

# Actually Existing Indian Nations

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#### Modernity, Diversity, and the Future of Native American Studies

The field of Native American studies was invented during the 1960s, a product of the Red Power civil rights movement, which is to suggest that it shares an origin story with ethnic studies in general. The turbulent 1960s and 1970s witnessed a dramatic rise of political mobilization among different constituencies -- ethnics, women, GLBTs, antiwar activists, Third World activists, and many others -- and the activism of these groups, some of it militant and some not, produced a change of attitude toward the status quo as more and more Americans denounced inequality and demanded greater access for all in higher education not only in terms of affirmative action to ensure diversity in the student body but also regarding the curriculum. Different voices needed to be heard, different histories had to be taught, and the white, male, straight, bourgeois, imperialist center was to be questioned and, ideally, decentered. In the face of these kinds of demands, ethnic studies programs were created at colleges and universities like San Francisco State College and UC Berkeley as "fire insurance," to use Evelyn Hu-DeHart's expression, against further militancy (B1). It was activism and unrest, in other words, and not the good thinking of academics that led to the creation of Native American studies (although, to be sure, many academics soon joined in, and some were clearly elated that their day had finally come).

Native American studies was at the center of the ethnic studies movement, and it radically transformed how Native peoples and cultures were studied. Until the 1980s, for example, the dominant paradigm for studying Native cultural forms (e.g., literature) was, in Eric Cheyftz's terms, "ethnographic-formal," emphasizing formal cultural properties "while deemphasizing or ignoring the social, political, and historical contexts" in which cultures and forms always take shape (5). Since then the study of Native cultural forms has become more politicized, thanks not only to activism but also to the rise of new critical theories and perspectives. Arnold Krupat finds that three critical perspectives now reign in Native American literary studies -- nationalism, indigenism, and cosmopolitan-ism -- but not in an antagonistic way. Rather, they are "overlapping and interlinked so that each can only achieve its full coherence and effectiveness in relation to the others," and "[a]ll three positions may be enlisted for the project of an anticolonial criticism, as all three may also operate to reproduce colonial dominance under other names" (1). The nationalist "bases her critical position foremost upon her understanding of the word sovereignty" and tends to nurture separatism; indigenists "look to a particular relation to the earth as underlying a worldview that can be called traditional or tribal"; and cosmopolitans "translate between different bodies of knowledge" as "citizens of the world" yet in a way that allows them to remain "selectively patriotic" toward their (tribal) nation of origin (2,10,7,14,18,emphasis in original). These three critical perspectives are not limited to literary studies but have been increasingly adopted across the diverse array of Native studies discourses, from the social sciences and the humanities to legal and political studies.

In what we might characterize as a fourth theoretical paradigm, what I will call, following Shari Huhndorf, "tribal transnationalism" (367), the critical perspective in indigenous studies shifts and broadens its view to comprehend a global indigenous subject acting on the world stage, a context marked not only by colonialism but increasingly by neoliberalism. The most obvious examples would be the Zapatista rebellion, which has been waged from its base in Chiapas, Mexico, since January 1, 1994 (when the North American Free Trade Agreement went into effect), and passage of the United Nations Declaration of the

Rights of Indigenous Peoples on September 13, 2007: two events that mark the arrival of a new indigenous politics, the novelty of which is not so much what it seeks but rather the new ways in which its political objectives are pursued, namely, through the utilization of globalized decision-making bodies, NGOs, and electronic communications media as well as through the articulation of a new subject (i.e., "indigenous people"). As for the goals of this new global movement, Ronald Neizen provides a useful summary statement:

For most indigenous peoples, liberation means an honorable relationship with states in which their rights to land are affirmed and compensation for their losses and suffering is honorably provided. Liberation means the ability to exercise self-determination, to develop culturally distinct forms of education, spirituality, economic development, justice, and governance. The most common goals of indigenous peoples are not so much individual-oriented racial equality and liberation within a national framework as the affirmation of their collective rights, recognition of their sovereignty, and emancipation through the exercise of power. (17-18)

In other words, decolonization and nationalism, albeit a nationalism that does not seek an independent state so much as tribal autonomy. Yet if Neizen's statement seems to speak more to the pluralism of the UN than to the radicalism of the Zapatistas, Manuel Castells finds the latter group engaged in the more ambitious project of attacking neoliberalism on the whole world's behalf: "They fight against the exclusionary consequences of economic modernization; but they also challenge the inevitability of a new geopolitical order under which capitalism becomes universally accepted" (77). The transnationalism of the Zapatistas agitates not only for protection of indigenous lands and ways of life but for the creation of, as one famous Zapatista slogan has it, "a world with room for many worlds." At this point, it might be tempting to suggest that there are actually two tribal transnationalisms, one advancing local nationalisms using internationalist means, the other trying to make the world align more closely with indigenous values, creating what Castells calls "project identity" (10), but on closer inspection such distinctions begin to blur and in any event do not seem mutually exclusive. Or if they do differ significantly, they do so in a way resembling the logic of Krupat's three critical perspectives, that is, by working together more often than not.

