987 to undermine Miskito support for the contra revolution movement, the Autonomy Law recognised Indigenous peoples' rights to i) benefit from their natural resources; and ii) practice their traditional subsistence activities. The law states that communal property consists of 'land, water and forest' (Asamblea Nacional de la República de Nicaragua, 2007, p. 25).

Three years later, following the electoral defeat of the Sandinistas in 1990, Miskito leaders were elected to the NAAR government and were committed to advancing Miskito land rights. At this time, neoliberal reforms brought about a wave of changes and since then adjustment policies have only deepened. Some have argued that structural adjustment programmes in Nicaragua have been harsher than in other places in Latin America because they were intended to undo Sandinista economic reforms (Babb, 2001, p. 155; Prevost and Vandén, 1999, pp. 6–7). In addition to cutbacks in state-sponsored services and subsidies, industry, health and education were all privatised (Pisani, 2003). The

country has been suffering from high unemployment as well as from declining levels of health, education and living standards among the majority of the population (Henriksen, 2008). Moreover, the post-war central governments have consistently undermined the territorial rights of the two autonomous regions, making Indigenous peoples who are small in number, such as the Mayagna, even more vulnerable than others.

### **After Awas Tingni**

While neoliberal structural reforms were being implemented in the early 1990s, environmental groups and international financial institutions pressured the government of Violeta Chamorro to stop the overexploitation of forests. As a consequence, President Chamorro created the Bosawás Natural Reserve without informing its Indigenous residents. The Mayagna and Miskito, who had previously inhabited the area before fleeing from the war, found out when they returned from Honduras that they were living within an ecological reserve and were suddenly being pressured to preserve the area. Ironically, while Indigenous communities were made accountable for their economic practices, illegal logging within the Bosawás Natural Reserve did not necessarily come to a halt. In search of economic alternatives, the community of Awas Tingni signed a conservation agreement in 1994 with the Nicaraguan government and the Nicaragua-Dominican lumber company, based on a forest management project that was considered to be economically beneficial, environmentally sound and respectful of human rights (Vuotto, 2004, p. 230). To further comply with the agreement, the community initiated studies to document their traditional land use and occupancy. In 1995 Awas Tingni found out that, without their knowledge, another logging concession had been granted by the central government to a Korean timber company. When they protested about this action, the Nicaraguan government argued that Awas Tingni had neither land title nor was 'using' the land in question. Moreover, the government noted that Awas Tingni had separated from the mother community, which was located in a different area, and therefore the disputed lands could not be considered 'ancestral' to the Mayagna.

Although the Autonomy Law recognises the rights of all Indigenous communities in the Atlantic coast, and the Nicaraguan state recognises Indigenous legal systems, Awas Tingni could not register their lands in any way, creating the conditions for the government's infringement of their rights. As a result, the *Awas Tingni v. Nicaragua* case was brought before the Inter-American Court in 1995 under the argument that Indigenous land rights were crucial to protect both the Mayagna and the environment. The Court drew from several sources to determine that proof of traditional land-use and

occupancy is sufficient for Indigenous communities lacking legal land titles to obtain recognition of their property, and ruled that the Nicaragua government had violated this right with respect to the Awas Tingni community. The Court found that, although Article 21 of the American Convention and Nicaraguan legislation recognised communal property, this legislation lacked the mechanisms to *title* and *demarcate*. As a remedy, the Court recommended that the Nicaraguan state title Awas Tigni's lands and also develop the mechanisms to guarantee property rights, not only for Indigenous but also for black communities. In 2008, the Nicaraguan state granted title to Awas Tingni but the demarcation took longer due to overlapping land claims.

While the case was being taken to court, the World Bank provided funds to survey the land tenure of Indigenous communities within the entire Atlantic Coast of Nicaragua. Researchers produced the report 'Diagnóstico general sobre la tenencia de la tierra en las comunidades indígenas de la Costa Atlántica' ('General diagnostic on Indigenous communities' land tenure in the Atlantic Coast') in 1998. It demonstrated the existence of unclear and often overlapping local perceptions of land tenure and recommended immediate demarcation and titling to avoid conflict among communities. While the report emphasised the need to homogenise property regimes, James Anaya noted that Indigenous peoples possess their own unique legal systems for governing their lands and resources. Because of this diversity, there cannot be a universal 'one-size-fits-all definition of property' (Anaya, cited in Anaya and Williams, 2001, p. 34).

So, why the insistence on regularising Indigenous property rights? A number of reports, including the Eliasch Review (2008) and the Focali Report (Westholm et al., 2009), state that secure property rights, on paper and in practice, are a pre-condition for long-term investments in sustainable management of forest ecosystems. As noted earlier, by homogenising property rights and authorising a fixed understanding of indigeneity, climate mitigation services can be brought into the market both to produce wealth and to fight poverty. Indigenous peoples are not only considered poor and marginalised but are also blamed for relying too much on the ecosystems they live in for fuel, shelter, medicine, food and water. The imperatives of climate-change mitigation demand that these peoples reduce their carbon footprints and learn to protect the environment since only preserved ecosystems have value. In this context, although Indigenous property rights are recognised, a narrative of cultural survival disciplines these peoples to limit their political and economic aspirations to a way of life that emphasises the stewardship of forests instead. In this regard, Baldwin notes that the idealised legal personality of the noble savage is indispensable to forest management (2009, p. 246). Without a noble savage who protects forests, there is no carbon emission offset. To conceive Indigenous peoples differently renders them unintelligible.

The *Awás Tingni v. Nicaragua* ruling resulted, in 2002, in the adoption of a new Communal Property Law, or Law 445, which established the mechanisms for demarcation and titling of communal lands in the Atlantic Coast. Law 445 explicitly defined the concept of a 'community of the Atlantic Coast', used in the Constitution, and also the terms 'ethnic community', 'Indigenous community', and 'Indigenous people'. Officially, the demarcation and titling process started in 2003 (Rodríguez Piñero Royo, 2004, p. 233). Following the recommendation of the World Bank, the Nicaraguan government promoted a model of land tenure based on an individual community's 'actual' use. According to Gordon et al., the idea was 'to create little islands [of Indigenous lands] in a sea of development' (2003, p. 376). However, Miskito, Creoles and Garifuna communities opted for a pragmatic approach to mapping, arguing that all lands on the Atlantic Coast are communal, and that as Indigenous peoples they have the right to govern them collectively. This resulted in the so-called 'block of communities', comprising numerous communities adjacent to each other with no unclaimed space separating them.

Are Indigenous lands more secure after the IACHR's decision and the passing of Law 445? Titling and demarcation have produced some unintended consequences. First, these mechanisms have reignited old land conflicts and driven communities that used to share lands to think of them in terms of exclusive property. Continuous waves of invasion and encroachment upon these lands are producing once again a conflict between the mestizo Pacific region and the predominantly Indigenous Atlantic Coast. In resisting illegal logging and intrusion, Indigenous communities have organised surveillance activities and claimed that mestizo peasants are to blame for the continued deforestation of their ancestral lands. The Nicaraguan Army also admitted recently that land invasions and deforestation have reached the very heart of the Bosawás Natural Reserve, considered the 'lungs of Central America' (cited in Kaimowitz, 2002, p. 191). Second, protection of the environment and the defence of land have created a scenario where some Indigenous communities are conceptualised as being stewards of the land, while poor, landless, mestizo and Indigenous peasants from the Pacific area are being portrayed as illegal settlers who destroy the land. While green neoliberalism praises hunting and gathering, farming is being dismissed as a viable economic activity. Third, although Indigenous peasant communities also inhabit the Pacific region, simplistic classification of their economic activities leads to the perception that 'authentic' Indigenous peoples, stewards of the land, live on the Atlantic Coast. Such a perception has posed some difficulties for the claims of those who self-identify as Indigenous but may not be recognised as such.

To further complicate this analysis, a universalised performance of indigeneity based on historical continuity with a pre-colonial past, and anchored in land-use patterns and subsistence economics, is excluding Indigenous peoples from reaping full benefit from their lands. According to this framework, these peoples lived with nature and performed 'traditional' activities that did not involve profiting from the land, so by extension their aspirations to participate in the logging industry are perceived as not being 'traditional'. As hegemonic assumptions about Indigenous identity and ethnic difference shape the recognition of collective rights and the tenets of green capitalism, the discourse of rights simultaneously requires Indigenous peoples to conform to certain expectations, limiting their use of their natural resources (Muehlmann, 2009, p. 470).

## Conclusion

The scenario discussed above forces a critical examination of how certain places are targeted in neoliberalism and how certain performances of indigeneity have the ultimate effect of failing the Indigenous subjects. The relationship between indigeneity, the environment and property rights enables the maintenance of existing power relations and exclusions. Property rights are never neutral. Paul Nadasdy argues that, as a socially constructed concept, property reflects the set of norms and values embodied in the nation state (2005, p. 232). By accepting the notion of property, Indigenous peoples authorise judges, government institutions and bureaucrats to impose those norms and values upon their communities, foreclosing the possibility of envisioning alternatives according to their own laws. While government and financial institutions promote environmental resource management, Indigenous peoples seek to control their natural resources.

The 'coming into being' of indigeneity in law universalises a form of fixed difference that simultaneously reinforces local identities and global forms of governance that naturalise and discipline the ways in which difference must be embodied. In this framework, Indigenous aspirations towards the modern are considered an anomaly. A focus on mapping and neoliberal governance demonstrates that although territorial rights and Indigenous legal systems are constitutionally recognised, the reregularisation of property rights incorporates new forms of commodity into the market. This approach offers insights into how universalised conceptions of indigeneity bring forth a set of limits and possibilities for changing people's living conditions. While the mobilisation of both indigeneity and environmentalism secures some support for these communities, mapping and lawsuits do not necessarily guarantee justice.

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## 12. What we talk about when we talk about Indian

Yvette Nolan

‘There are many Shakespearean plays I could see in a native setting, from *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* to *Coriolanus*, but *Julius Caesar* isn’t one of them’, wrote Richard Ouzounian in the *Toronto Star* in 2008. He was reviewing Native Earth Performing Arts’ adaptation of *Julius Caesar*, entitled *Death of a Chief*, staged at Buddies in Bad Times Theatre, Toronto. Ouzounian’s pronouncement raises a number of questions about how Indigenous creators are mediated, and by whom, and how the arbiter shapes the idea of Indigenous.<sup>1</sup> On the one hand, white people seem to desire a Native Shakespeare; on the other, they appear to have a notion already of what constitutes an authentic Native Shakespeare.

From 2003 to 2011, I served as the artistic director of Native Earth Performing Arts, Canada’s oldest professional Aboriginal theatre company. During my tenure there, we premiered nine new plays and a trilingual opera, produced six extant scripts (four of which we toured regionally, nationally or internationally), copresented an interdisciplinary piece by an Inuit/Québécois company, and created half a dozen short, made-to-order works, community-commissioned pieces to address specific events or issues.

One of the new plays was actually an old one, the aforementioned *Death of a Chief*, which we coproduced in 2008 with Canada’s National Arts Centre (NAC). *Death*, an adaptation of Shakespeare’s *Julius Caesar*, took three years to develop. Shortly after I started at Native Earth, Aboriginal artists approached me about not being considered for roles in Shakespeare (unless producers were doing *Midsummer Night’s Dream*, because apparently fairies can be Aboriginal, or *Coriolanus*, because its hero struggles to adapt to a consensus-based community). Even when they did get an audition, they often did not have the tools to nail the part. Most of our artists still do not have conservatory training;

1 There is no single appropriate or agreed-upon term that can be adopted to refer to the Indigenous peoples of Turtle Island (North America), and nomenclature shifts and evolves in different cultures. This chapter uses the term Indigenous in the broadest sense, to include such disparate and far-flung groups as the Māori, Canadian First Nations and Aboriginal Australians. I often use Aboriginal when referring to a community of artists from different First Nations, or in the case of Native Earth, respecting the way the company self-identifies (‘Canada’s oldest professional Aboriginal theatre company’). Where possible and appropriate, I refer to particular nations, such as Guna, Algonquin, Cree and so forth.

many did not go to universities for acting, all the places where one learns about Shakespeare. So Native Earth offered a Shakespeare-intensive workshop with Kennedy C. MacKinnon, who is a coach at the Stratford Festival in Ontario and has a profound and unshakeable belief that Shakespeare belongs to everyone. At the end of the week-long workshop, the artists said, 'Great, now we have the tools, we need a production'.

My first Shakespeare was *Julius Caesar*, when I was a toddler. My mother was an autodidact – an Algonquin woman whose first language was Algonquin, second French and third English – and so we learned much together. In the 1960s, the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation televised various productions including a *Julius Caesar* from the Stratford Festival. Some 40 years later, casting about for a likely Shakespeare, I settled on *Caesar*. It is, after all, about how we choose our leaders, elevate them, perceive them to be corrupted, tear them down and look for a new leader, starting the cycle all over again. This has too often been our experience in our long return to self-government as Aboriginal people; we choose a leader who turns out to be self-serving, and we have to depose him and choose another.

Over the next three years, we held workshops, working with the text, choosing what spoke to us, exploding the timelines and putting the scenes back together, often simultaneously. More importantly, perhaps, we negotiated over the years our own kind of self-government within the company. We were, after all, a company drawn from a host of nations: Mohawk, Guna, Rappahannock, Wampanoag, Métis, Gwich'in, Algonquin, Cree, Ojibwe, Tuscarora. We each brought our own teachings and traditions to the room – in some cultures women do not drum, some are matrilineal – and negotiated a new set of rules for this community, this Rome, Ontario. We self-governed. And that which we did in the room, we extended into the play, and in my heart I could imagine a way forward for First Nations in Canada.

Canada's NAC English Theatre in Ottawa, the nation's capital, came on board as a coproducer late in the development process, bringing a much-needed injection of cash to hold a week-long workshop six months before we went into production. The artistic director of English Theatre at the time, Peter Hinton, had made a commitment to include First Nations work on the NAC stages. The previous year, his first season, he had premiered Métis playwright Marie Clements's *Copper Thunderbird*, about the Anishinaabe painter Norval Morrisseau.

*Death of a Chief* opened in Ottawa in the NAC's 300-seat Studio, playing to 99 per cent-full houses. Although we had included a glossary in the house programme – something to which I had been resistant – in the frequent talkbacks, audiences invariably asked about the significance of things such as the rocks which formed the medicine wheel that began the show and the

colours of each of the four banners: red, yellow, black, white. Evidently, this concerned some of the reviewers as well. In Ottawa, one of them (Connie Meng) said, 'A mixed audience of Natives and non-Natives needs more specific cultural information, if not from the stage [then] at least in programme notes. For example, what is the significance of the opening and closing sequences with the stones?' (2008).

The stones that mystified Meng were actually a circle of stones, arranged in the form of a medicine wheel. These sacred symbols dot the landscape of Turtle Island (North America), the oldest being the Bighorn wheel in Wyoming, with Alberta boasting the majority of known medicine wheels, some 66 per cent. Here, when the audience is presented with an authentic marker of Native presence on this land, they – or at least the reviewer, purporting to speak for the audience – are baffled, ignorant about one of the oldest artefacts connecting the Indigenous populations of the past to those of the present.<sup>2</sup> This is the same reviewer who stated in reference to *Death of a Chief*, 'They have incorporated some native languages as well as singing and movement to better reflect Native culture' (Meng, 2008). *The Toronto Star* reviewer, the one who relegated us to *Dream* and *Coriolanus*, suggested that the only 'Indian' – his word, not mine<sup>3</sup> – in the play was in the 'ritualistic trappings that designer Camellia Koo has given it ... On a virtually bare playing space, the cast performs in earth-toned garments that morph from tribal robes to urban hoodies' (Ouzounian, 2008). The reviewer from Canada's national newspaper, *The Globe and Mail*, stated that 'the play fails to make any resonant connection to Aboriginal issues' (Nestruck, 2008).

## Native on its own terms

Métis scholar Jason Simmonds, in his PhD dissertation about Native Shakespeare, talks about the reviews and the reviewers of *Death*, saying that 'many of the critics suddenly became experts and thereby border guards of what constituted a Shakespeare performance and also of what constituted a performance of aboriginality' (2011, p. 193). He continued: 'Their issue is with the power Native Earth has to represent and present itself as Native on its

- 2 The two-dimensional representation of the stone medicine wheel is a circle with the four colours – black, white, yellow and red – each of which is associated with a direction, a season, a stage of life. These are the medicine wheel teachings in Anishinaabe culture and some of the Plains cultures.
- 3 'Indian' as an appellation for Indigenous people is problematic for many reasons going back to Columbus and his belief that he had reached the Indian Ocean when he landed on the shores of Turtle Island. Nonetheless, many of the pieces of legislation and bodies that govern the Indigenous populations of Turtle Island use the term (The Indian Act in Canada, the Bureau of Indian Affairs in the United States). On 8 January 2013, the Supreme Court of Canada handed down a decision that officially recognises Métis and non-status Indians as Indians under the 1867 Constitution Act, effectively doubling the number of 'Indians' in Canada.



Figure 12.1. Monique Mojica plays Caesar in *Death of a Chief*. Photo: Nir Bareket.

Figure 12.2. Scene from *Death of a Chief*. Photo: Nir Bareket.

own terms' (ibid., p. 195). My reading of these responses, from both spectators and reviewers, was that somehow we were not authentic. Not Indian enough. Yet, authentic by definition is real, genuine, not false or copied.