All of this is to suggest that the still-developing field of Native American studies has had its purview radically expanded over the past four decades. The field is now a great deal more political than it was before, and the theoretical paradigms supporting its various politics have multiplied. To study Native Americans today means situating one's subject in any number of possible theories, contexts, and discourses, from the reservation to the world. But in what direction should the field move now? I want to suggest that the next big project for Native American studies, and indeed for the indigenous movement as a whole, is to develop new ways of engaging with the irreducible modernity and diversity that inheres in every Native community and has for some time. This means interrogating the theoretical discourses now in circulation, especially nationalism, which is dominant, to examine the assumptions that undergird their politics. Such unstated assumptions can mischaracterize the real makeup of Native communities and ironically reactivate the old ethnographic-formal model. But before we get to all that, let me tell you a little bit about the Ojibwe reservation where I grew up. It's an actually existing Indian nation.

The Leech Lake Reservation in northern Minnesota was established by treaty in 1855; that same treaty provided thousands of acres of land cessions that now comprise a good portion of northern Minnesota. More land was lost in subsequent years, especially during and after the allotment era. Today, people at Leech Lake control a tiny fraction of the original land base, and the reservation is

"checkerboarded," which is to say that state land, federal land, tribal land, allotment land, and private property exist in rather close proximity. Indians are no longer the majority population on the reservation, and among private business owners they are a tiny minority. There are eleven communities at Leech Lake - Ball Club, Bena, Cass Lake, Inger, Mission, Oak Point, Onigum, Penning-ton, Smokey Point, Squaw Lake, and Sugar Point -- and the reservation straddles four counties and seven school districts. There are roughly five thousand members of the Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe, approximately half living on the reservation, most of the others residing in cities as a result of federal relocation policies. Leech Lake has a government that is formally part of the six-band Minnesota Chippewa Tribe (MCT), which was created in 1936; the other bands are White Earth, Mille Lacs, Bois Forte, Grand Portage, and Fond du Lac. Unlike other historical Native political consortiums -- for example, the Haudenosaunee Confederacy, which predated white settlement by centuries -- there is nothing particularly traditional about the MCT. Rather, the MCT was a product of John Collier's Indian Reorganization Act of 1934, which attempted to restore a semblance of self-government among Indian communities after well over a century of federal assault.

Of the many Ojibwe groups that dealt with Europeans and Americans prior to our incorporation as a "tribe" -- an idea invented and attributed to us by the French during the Fur Trade -- the two that ended up at Leech Lake were the Pillager and Mississippi bands, each having subset bands that lived in different places and had different leaders and, really, different histories. What they shared was a language, Ojibwemowin, and what appeared to the whites to be a race. They did not share a religion, as a host of Christian churches -- Episcopal, Catholic, Mission Alliance, to name only a few -- had been around for over a generation and functioned alongside (and usually in opposition to) traditional ceremonial institutions like the Midewiwin and pan-Indian practices such as peyotism and the sweat lodge.

The last official war between Indians and the United States Army took place at Leech Lake in October 1898, when Bugonaygeshig and twenty-two others, including at least three women, defeated the Third Infantry at Bear Island (Sugar Point). One person who hails from Sugar Point and lives there still is Dennis Banks, who during the 1960s and 1970s distinguished himself as a fiery leader of the American Indian Movement (AIM). There was a lot of struggle at Leech Lake during the Red Power years of my childhood, and Banks usually attended it. In May 1971, when I was six, Banks organized an AIM action at Leech Lake, and hundreds of Indians showed up to participate. I lived with my family in Cass Lake then and remember driving through an armed checkpoint with my terrified white mother. As Gerald Vizenor, who covered AIM as a journalist, chronicled it:

[T]he American Indian Movement carried weapons for the first time, in preparation for an armed confrontation with white people on the opening day of fishing on the Leech Lake Reservation in Minnesota. The militants were prepared and determined to battle for tribal control of hunting and fishing rights on the reservation, rights that had been won in federal court. Their threats were not needed. (People 131)

Nine months later, Banks and AIM took their stand at Wounded Knee, perhaps the last unofficial war with the United States.

Since Red Power, Leech Lake has experienced a small explosion of new tribal businesses, social institutions, and powers of self-government. There are three gaming facilities on the reservation (all fairly modest in productivity, at least when compared to prominent others around Native America), making Leech Lake the largest employer in Cass County. The tribe owns a service station and convenience store, an office supply company, a motel-restaurant-marina complex, an archaeological firm, and a gift shop. In addition to these businesses, Leech Lake operates a halfway house, an ambulance service, two daycare

facilities, seven Head Start programs, the K-12 Bug-O-Nay-Ge-Shig School, and Leech Lake Tribal College. There are other enterprises as well, and the sum effect of these institutions, most of them developed during my lifetime and since Red Power, is, as a former Vista worker once put it to me, "quite the drastic change from the sixties, when absolutely nothing was happening at Leech Lake." I credit these improved conditions of daily life to reforms that were instituted not because the federal government became more sensitive and morally responsible but because of the pressures created by activist groups like AIM. If nothing else, they made invisible injustices visible to white Americans, who in many cases had little idea that Indians were still around, and they in turn pressured the state to do something. Power concedes nothing without a demand; AIM demanded; now things happen at Leech Lake. There's a line that can be drawn here, although it would be by no means a direct or unbroken line.

One can, however, draw a fairly straight line from Leech Lake's problems to our historical experience with the United States and its history-makers. In the late nineteenth century, dams were built by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers at Leech Lake, Cass Lake, and Lake Winnibigoshish to control seasonal flooding in the Twin Cities. They raised water levels by seven feet or more, destroying homes, graveyards, and the wild rice beds that then constituted a major food source. In 1889 the Nelson Act, Minnesota's version of the Dawes General Allotment Act, created individual land allotments that were granted to male heads of household; "surplus lands" went to timber barons, railroad companies, and white settlers. By 1934 most of the allotments had been lost through tax forfeitures and fraud, and Leech Lake now retains roughly 5 percent of the reservation's original 670,000 acres. In 1899 the Great Northern Railroad was granted a right-of-way through the reservation, and two other railroad companies followed. The town of Cass Lake was created and quickly boasted one of the largest rail yards in the state, but the profits of the railroad, as with the timber and the dams, benefited whites and not Natives. In 1908 the federal government, suddenly concerned about the excessive logging that had been done, created the 1.6-million-acre Chippewa National Forest by seizing some 40 percent of the tribe's remaining land. The Ojibwe were promised \$1.25 per acre plus the value of any remaining timber, but the logging boom had already subsided. By the 1930s the timber barons were gone, the government land office had closed, and most Ojibwe were poor. A new tourist economy was taking shape, but as with other industries it was controlled and owned by whites. The 1950s witnessed the arrival of an oil pipeline and the rerouting of a major highway around Cass Lake at the precise moment when Indians were beginning to situate themselves into the local economy as business owners. By the 1960s, as we've already observed, absolutely nothing was happening at Leech Lake.

It goes without saying that the Red Power movement was in large part a response to this history. While there can be no question that some aspects of life have drastically improved since then (more economic opportunities, enhanced control over education and health care, greater degrees of political sovereignty), life can still be challenging at Leech Lake. Poverty is still widespread, and with poverty always comes crime, chemical abuse, and violence. Racism remains a major problem in border towns like Bemidji and Walker. Many of the forty-plus lakes on the reservation, including sizable Leech Lake, a tourist destination, were polluted by local industries that operated without accountability for decades. Poor health, including mental health, is always of concern. The reservation is one generation away from having Ojibwemowin spoken by a scant handful of people. Finally, the public story of Leech Lake is always narrated as a tragedy, by which I mean, as Murfin and Ray have defined the genre, "a serious and often somber drama, written in prose ... that typically ends in disaster" (518). The use of tragedy as a narrative form to tell an Indian story is a problem, because tragedy always ends in death, posits the existence of some damning flaw, and compels little to no action from its audience; as countless critics have observed since the

time of Aristotle, tragedy wants to produce catharsis, not change. As Vi-zenor has written, "tragic tribal tales ... are simulations for an audience familiar with manifest manners and the literature of dominance. Decidedly, the stories that turn the tribes tragic are not their own stories" (Manifest Manners 16).