In spite of our three years of development as a community of artists working on the production, in spite of the development processes being achieved through an Indigenous practice, in spite of what we did, or what we said, or what we said we were doing, we were very often told we were not Aboriginal enough: 'Nice singing, nice drumming, [but] why do they have to speak Shakespeare's language?' One of the markers of authenticity that the viewer – whether audience member or reviewer – was missing seemed to be language. That we did not speak in either a Native language or in rez-speak<sup>4</sup> indicated that we were not authentically Aboriginal.

4 Rez-speak is English spoken with a certain cadence that mainstream audiences, especially in Canada, have been trained to receive as an 'Indian accent'. Often, English is the speaker's second or third language, and the cadence of the mother tongue affects the pronunciation of the English. Children may not learn the mother tongue, but may learn English with the accent. The Canadian Broadcasting Corporation has long had First Nations representation on the radio and television, but may have contributed to the notion that all Aboriginal people speak with an accent. Examples include Jasper Friendly Bear and Gracie Heavy Hand in *Dead Dog Café* and the Joe character in *Joe from Winnipeg*, both produced by CBC Radio. The irony is that *Dead Dog Café* writer Thomas King and Ian Ross, who wrote and performed *Joe From Winnipeg*, both speak without the Indian accent in daily life.

In 2010, I got word that Tom Bird from Shakespeare's Globe was looking for a Native Canadian Shakespeare for their Globe to Globe Festival, part of the 2012 London Cultural Olympiad. I offered to send him a package about *Death of a Chief*. He asked me what language the production was in, because the concept of the Globe's festival was 'to do all 38 Shakespeare plays, each one in a different language'.<sup>5</sup> I explained as follows:

Our *Caesar* is mostly in Shakespeare's English, though there is a smattering of Ojibwe, a few words in Guna, Mohawk, and a whack of vocables. Native Earth is, of necessity, a pan-Indian theatre. Our constituency is primarily the urban Aboriginal population. Our artists come from all over, all over Turtle Island, all over the world, really ... What so many of us have in common is that we have not got our languages. The Oracle speaks in Ojibwe when he calls Caesar – and of course she doesn't understand. That's one of the points.<sup>6</sup> Having said that, the piece is in our language in that it is crafted through a practice of Indigenous thought ... time is less linear, the ancestors are with us, the players grow right out of the land. Scenes happen simultaneously, layered. We – the company who crafted it – agreed to rituals and practices through a process of discussion and negotiation. But if you are looking for a Caesar in one Native language, we are not it.

We were indeed not it. Tom thanked me and declined, saying,

We won't get away with doing a show that's mainly in English, just because it's not really fair on all the other companies who'd like to do that! ... [But if] you do hear of any Shakespeare-influenced work solely in Native languages in either Canada or the US, I'd love to hear about it.

Several months later I happened to be checking the title of one of Yirra Yaakin's plays on their website (Native Earth has in the past toured with Yirra Yaakin, a Noongar company in Perth, Australia, as part of Honouring Theatre, an initiative showcasing Indigenous works). The first thing that popped up on their attractive new site was a banner stating: 'Yirra Yaakin Theatre Company and Olympic partner Woodside are proud to announce our invitation by Shakespeare's Globe Theatre to translate Shakespeare's sonnets into Noongar and present them on the Globe stage as part of the Cultural Olympiad Festival'. The website includes a video about the project, in which three of the artists involved talk about the process of translating Shakespeare into Noongar. Towards the end, artistic director Kyle Morrison says: 'And the interest, as soon as I talk to people, as soon as I mention what we're planning on doing, what the

5 This correspondence took place in a series of emails dated 30 Dec. 2010 to 5 Jan. 2011.

6 The actor playing Caesar, Monique Mojica, is Guna and Rappahannock; she speaks English, Spanish, French and a smattering of Dulegaya, the Guna language.

idea is, automatically people just wanna hear more, they wanna hear it straight away, can you do it for me?’<sup>7</sup>

I was happy to see our colleagues at Yirra Yaakin meet the challenge of translating Shakespeare into Noongar and presenting at the Cultural Olympiad and was in no way jealous. Opportunities like these can be as much a curse as a blessing, distracting a company from the work it is mandated to do, and often tempting its members into following the money, doing work that is commissioned or resourced by someone whose idea of Indigenous may be different from the company’s.

In his last year at the helm of Canada’s NAC, Peter Hinton programmed an ‘all-Aboriginal *King Lear*’ as his First Nations piece. However, while the cast was all-Aboriginal – and many of them alumnae of *Death* – there was no Aboriginal person in any position of power. The director, designers and dramaturg were all non-Native. Perhaps this should not have been a problem, given Peter’s vision for *Lear*. When he was casting, he told actors he was considering for the roles that this was not an adaptation, this was a straight Shakespeare; this was not *Death of a Chief*.

What I saw when I attended a performance in Ottawa on 25 May 2012 was Shakespeare in beads and buckskin. The play was ostensibly set in Algonquin territory, the land on which the NAC sits. It is also my territory; my community of Kitigan Zibi is 90 minutes up the road from Ottawa. Early press stated that the play would be set in the time that it was written, which would place it in 1603–08 (in his programme notes, Peter Hinton states that *Lear* was first performed in 1606). Given that Samuel de Champlain, the first European to make contact with the Algonquin people (and the Huron, the Montagnais and the Etchemin), did not do so until 1609, I assumed the play would be moved on a bit in time. Later press and the programme notes situate the play ‘in 17th-century Canada’.

In a remarkably frank interview with *Guerilla* magazine, Suzanne Keptwo, the production’s ‘Aboriginal advisor and community liaison’, expressed a number of concerns about the production, and how it was going to be received. Her concerns prefigured what I observed:

The problem is that the first publicity sets up the play for some very serious cultural and historical inaccuracies. It sets up the media to misread the production as it is now. It sets up audiences to misread it. And for those Algonquin people who know their history – and most know it very well – this production will be inaccurate. It will be confusing. The Algonquin never signed a treaty with the British, the French, or the government of Canada. They never divided lands; they occupied traditional territories.

7 Click ‘video’ link at bottom of home page of [www.yirrayaakin.asn.au](http://www.yirrayaakin.asn.au) (accessed 29 Aug. 2013). ‘Shakespeare’s sonnets in original Noongar language’ is also available on YouTube.

And it is not just the historical setting but the cultural interpretation found in the set and costume design. For example, there will be palisade fencing to depict the Algonquin village, but the Algonquin of this territory never used fencing to envelop their communities. The land and the water served as natural protective barriers. Hairstyles are another important symbol. How a person's hair is worn and styled, cut, or braided has deep significance and provides cultural distinctions between nations in traditional First Nation societies. These are details that need to be understood. (quoted in Finken, 2012)

Suzanne felt the pressure of being the only Aboriginal person on the decision-making side of the table:

I am somewhat nervous about this production. My name is on it as the Aboriginal Advisor and Community Liaison but, ultimately, decisions are made for various theatrical and artistic reasons that are above my control and may not, in the end, reflect cultural accuracy or authenticity. (ibid.)

What is ironic is that the production's costumes were assembled out of real feathers and animal skins so as to seem as authentic as possible. The setting – 17th-century Canada – gave the creative team permission to dress the company of actors as what the Cherokee author Thomas King calls 'Dead Indians':

The Dead Indians I'm talking about are not the deceased sort ... [T]hey are the stereotypes and clichés that North America has conjured up out of experience and out of its collective imaginings and fears. North America has had a long association with Native people, but despite the history that the two groups have shared, North America no longer *sees* Indians. What it sees are war bonnets, beaded shirts, fringed deerskin dresses, loincloths, headbands, feathered lances, tomahawks, moccasins, face paint, and bone chokers. (2012, p. 53)

The costumes of *King Lear* included all of the signifiers King lists, with the exception of the war bonnet, which would have been inaccurate in an Algonquin setting, given that the war bonnet comes from Plains culture.

So, although the creative team has gone to great lengths to ensure that the audience receives the all-Aboriginal *Lear* as authentic, the very signifiers are used in such a way that they actually say things about their wearers that are antithetical to an Indigenous worldview. Goneril, *Lear's* eldest, is bedecked in a coyote cape made of multiple tails. Where, one wonders, are the rest of those animals? Is this coat of many tails supposed to indicate that the Duke of Albany is an exceptionally good hunter? To a community whose tradition is to thank each animal for giving itself for food and shelter and warmth, the effect is ostentatious, wasteful.