Ninety-four years ago as I write, Charles Alexander Eastman published this about his visits to the Ojibwe of northern Minnesota: "I know of no Indians within the borders of the United States, except those of Leech, Cass and Red Lakes of Minnesota, who still sustain themselves after the old fashion by hunting, fishing and the gathering of wild rice and berries" (168). Eastman characterized Leech Lakers as holdouts against modernity, living in a seasonal manner, traveling by canoe and by foot, and staying away from their permanent frame houses in order to circulate among different camps. "The Leech Lake Ojibways," he reported, "appear perfectly contented and irresponsible" (169).

To be an "irresponsible" Indian in 1916 meant having little to do with modernity or the many assimilation programs that were under way at that time; it wasn't an insult. In fact, Eastman wrote with great respect for the Ojibwe who hosted him -- including "Majigabo" and "Boggimogishig," as he spelled the names of these notable chiefs -- and said in regard to their resistance and traditionalism, "I could not but sympathize" (171). At Sugar Point, Eastman collected histories and legends, including stories about Ojibwe wars with Eastman's people, the Dakota, as well as the 1898 war at Bear Island, and he received a "sacred war club, which had been handed down through several generations of daunted leaders," a gift that obviously made him feel honored and proud (171). While Eastman would, despite his sympathies, continue to advocate for civilization programs at Leech Lake, "because there is no chance for our former simple life any more" (195), he produced a narrative about Leech Lake that never succumbed to the tragic mode.

There are three primary claims I want to make about Leech Lake, and in keeping with Elizabeth Cook-Lynn's 1997 call for Native American studies "to defend indigenous nationhood in America" (11), I will offer these claims in defense of Leech Lake's actually existing tribal nation. First, Leech Lake, which is only part of an Ojibwe Nation writ large, met its strongest and most damaging influences through a history of colonization. Colonization has defined its history since the reservation was created; indeed, it is the reason why the reservation exists. Indian reservations are federal enclaves "reserved" and held in trust by the U.S. government for the purpose of providing homelands for tribal nations in accordance with treaties that were signed not so very long ago. Those treaties and the legal relationships they engendered are still in effect now, no matter how "broken" they may have been over time. What this means is that reservations are colonized territories. Natives who live on them possess dual citizenship (since 1924 Indians have been legally American citizens as well as citizens of their tribal nations) and thus have a peculiar dual identity as both American and colonial subjects depending on the space they inhabit at a given time. As Cheyfitz explains, an Indian residing on a reservation is "constrained to live under the colonial regime of federal Indian law without the constitutional guarantees of U.S. citizenship, excepting the right to vote in U.S. state and national elections" (44), while that same person living elsewhere in the United States is an American of tribal descent -- or, if you prefer, an ethnic minority -- with American rights. This duality of nationality owes itself to the United States Supreme Court's famous (or infamous, depending on your view) invention of "domestic dependent nation" status to characterize the nature and sovereignty of tribal nations in the Marshall Trilogy of the 1820s and 1830s. While the idea of domestic dependent nationality preserves a national status for Indians, it has also created some confusion over the meaning of sovereignty, which by definition is supposed to be absolute but in this case is not. At Leech Lake, having sovereignty means constantly negotiating legal compacts with federal, state, and county officials over issues ranging from taxation to law enforcement to gaming. On the other hand, it also means retaining that all-important status

of nationality that, however diminished, allows for the survival and benefit of the Ojibwe. It's a paradox: sovereignty produced by colonization.

Because the ongoing (but changing) experience of colonization is so important, any claims we make regarding Leech Lake should proceed from that. Hence, number two: Leech Lake has, both within its population and immediately surrounding it, a great amount of social and cultural difference, and this too was produced by colonization. We can no longer speak of one Ojibwe religion, for example, and in fact we really haven't been able to do so for some two hundred years. (We can, however, speak of traditional matters in a different way, which I will address below.) If we wish to deal with Leech Lake's actually existing nation, we must include Catholics, Episcopalians, Lutherans, a wide array of evangelicals, NAC peyotists, Mormons, and a whole lot of atheists, along with Midewiwin initiates and other traditionalists, when talking about Ojibwe religions. In a similar vein, Leech Lakers have more than one language, more than one race (or phenotype), and indeed more than one mode of production. Sometimes these differences blur. For example, I know devout Christians who speak fluent Ojibwemowin, professors who spend their summers running Midewiwin ceremonies, and softball-playing, English-speaking, nonreligious types who are tremendously talented in the woods, understanding perfectly the language of animal tracks, wind patterns, and habits of game. I know light-skinned -- and black-skinned -- people who can do things that are typically imagined as the doings of brown-skinned people. In fact, now that I think of it, I'm not sure I've ever met anyone whose life perfectly conformed to the standards of Ojibweness as they might be imagined by a purist (language: Ojibwemowin; religion: Midewiwin; mode of production: hunting and gathering; phenotype: brown/black; check, check, check, check). It feels a little awkward making this argument as late as 2010, but I think it needs to be made in an age when Native scholars are saying that Native American literature doesn't exist because it is written in English using non-Native aesthetic forms or advocating for movements to restore "the memory of who we truly are" or, put another way, were (see Treuer; Alfred 282). I am interested in dealing with what is, in an actually existing sort of way, without the discourses of assimilation or authenticity attempting to discredit it. Assimilation and authenticity have always been language games designed for Indians to lose.