Even more problematic for me was a moment in the final act. When Edgar reappears for the final confrontation with Edmund, he is wearing a full bearskin, the bear's head on his own head. I froze in my seat and held my breath. As an Algonquin woman descended from medicine people, the sight of a real bearskin being used as a costume took my breath away. *Mukwa dodem*, or bear clan, is traditionally associated with healing, and with defence. Here was a man arrived to kill his brother, wearing nothing but a loincloth and a bearskin. Did the company understand the symbolism of the animal onstage? Did the audience? A real, full bearskin is to me a sacred item, and so I felt that the animal was being disrespected. I am distressed not only because the use onstage of things I consider sacred offends me. Theatre has the power to shape the opinion of the audience. If theatre's only purposes were to entertain and distract, then it would not be so dangerous. Nor would I be practising it. So much of who I am and what I believe has been shaped by my experiences of sitting in a darkened theatre receiving some artist's interpretation of the world: Arthur Miller's *The Crucible*, Martin Sherman's *Bent*, *The Diary of Anne Frank* by Frances Goodrich and Albert Hackett, Peter Shaffer's *Equus*, John Steinbeck's *Of Mice and Men*, to name but a few. Theatre may not be the best delivery system for facts, but it very often delivers things we apprehend to be truth. So what truths were being received by the NAC audience?

Recently, I spoke about the NAC production of *King Lear* to a non-Native colleague, a director with whom I have worked occasionally, someone I respect. I described some of the images: the bearskin, the coyote cape, the multiple drums played (or airplayed, in some cases), Lear's tomahawk-waving followers. She could see that I was disturbed; I could see that she was not comprehending my consternation. At the end of my description, she leaned forward and looked into my eyes: 'It sounds like it was spectacular ... I mean, if you are not culturally sensitised ... was it spectacular?' We sat across from each other, the table and a huge abyss of non-comprehension between us. Yes, it was spectacular. Once again, the spectacular trumps the authentic, and yet, I cannot help feeling that the audience was receiving *King Lear* as somehow *more* authentic because of the trappings.

As a dramaturg, I have questions about the insistence on not adapting at all, brooking no changes to the text to accommodate an Indigenous worldview, or even situating the play on Turtle Island. Hence, when Gloucester introduces the King of France with 'Here's France and Burgundy', when the King invites Cordelia to be 'queen of us, of ours, and our fair France', when Lear responds 'Thou hast her, France', the effect on the audience is jarring, for the King of France is bedecked in buckskins, two feathers sticking up in his hair. He does not look like the King of France, he looks like a dead Indian.

I wonder if the reviewer who could not accept a *Julius Caesar* ‘in a native context’ would take issue with the choice of *King Lear*. Our *Caesar* was about how we choose our leaders, how our leaders disappoint us with pride and greed and ego, and how we have to overthrow them and choose new leaders, falling into a destructive cycle that threatens the harmony of the community. *King Lear* is based on the very un-Indigenous concept of personal land ownership. The idea that one can divide and give the land to anyone is contrary to the belief and practice of most Indigenous nations on Turtle Island. The land is held by a nation on behalf of the members. The entire conflicted relationship between the settlers and the Indigenous people has been about white folks taking the land on which the Indigenous people have lived, not about us giving it away.

During his time at the helm of the NAC’s English theatre programming from 2005–11, and as the director of this *King Lear*, Peter Hinton made a Herculean effort to include Aboriginal artists in his programming. Peter’s First Nations programming had included the *Copper Thunderbird* premiere, *Death of a Chief* and *The Ecstasy of Rita Joe*, a canonical Canadian play about First Nations written by George Ryga, a Canadian of Ukrainian descent. *Rita Joe* had opened the NAC 40 years before, and is occasionally identified as the beginning of a contemporary Canadian theatre because it is about the relationship between the First Nations and the settlers, and because it was commissioned to celebrate the Canadian centennial. Peter Hinton’s NAC’s 40th anniversary production fulfilled his vision by engaging for the first time an Aboriginal director – me – to direct the play, and I built a company of primarily First Nations artists.

I struggled, as did many of my colleagues, on this production. A primarily Aboriginal cast and creative team (nine of 13 actors, the choreographer, composers and director were all First Nations) did not make *The Ecstasy of Rita Joe* an Aboriginal play. We needed to shift the gaze of the play, to bring an Indigenous lens to it. Ryga had given us many tools already – the non-linear time structure, the inclusion of music and dance. Much of what he saw about us he included in the play, but he could only capture what he observed. In a way, we put flesh on the bones that Ryga wrote. One of the major, contentious changes was commissioning Michelle St John (Wampanoag) and Jennifer Kreisberg (Tuscarora) to compose new music, and shifting the identity of the onstage singer from what the published text describes as a ‘white liberal folklorist with a limited concern and understanding of an ethnic dilemma’ to the ‘alter ego to Rita Joe’ (Ryga, 1970, p. 15). In our estimation, that meant ‘Native’ and, in essence, Rita Joe’s spirit. Some of the songs were translated into Secwepemc (Shuswap) and everyone sang at various moments in the play. At one point, one of the non-Native actors expressed his frustration at ‘workshopping’ a 40-year-old play. His anger was illuminating for me because

I realised that we were translating every moment to an Indigenous worldview, shifting the gaze beat by beat, in order to transform a white play into a Native one. I was not in the rehearsal hall of *King Lear*, so I have no way of knowing if Peter Hinton and the company had a similar experience.

In his last few years in charge, Peter presented touring productions to fulfil his mandate of presenting Aboriginal work. *Where the Blood Mixes* by Nlaka'pamux artist Kevin Loring won the 2009 Governor General Award for Drama; it played at the NAC as part of a national tour that included stops in Victoria, Vancouver, Winnipeg and Toronto. Anishinaabe creator Waawaate Fobister's one-man show, *Agokwe*, was similarly successful before it arrived at the NAC, garnering six Dora Mavor Moore awards in Toronto in 2009. Both of these were first plays for their authors, developed thanks to years of generous support from theatres and/or festivals with resources. *Where the Blood Mixes* was funded by the Vancouver Playhouse, Western Canada Theatre Company and Luminato among others, while *Agokwe* received support from Buddies in Bad Times Theatre. By the time they arrived at the NAC theatre, they were relatively inexpensive to stage. *King Lear*, presented in 2012, was the culmination of Peter's tenure at the NAC. In a press release for the production, after the announcement of his departure, he stated, 'There are two things that I am proudest of at the NAC. On one level is the Shakespeare, and the other has been our Aboriginal programming'.<sup>8</sup>

Intercultural theatre scholar Ric Knowles asks in his contribution to a forthcoming book, 'Why is it that white people want so badly for there to be a Native Shakespeare?' (2015). I too wonder why I so badly wanted this that I invested close to three years of the life and resources of the company I led to develop what I considered to be a Native Shakespeare. The desire was not mine alone; the actors who asked for training in approaching Shakespearean texts were the genesis of the project. Six members of the NAC's *King Lear* production came to it through having been involved in *Death of a Chief* – four had played Caesar, Mark Antony, Brutus and Calpurnius respectively; two others had participated in the three years of development workshops.

As a theatre professional who has spent a decade working within my communities to support a contemporary Indigenous practice, I argue publicly that just because we do not wear beads and buckskin does not mean we are not doing Native theatre. I sometimes feel like I am battling Buffalo Bill, dead nearly a hundred years now. Canny showman that he was, he recognised the value of Native life as commodity. After making a career of hunting and killing Indians, he switched gears, and transformed them into entertainers, performing their Aboriginality. Cody sexed up the dances and had the Indians reenacting

8 See <http://nac-cna.ca/en/media/newsrelease/3840> (accessed 25 Sep. 2013).

battles, like Custer's Last Stand, that captivated the public. The ensuing decades of Wild West shows cemented in the public's mind the spectacle of Indians in feathers and animal skins, dancing, whooping and waving tomahawks.

Native Earth's marketing for *Death of a Chief* stated that 'Shakespeare's tale of *Julius Caesar* is unearthed ... this time on native ground'. The three-year process allowed a community of theatre practitioners the time and space to negotiate protocols, articulate a vision and maintain creative control over every aspect of the production. The process made the space in which we worked Native ground, and the work growing out of such ground is authentic in a way that is beyond question. As more Indigenous artists take control of their storytelling – and they are, from Marie Clements and her red diva projects in Vancouver to Tawata Productions in New Zealand – so will they wrest control of what is deemed authentic, and the work will be Native on its own terms.

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**Video**

'Shakespeare's sonnets in original Noongar language', available at: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=IrvDQB9ql3w](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IrvDQB9ql3w) (accessed 29 Aug. 2013).

### 13. Indigenous interventions at Klahowya Village, ᑭᓄᓐᓂᓐ ᓂᓐᓂᓐ ᓂᓐᓂᓐ y Vancouver/unceded Coast Salish Territory

*Selena Couture*

On a hot day in late July 2010, I walked through an area of Stanley Park, downtown Vancouver's thousand-acre urban park, with some participants from a youth exchange programme I was hosting between East Vancouver and Fort Good Hope, Northwest Territories.<sup>1</sup> On our way to a picnic lunch at the beach, we stopped so that the northern youth could take the chance to look at some of the park's huge west-coast trees. Just beyond the aquarium, a sign advertising Klahowya Village caught our attention and, close behind it, the false wall of a longhouse, built with cedar planks adorned with two large cut-outs of red hands upraised in a gesture of thanks and welcome (the logo of the Aboriginal Tourism Association of British Columbia). Coast Salish iconography decorated the entrance. Although I had heard of the recently opened tourist attraction, a visit to the site had not been planned. However, since our visitors were interested, we walked through, lingering beside a carver working on a tree stump. He spoke to some of the group and, on learning they were participating in a youth exchange, decided to perform a ceremony with us. Getting us to join hands in a circle around the stump he was working on, he asked us to help him connect with the spirit of the wood. A costumed singer danced and drummed as we circled and sang along. As the music ended, he asked us all to lay our hands on the wood. We then packed up and went on our way.

I was left feeling ambivalent, not having understood what I had just experienced. I am wary of much of the cultural tourism that happens in Vancouver's public spaces and suspicious of the commodification of indigeneity. We had not been asked to pay any money for our experience but artisan-made cedar bark hats, dreamcatchers and bentwood boxes were on sale as well as tickets to the 'Spirit Catcher' train ride. I did not know where the performers and artists at the village had come from or who was paying them to be there, yet our interactions with them were positive. I felt uncomfortable and wanted to know why.

1 Since 2002, I have been an organiser for a youth exchange programme run by the Purple Thistle Centre, an arts and activism collective run by youth in East Vancouver. It involves exchanges with the Shtu Dene people of Fort Good Hope, Northwest Territories, and is intended to build ongoing relationships between the two communities.

This chapter results from my trying to understand the source of that discomfort. In it, I argue that the presence of performing artists at this culturally significant site in Vancouver – metres from the former Coast Salish village of  $\chi^w\text{ay}\chi^w \text{əy}^2$  – asserts a limited form of ‘visual sovereignty’. Michelle Raheja has described this practice in indigenous filmmaking as one that addresses settler populations by using stereotypical self-representations while it connects to aesthetic practices that strengthen treaty claims and more traditional cultural understanding by revisiting, borrowing, critiquing and stretching ethnographic conventions (2011, pp. 19, 193). Encountering the stereotypes employed in this process could have been one source of the discomfort I felt, as could my venturing into an unsettling space inflected by colonial conventions. Expanding on Raheja’s analysis of visual sovereignty in indigenous filmmaking to consider the performative aspects of a live event, I demonstrate here the significance of the embodied experience of both performers and audience at Klahowya Village layered over the archival architecture of this tourist space.

Diana Taylor distinguishes between the archive, which she argues is generally misconceived as unmediated records that work across distance, space and time to preserve memory, and the repertoire which ‘requires presence: people participate in the production and reproduction of knowledge by “being there,” being a part of the transmission’ (2003, pp. 19–20). She asserts that the repertoire is equally important as ‘a system of learning, storing, and transmitting knowledge’, and that the archive and the repertoire exist in a constant state of interaction, thus expanding what we understand as knowledge (pp. 16, 21). In order to access this knowledge, Taylor develops a methodology of focusing on the ‘scenario’, which draws attention to the repertoire by emphasising the power of performance to transmit knowledge, social memory and identity (pp. 28–33). As the stripping of knowledge containing social memory and identity has been one of the methods employed in the colonial process to eliminate indigenous people’s culture (as exemplified by the residential schools system in Canada), the use of the repertoire to transmit that knowledge is an important means of recuperating indigenous subjectivities. My intention is to explore not only how indigenous people resist colonialism in the present, but also the ways of transmitting indigenous knowledge through performance that do not depend on the colonial archive. I also contend that the visual sovereignty asserted in this place creates a new archive to interact with this repertoire.

- 2 Naming of places and indigenous groups is different depending on whose language is used. In English the names of the local Coast Salish nations are Musqueam, Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh. In their own languages, they are  $x^w\text{mə}\theta k^w \text{ə y}^2 \text{ə m}$ ,  $S\text{kw}\text{xw}\text{ú}7\text{mesh}$  and  $səlil'wə\text{tə}\text{ʔ}$ , respectively. Each language also spells slightly differently the original indigenous village on which Klahowya is located, either  $\chi^w\text{ay}\chi^w \text{əy}$  or  $Xwáyxway$ . In English this is translated as *Xwáyxway* and sometimes *Whoi Whoi*.

Focusing on multiple modes of performance observed over seven site visits in the summer of 2012, this chapter will examine the scenario of touristic encounter layered into the village, taking into account the historical context of indigenous performance in this region and the physical location. This focus on the scenario illuminates the knowledge transmission that occurs through the embodiment of social actors and the use of formulaic structures that predispose certain outcomes, while also allowing for reversal, parody and change. The chapter also considers the implications of the usage of what non-indigenous people might consider 'aberrant' cultural practices during a live performance as opposed to a film (Raheja, 2011, p. 204). Following Taylor's emphasis on the repertoire and the archive not being sequential or binary (2003, p. 22), and using Raheja's notion of visual sovereignty to analyse the tourist village's site design as an intervention in the colonial archive, the chapter demonstrates how Klahowya Village presents an enterprise which asserts sovereignty. It also shows how the village simultaneously enables some intra-nation, indigenous transfer of knowledge, although it is structurally limited as a site of indigenous critique of settler society due to its status as a touristic spectacle.

### **A Coast Salish genealogy of cultural performance**

There has been a long history of settler government policy in Canada, including British Columbia funding cultural projects to capitalise on Aboriginal tourism, dating back to the early days of European settlement. One commentator asserts that '[y]oung people today are not able to find employment because they are not trained for new fields in business life ... Indian young people, by reviving old native arts, will find a profitable trade in the tourist industry' (Dawn, 2008, p. 12). This quotation could easily be from a recent news conference, but is not. The speaker is R.A. Hoey, head of the Indian Affairs Welfare and Training Division arts programme, who came to Vancouver in 1938 to announce the federal government's new policy regarding First Nations' art. Although the government had outlawed traditional ceremonial practices in the late 19th century, it began at this point to encourage traditional artistic practices for economic use. While not explicitly articulated in government policy, the fact that performances were banned while visual arts were encouraged is an indication that performance had the power to unsettle colonialist operations. The potlatch ban was enacted in 1884, 13 years after the colony of British Columbia joined the Confederation, and remained in place until 1951 even though indigenous groups publicly resisted its strictures through petitions, such as the one signed by Coast Salish people in 1910 (Shaw and Campbell, 2012, p. 165). As Dawn explains, the 1938 policy was considered to be the spur that started a post-war revival in indigenous art production, which was

in fact already flourishing. Instead, the policy helped to change the audiences for that cultural production from indigenous to non-indigenous people and recontextualised its tangible creations within museums as aesthetic objects that were consumable commodities, 'divorced from cultural meanings' (2008, p. 43).

Not ten years later, during the 1946 celebrations of Vancouver's Diamond Jubilee, the Native Brotherhood of British Columbia (NBBC) participated in an 'Indian Village and Show', a two-week installation at Kitsilano park on land from which the Squamish people had been forcibly removed in 1913 (Barman, 2007, p. 17). The show featured 'northern' and 'southern' dancers, performing on a platform designed to look like a giant 'tom tom', surrounded by dramatically lit totem poles and masks, its stage lights piercing the dark night. The final performance ended with a ceremony to make Canada's new Governor General 'an honorary chief of the BC Indians' (Vancouver Diamond Jubilee programme, 1946, p. 2). This event, funded by municipal and provincial governments, was both part of a congratulatory boosting of Vancouver's accomplishments and an opportunity to increase tourism, yet the NBBC's involvement complicated the official narrative, as newspaper headlines suggested: 'Disgruntled Indians may quit show' (City of Vancouver Archives, 1946); 'Indians, Jubilee smoke peace pipe' (*Vancouver News Herald*, 1946). Ronald W. Hawker notes that the leadership of the NBBC was determined to maintain control of the First Nations cultural presence at the event, and that 'art became attached to the Native Brotherhood's attempt to present First Nations individuals to the non-Aboriginal public as dignified, organised, and professional people' (2003, pp. 117, 120). Hawker does not distinguish between visual arts and performance, but it is important to note that the performances at this event were still officially banned, requiring special permission, while the visual arts were officially encouraged.

Centennial celebrations have also provided occasions for indigenous cultural performance. Susan Roy positions the Musqueam involvement in the 1966 Centennial celebrations in BC, including their enactment of a warrior dance at a totem-pole raising in Tsawwassen, south of Vancouver, as performing resistance to settler efforts to culturally homogenise all BC First Nations people. She also examines their decision to use *sx̣wáyχ̣w* ay dance in a ceremony to make a mayor into a chief, reading it as strategic:

[I]f we understand politics to encompass the strategies employed by Aboriginal communities to further their existence, visibility, and recognition as nations, then other activities (such as the display of expressive culture) can also be understood as political strategies ... Cultural performance makes the connection between people and place visible, tangible, and, it is hoped, memorable. (2002, p. 90)

Roy's observations support the idea that performances were banned because of their usefulness as political strategy and their ability to unsettle. Aaron Glass also recognises the opportunities that the Indian Village and Show, Centennial celebrations and other such encounters offered to First Nations people struggling under colonial oppression to elicit respectful engagement with modern Canadian settler society:

For the authorities, carefully circumscribed, aestheticized, and commodifiable production of the past was accepted as one minor step toward modernization; for First Nations, such gap in colonial policy (however contradictory) may have created a space (however marginal) for social and cultural reproduction under new conditions of material flexibility and artistic freedom. (2010, p. 30)

For these reasons, indigenous cultural performances have continued to be supported by governments and used strategically by First Nations groups in this region from the 20th century until the present. The groups were most internationally visible when participating in the 2010 Winter Olympics opening ceremony and the accompanying Cultural Olympiad.

A significant element of the plans the Vancouver Organizing Committee made for the 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games (VANOC) was the negotiated involvement of some indigenous groups and the creation of the Four Host First Nations (FHFN) organisation. The latter was the official representative of the Lil'wat, Musqueam, Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh peoples on whose territories the events were being held. Their involvement and representation was intended to ensure that these groups benefited economically at the same time as the Olympic movement's social impact was legitimated (Silver et al. 2012, p. 294). O'Bonsawin asserts that the 2010 Winter games influenced the modern treaty process by motivating the government to settle with First Nations on whose land a major ferry dock had been built, in order to avoid transport disruptions, and that the process also 'encourage[d] First Nations communities ... to develop tourist centres with the purpose of promoting indigenous cultures' (2010, pp. 151–2). Her assertions make explicit the connections between land, political negotiations of power and performative events in this time and place.

The Olympic Games opening ceremonies featured FHFN members in full regalia who entered immediately after the national anthem, speaking words of welcome in their own languages, while four massive statues with outstretched arms rose from the stage. The spectacle then expanded to include hundreds of Aboriginal people from across Canada, dancing in the arena in arresting costumes throughout the athletes' hour-long parade ('Opening Ceremony – Complete Event', 2010). The games also featured an Aboriginal Pavilion

showcasing 232 performances as well as a film, *We are Here*, projected on the inside of the dome (VANOC, 2010, pp. 82, 85). Of the hundreds of events staged during the Cultural Olympiad, VANOC categorised 21 as Aboriginal, including two original plays. *Beyond Eden*, a musical by Bruce Ruddell, dramatised Canadian artist Bill Reid's 1957 expedition to recover totem poles in Ninstints on Haida Gwaii, and Marie Clements' *The Edward Curtis Project* recontextualised the work of the renowned titular photographer by imagining him in dialogue with a contemporary indigenous journalist who is trying to cover the story of two young children's traumatic deaths (see Couture, 2010, pp. 10–17).

The work done by the FHFN organisation during the Olympics is in keeping with the above-mentioned genealogy of ongoing federally and provincially funded projects to increase Aboriginal tourism. Since 1997 the closely related Aboriginal Tourism of British Columbia (AtBC) has been offering training, resources and networking to First Nations entrepreneurs and communities working in the business (Aboriginal Affairs, 2009; AtBC, 2013). The organisation has been the recipient of over \$10 million of combined federal and provincial funding in the last seven years alone (Aboriginal Affairs, 2009; Government of BC, 2006; Government of Canada, 2007). Klahowya Village, one of AtBC's current projects, is clearly a genealogical descendant of the provincial government's past promotion of Aboriginal tourism to encourage economic stability, and is likewise used as a political strategy by First Nations groups.

### **Archive: context, site, naming and place**

Part of the political strategy was to rebrand the site on which Klahowya Village is located. In his broad-ranging study of Pacific performances, Christopher Balme draws from Taylor's concepts when he describes the buildings of the Polynesian Cultural Centre in Hawai'i as an archive (2007, p. 186). Similarly, the Klahowya Village site is an archive in the process of a politically motivated mediation, a concept Taylor elaborates in discussing archive myths (2003, p. 19). In 2009 the City of Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation, facing a budget shortfall, decided to close the children's farmyard in Stanley Park. It had been losing money for years and the city could no longer afford to subsidise it (City of Vancouver, 2010a and b). In May 2010 the Board approved a motion that AtBC open Klahowya Village, using the site's existing miniature railway as an Aboriginal cultural tourism attraction and renaming it the 'Spirit Catcher Train'. Klahowya Village has been run every summer since, expanding each year. Currently there is no admission fee, but a small amount is charged for a puppet show and the train ride. The village is now layered over the various other

farm life signifiers remaining from the children's farmyard. A tipi structure has been set up in the middle of a yard surrounded by two barns, livestock pens, a red cast-iron water pump, some split-rail fencing and rough stonewalls. The farmyard's former ticket booth is now a BC Métis Federation display of information and artefacts. The miniature railway, which winds through the forest around various remnants of farm life (a farmhouse, covered wagon, wooden water-wheel and woodshed) as well as plastic replicas of livestock, has been transformed into the Spirit Catcher ride with the addition of two tunnels. On my visit, poster-sized photos of a tipi, a child in dancing regalia and a man drumming adorned the entrance while dark fluorescent masks glowed at the exit tunnel. The farmhouse roof was decorated with a cut-out eagle, and oversized bentwood boxes were placed as props throughout the forest for costumed performers to use when acting out the 'Legend of the Sasquatch'. The miniature railway is itself a particularly significant example of archival architecture – the train engine is a replica of Canada Pacific Railway Engine #374, which pulled the first Canadian transcontinental passenger train in 1887 (City of Vancouver, 2013). Although there had been some European settlement in the area for 60 years, the arrival of the railway consolidated the incorporation of the existing settlement into the city.

Signage at both entrances explains the meaning of the village installation's name – Klahowya:

Prior to European contact, the Aboriginal people of BC spoke Chinook, a trade jargon that was spoken between several First Nations and was made up by many First Nations languages which allowed communication and trade of resources that were not typically found in one zone territories. The Chinook language was used from Baja to Alaska and into Montana. In Chinook, Klahowya means Welcome. (AtBC, n.d.)

Using the Chinook word for 'Welcome' is diplomatic. As a language developed for intercultural communication, Chinook signifies the cross-cultural contact that is expected to happen between tourists and indigenous representatives at the site. It also signifies, however, that this site of  $\chi^w\text{ay}\chi^w\text{ay}$ , as well as Stanley Park and Vancouver in general, are on unceded and overlapping Coast Salish Nations' territories. At the Eagle entrance there is signage representing each host nation, the Musqueam,  $\text{Skwxwú7mesh}$  and  $\text{səlil'wətaʔ}$ . The Musqueam sign emphasises the continuing presence of Musqueam people 'on this location where you now stand', explains that their name means 'People of the River Grass', relays the story of their origin and stresses the importance of runners in protecting their land. The sign explains the orthographic system of their language,  $\text{hən'qəmī'nəm}$ , and features the 2010 Canadian Olympic hockey team's jersey, which was designed by Musqueam artist Debra Sparrow. The

Skwxwú7mesh sign incorporates text from their language, as well as a map of their territory identifying the Klahowya Village as the site of the Skwxwú7mesh village of Xwáyxway. Modern and historical photographs of Skwxwú7mesh people are also included. The səlil'wətaʔl sign was printed in their language first and then translated into English; they identified themselves as People of the Inlet, described their traditional lands, mentioned their creation story and emphasised their knowledge of the land and the connection between the health of both their culture and the environment. The sign depicts Chief Dan George, a famous leader, poet and actor (who starred in the film *Little Big Man* among other screen and stage works), as well as recent images of those involved with the Olympic opening ceremony and torch run. Each nation, as well as the Sts'ailes Nation from further up the Fraser River and the BC Métis Federation, also had a weekend set aside during the summer which would feature their performers. These signs were an important part of the visual sovereignty being asserted. Their representations of traditional culture, along with performers, leaders and images from the recent Winter Olympics, mark the Klahowya Village project as part of the ongoing political strategy to increase recognition and connection to the land, as well as cultural continuation.

The rebranding of the site is a conscious choice. Each of the major reports on the project published by AtBC emphasise the brand, noting and enumerating its use in all creative designs and signs on site, and stating that branding the village as an integral part of AtBC is an important strategy (AtBC Management Team 2010, p. 17; 2011, p. 8; 2012, p. 14). This can be seen as a method of creating a visible public archive, just as the city of Vancouver has attempted to brand itself with indigenous signifiers over the years. In particular, this part of Stanley Park is where Vancouver, the settler city, also performs itself – and has for many years, as this chapter shows. Near this site is the remnant of an attempt begun in 1915 by R.C. Campbell-Johnston and the Art, Historical and Scientific Association of Vancouver (AHSAV) to purchase and move a Kwakwaka'wakw village from Alert Bay to Stanley Park. The AHSAV's plan was interrupted in 1925 when a Skwxwú7mesh representative, Andrew Paull, met with the committee and Indian Agent C.C. Perry to explain that the 'Squamish did not want a Kwakwaka'wakw village. They had no objections to a mixed village ... but they wanted the living Squamish to be recognized' (Phillips, 2000, p. 28; Hawker, 2003, p. 44). Now one of the most visited tourist sites in Vancouver, the Stanley Park totem pole collection is a leftover from this initiative. The City of Vancouver updated (and rebranded) the site before the 2010 Olympics to include commissioned Coast Salish portals carved by Susan Point, a Musqueam artist (City of Vancouver, 2012). In close proximity – just a ten-minute bike ride away – are well-known destinations such as the Vancouver Aquarium and Lumberman's Arch, an arrangement of large rough-hewn logs celebrating the logging industry.

The area is also home to an open-air performance venue, the Malkin Bowl, where the summer company Theatre Under the Stars operates. Nearby, visitors can also find the Shakespeare Garden, which contains all the trees and plants mentioned in his plays and poems. Another kind of settler performance can be seen when the Nine O'Clock Gun fires every evening; it is a decommissioned British naval cannon installed on the point in the late 1800s when there was still a community of indigenous people living on the site. In close proximity is the statue commemorating Lord Stanley's 1889 dedication of the park, in a clearing that once held the grave of a Skwxwú7mesh man (Barman, 2005, p. 93). Keeping these past and present settler uses of the site in mind, while also noting the AtBC interventions in the area, will help to clarify the dynamics of performance, history and spectatorship at Klahowya. This part of the city, which masquerades as a natural park, is actually a carefully constructed public archive with many layers of history, performance, tourism, commodity exchange and intercultural communication. Klahowya Village is only the most recent to be added as settler and indigenous people continue to contend with the task of reconciliation and restitution that has been the national project for the last few decades. Touristic spectacle, in order to be most accessible to a general public, often aims to avoid the difficult truths inherent in the settler/indigenous relationship; however, any encounters which occur here are nevertheless embedded in this context.

### **Repertoire: knowledge transmission, inversion and critique**

Touristic spectacle mainly aims to entertain, yet this does not preclude an educational function. It can therefore overlap with knowledge transmission, a necessary part of reconciliation, both within a First Nations culture (to enable recovery) and cross-culturally (to correct misunderstandings). The dances at Klahowya enable one prominent means of cultural transfer. Each of the six dance troupes I witnessed performing over the summer was multi-aged, and included young children who were clearly being instructed to model themselves on the skilled performers. A couple of the youngest were under two – dressed identically to the other dancers, they were free to come and go onstage. One toddler was given a drum to play. The speaker for the Kwakwaka'wakw group, when introducing his little grandson, explained that this was part of their practice for passing on knowledge of song and dance. The Sts'ailes Nation dance group engaged in both kinds of knowledge transmission. Of all the groups I saw, they were the most multi-generational. The adults sang and drummed while a teenage youth led about six boys through the dances, with the younger children rarely looking away from him to the audience and the older boy watching each of them in turn as he danced. The most significant

dance was about Sasq'ets, a powerful Sts'ailes creature. The Sasquatch, a.k.a. Bigfoot, is well known all over North America as an elusive creature of the woods. The 2012 Klahowya Village's event space, website and promotional videos on YouTube were branded with Sasquatch images. The Sts'ailes Nation, however, reclaimed the story, explaining that Sasquatch was 'thought to be a mispronunciation of Sasq'ets' (AtBC, n.d.). Their dance troupe performed in mid-July, singing their 'Sasq'ets' song and explaining the story's origin. While reclaiming the story, and passing on their dance skills, the group also transmitted knowledge across cultures. A spokesperson for this Sts'ailes group emphasised that they were following protocol by only sharing some of their songs and ended their performance by opening up the touristic encounter and inviting spectators to join in the last dance, which many people did. In the railway play, the Sasquatch, which is usually cast as a mysterious and somewhat fearsome monster, was instead presented as a protector of the environment who only punished greedy people. The puppet show plot also featured the Sasquatch as a protector of the land, teaching an urban First Nations girl about where her food comes from and the importance of not polluting the earth.

The Sts'ailes group functioned confidently and generously, transferring knowledge through generations and across cultures, building through performance a strong position from which to negotiate reconciliation. When a woman in the audience interrupted the spokesman to ask if Sasq'ets was related to the name of the Canadian province of Saskatchewan, he patiently explained that it was situated far away from this region and derived from a different First Nations language, and then resumed his performance. His forbearing response to a seemingly obtuse question (rudely asked) was yet another indigenous demonstration of the kind of generosity necessary for inter-community reconciliation, which aims to restore estranged people to a peaceful coexistence (Coulthard, 2013). The Sts'ailes group also approached the story in dynamic ways. The original Sasq'ets creature is viewed as fierce, stinking – usually smelt before he is seen – and male. There is also a female counterpart, who steals children out after dark. The Klahowya Village adapted the story in order to connect with environmental concerns of contemporary life, thereby demonstrating that the transmission of knowledge is not from a static archive but can be active and incorporate change, as from a repertoire.

Another significant element to note about the dance performances is their location on the site. One of the major alterations to the children's farmyard is a stage built into the fenced area close to the barns. A large courtyard surrounds it, and a few viewing platforms, although all are separated by a large pond directly in front of the playing area. A striking sculptured eagle, made out of cedar shingles, overhangs the stage. Despite its appealing design, this area was rarely used over the summer. Balme's analysis of the Polynesian Cultural Centre

entertainments is helpful in understanding the place chosen by the Klahowya Village dancers to stage their displays. Balme contrasts the Māori and Hawaiian performances with those of the Samoans and Tongans, noting that as Fourth World indigenous cultures submerged in a majority colonising culture, both Māori and Hawaiian groups staged 'performance traditions which fulfilled the double function of presenting an image of cultural vitality to the colonial gaze and finding new functions for performance within a new cultural situation' (2007, p. 185). Balme describes the Hawaiian hula performances as 'entirely didactic', occurring in the village without a raised stage, the performers acting as cultural demonstrators while tourists gather around informally (*ibid.*). His insights into this didactic tourist spectacle help explain why dancers at Klahowya did not favour the usual dramatic stage. Rather than displaying themselves at a distance, which can make them seem far away and of the past, they chose to dance on the same ground the spectators were standing on. This emphasised their presence in the present, and their connection with the physical space.

A method of asserting strength is to elicit a formulaic expectation, but then refuse to fulfil it. The storyteller, who was onsite twice daily, did just this. He would call people to his area, which comprised a number of logs arranged as seats in front of a tree stump carved out so a person could stand inside it. Usually dressed in everyday clothing, he would occasionally wear his dance clothes. He did not introduce himself on any of the days that I attended. His performance integrated drumming, singing and telling stories. One of these, told first in his own language and then translated into English, was about an industrious beaver who carries a lazy porcupine up a mountain to force him to find a new shelter. In another story, presented as a way of explaining how plants and animals talk to us, an old man learnt from a spider's web how to make a fish net. These narratives, however, were only part of the storyteller's performance. He mainly initiated dialogues with his audience members, asking them where they were from and inviting questions, and he was incredibly patient with people coming and going and asking him to pose for pictures – sometimes even in the middle of his performance. He explained that the term 'Indian' was a government word which it was important to use in order to hold governments to their responsibilities. He spoke of Aboriginal title, giving a demonstration using a newspaper and his credit cards to show how it underlies all other titles and cannot be extinguished. He also showed – by lifting up a log from the ground and carrying it – what it was like to carry hatred around with you. The advertised storytelling session thus became a space for sharing insights and experiences. At each session he also shared his drum with visitors and would sing to whatever beat they played, always making sure any children present had a turn.

These performances went on for much longer than the scheduled half hour. At one session, after the storyteller had explained that there would be no more First Nations people by 2048 (I think he meant those with government-recognised status), a white man, identifying himself as a Mormon from Japan, was moved almost to tears and asked for suggestions about how to help indigenous people. I was struck by this interaction; it was so unlike the anthropological staging of culture in museums, what Andrea Zittlau terms an 'encounter without meeting' in her discussion of Nora Naranjo-Morse's 'Always Becoming' at the National Museum of the American Indian (2012). Instead, the performer had created a safe environment for conversation and meeting. He often repeated that he did not mean to offend people, and mentioned once that AtBC had hired him and given him leave to say whatever he wanted. The choreography of his performance also inverted expectations. As he moved from the defined performance area in the stump into the adjacent forest behind the audience and sometimes out of view to gather plants to use as illustrations for his stories, the spectator-performer arrangement dissolved into a space of dialogue for sharing insights and life experiences. This echoes the movement of the dance groups away from the Eagle stage on to the grass field behind the vendors and seems to indicate the performers' overall effort to create ambiguous encounters that could also be cross-cultural interactions without the barrier of theatricality.

One element of the performance was particularly puzzling. A red-and-white beaded and feathered headdress had been placed on a manikin head with an invitation to visitors to take photos of themselves wearing it next to the totem pole (see figure 13.1). The bedraggled headdress was not representative of any of the BC First Nations people and no one was in charge of it. I observed many visitors taking up the invitation. This item was incongruous, playful yet unsettling; it invoked a Hollywood stereotype of 'Indian' in a place that seemed to be making an effort to undo those conceptions. As an empty headdress available for visitors to put on, this prop recreated the settler vision of the 'imaginary Indian', a colonialist construction. Many people interacting with the headdress seemed surprised and laughed. Such moments can be illuminated by a concept that Phillip J. Deloria develops in *Indians in Unexpected Places*, making the point that people respond to images of Native Americans in modern situations with a chuckle (2004). He believes this patronising laugh has to do with the anomaly, but argues that settler expectations actually create the anomaly. By placing an object that signifies stereotypes of 'Indian' within a site where indigenous peoples were asserting both their modernity and the continuation of their traditions, the Klahowya organisers inverted the chuckles. This placed an emphasis on the present by inviting visitors to perform expectations from the past as well as to indulge in the desire to 'play Indian'. Not everyone accepted the invitation, however, and some passers-by

dismissed the headdress as a discomfiting relic. Discomfort and ambiguity, while not conducive to a simple, entertaining touristic experience, are part of the decolonising process. In that respect, this strange and unexpected object was among the most compelling elements of the installation. Balme calls this 'reverse colonial mimicry': rather than 'imitating the colonizer and developing forms of subversion by holding up a distorted image of the European', indigenous people mimic 'European projections of themselves' (2007, p. 182). These moments give the performers a chance to subvert the demands of the tourist spectacle.

In her discussion of visual sovereignty in indigenous filmmaking, Raheja notes that some directors deliberately show the aberrant – for example the eating of raw meat or polygamy – as a method to disrupt dominant narratives and create debate (2011, p. 204). In my analysis of performances at Klahowya Village, I have searched for representations of what non-indigenous audiences might consider aberrant practices. I could not find any. This led me to think about the difference between live performance and film. Aberrant acts displayed on film can affect an audience strongly and provoke reactions. No matter what the reaction, however, the actors in the film are safe. This is not the case with live performance, especially where the boundary between the audience and performers is so permeable, the dancer posing next to the spectator in the headdress, or the dancers and singers standing on the grassy lawn, surrounded by spectators. Raheja also discusses the potential for violent retribution for critical self-representations, noting that the 'threat of violence explains how early Native American cinematographers ... [worked] primarily within the bounds of hegemonic discourse out of fear of violent reprisal, while also subtly critiquing Indian images' (p. 231). Klahowya Village was well staffed and supported, in a very public place in Vancouver; potential for violence in some ways seemed very remote. However, on 21 June 2012, the opening day of the enterprise, an act of arson burnt down the Spirit Catcher railway station and information booth. Set at night, the fire completely destroyed the building (situated in the middle of the site) as well as \$40,000-worth of artists' supplies, tools and products (Harry, 2012). Still under investigation, the arson has not been attributed to any individual or group. The village's organisers held a healing ceremony a few days later in order to respond to the incident and carry on; however, throughout the summer the burnt site, with its safety fencing and singed trees, was a constant reminder of the violence. Even if the arson is completely unconnected to AtBC's work, in the context of past and contemporary acts of violence towards indigenous people, it must be recognised as constituting part of the milieu within which Klahowya operates. For this reason it is not surprising that the performers avoid shocking or aberrant cultural practices during the live events.



Figure 13.1. 'Indian' headdress at Klahowya Village tourist performance. Photo: Selena Couture.

## Conclusions and continuing plans

At the ceremony to open Klahowya Village, on 1 July 2010, Sk̓w̓xwú7mesh chief Ian Campbell noted the site's connection to the historic Coast Salish village and suggested that perhaps Stanley Park should be renamed Xwáyxway. The ensuing media storm, with comments both in support and virulently dismissive of the idea, was only put to rest when a federal cabinet minister with the governing Conservative Party, declared that it would not happen (Stueck, 2010, n.p.). This statement highlighted the layered colonial history of this area; the park is federal land because it was considered a strategic military position by the original colonial land surveyors and is only leased to the City of Vancouver, although no records exist to support this federal claim, as Barman explains in *Stanley Park's Secret* (2005, pp. 25–7).

I now recognise the source of the discomfort I felt upon entering Klahowya Village. The enterprise, which seemed like an easily dismissible touristic spectacle is actually what Raheja describes as 'the space between resistance and compliance' (2011, p. 193). In the summer of 2012, dance groups and the storyteller continued to express sovereignty over this land by transmitting their knowledge and inverting stereotypical expectations in the repertoire of performance enacted repeatedly over the weeks, as well as through their interventions in the archival landscape design. Each of the groups mentioned at some point during their performances the proximity of  $\chi^w\text{ay}\chi^w\text{ay}$ ; indeed the spokesperson with the *salil'wətaʔl* group pointed out one of their young dancers, saying that his great grandfather had lived there and fished off the point nearby. Attending to language and place names also reveals a fascinating connection. The meaning of the Coast Salish name of  $\chi^w\text{ay}\chi^w\text{ay}$  has been given as 'masked dance performance', and the origins of the  $\chi^w\text{ay}\chi^w\text{ay}$  dance are explained as 'a cleansing device to "wash" persons while undergoing life crises, changes in status, or removal of some source of shame' (Suttles, 2004, p. 571; Roy, 2002, p. 84). The name of the original village therefore reinforces the notion that the current use of this place by Coast Salish groups is a continuation and adaptation of cultural practice from pre-settlement times.

Klahowya Village is still in the early phase of development. It represents a cooperative project between an indigenous group promoting an economy based on tourism and three levels of government. In this incarnation, it offers some opportunity for knowledge transmission, dialogue and unexpectedly humorous critiques of stereotypes, while still needing to be somewhat neutral in order to attract tourists and create a safe place for interactions. The current ironic visual layering of an 'indigenous village' over a 'settler farm' offers a rich metaphor for the possibilities of restitution. The next phase, which is already being negotiated with the City of Vancouver, will be for AtBC to

build a cultural centre on the site, in all likelihood removing the traces of the settler farm. Local company Full Circle First Nations Performance has also announced a work in development, *Reclaiming Xway Xway*, described as ‘a site-specific, multidisciplinary collaboration’ capturing the ongoing relationship of the Squamish, Musqueam and Tsleil-waututh to Xway Xway.<sup>3</sup> A purpose-built cultural centre and this new performance promise to intrude more strongly into this palimpsestic landscape currently existing on the edge of Vancouver, named after a British Lord who visited briefly in 1889, built on top of and in the midst of an indigenous archive kept alive through an ongoing repertoire.

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# Recasting Commodity and Spectacle in the Indigenous Americas

Edited by Helen Gilbert and Charlotte Gleghorn

Indigenous artists frequently voice concerns over the commodification of their cultures, a process acutely felt by those living with the consequences of colonialism. This timely volume, which features colour illustrations, excavates recent histories of indigenous performance in different parts of the Americas and invites us to re-examine indigeneity's distinctive relationship with economies of display, at local and regional scales. Making reference to aesthetic forms, intellectual property and political empowerment, the chapters address the creative ways in which performance practices are mobilised by indigenous artists and communities to resist imposed stereotypes and shape their own complex identities. Leading academics and practitioners register the vibrancy of a wide array of indigenous arts and cultural events in the USA, Mexico, Peru, Bolivia, Canada, Nicaragua, Ecuador and Belize and trace the circulation of creative products and practices as commodities, as cultural capital and/or as heritage. Through a focus on performance idioms in music, festive events, film, photography, theatre and museum installations, these essays paint a fascinating picture of the ways in which spectacles of cultural difference enter the public sphere, and how they are remodelled in the hands of skilled indigenous practitioners.

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Cover image: Alex Wells – Lil'wat Nation Hoop Dancer. Photo: David Martin. Courtesy of Alex Wells and David Martin.



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