Another observation to make is that Leech Lake is and has long been embedded in modernity, and again we have to credit colonization for that; indeed, colonization was the horse that modernity rode in on. But as with the history of actual horses, Indians quickly appropriated it and proved capable of its mastery. By modernity I have in mind a general sense of the new, a feeling regarding one's life in modern times that can be distinguished from "the world we used to live in." Such was the original meaning of the word. Hans Robert Jauss locates the first use of the Latin *modernus* in the fifth century to distinguish the Christian present from the pagan past (46-48), and ever since the concept has been employed to characterize a sense of some great epochal change underfoot. Today the idea of modernity is more structural, as Anthony Giddens explains:

At its simplest, modernity is a shorthand term for modern society or industrial civilization. Portrayed in more detail, it is associated with (1) a certain set of attitudes towards the world, the idea of the world as open to transformation by human intervention; (2) a complex of economic institutions, especially industrial production and a market economy; (3) a certain range of political institutions, including the nation-state and mass democracy. Largely as a result of these characteristics, modernity is vastly more dynamic than any previous type of social order. It is a society -- more technically, a complex of institutions -- which unlike any preceding culture lives in the future rather than the past. (Giddens and Pearson 93)

It probably goes without saying that this particular definition of modernity will compel some of my friends in Native studies to immediately proclaim their undying opposition to it. (I would probably just point out in response that their protests would be made in print publications and on the Internet.) But Leech Lake clearly meets the definition:

1. Tribal institutions devoted to education and resource management, to mention only two examples, are precisely in the business of using "human intervention" to transform the world.
2. One thing that has made life better in the last four decades is the emergence of a market economy dependent in large part on gaming. Gaming is not an end but a beginning, as it funds other tribal enterprises, including subsidizing traditional artisans, heritage language activists, and the tribal college.
3. Leech Lake has a constitutional government, tribal sovereignty, and all the headaches that usually accompany those things. Its governmental problems are not so different from those one finds in other constitutional democracies, for instance, the United States, including corruption and disillusionment. The point is, Leech Lake's government is both modern and in the business of protecting Ojibwe sovereignty and everything we mean when we invoke sovereignty: culture, language, the survival of a people, and much else.

Modernity and indigeneity are often opposed in binary fashion in both academic and activist discourse, for example, in the recent (and important) United Nations report *The State of the World's Indigenous Peoples* (2009), which opens with a side-by-side contrast of "cultural values" (sustainability, collectivity, naturality, spirituality, process-orientation, domesticity, and locality) with "modern values" (productivity, individualism, technology, rationality, efficiency, commercialism, and globalization) (Carino 15). As with all binary oppositions, closer inspection of these values finds them existing on both sides of the presumed cultural divide, and both sets are alive and well at Leech Lake. To the extent that these sorts of binaries, which are now ubiquitous, can be read as strategic essentialism, they should be treated as any other kind of strategic essentialism; that is, one simply considers the politics they serve and decides whether or not the essentialism is worth a pass in a particular instance. Or, another angle, to the extent that these binaries compel a consideration of the different hierarchies of values one finds when contrasting different communities (e.g., sometimes the water really isn't commodifiable), then they can serve that purpose, and perhaps we might even agree that it is good. But to carve the world into discernible, discrete wholes called cultures, then to contrast them in binary fashion, with one side granted "spirituality" and the other side "rationality," and to name the nonindigenous side "modern," well, that's a different ballgame altogether. In the nineteenth century, it was called savagism and civilization, and it never served Indians well.

There is good reason to fear for a future where signs of modernity are considered always already antithetical to indigeneity, but even on a more mundane level it is vital that the fields of Native American and indigenous studies accurately describe the people, communities, and nations they want to study, and that means, at the very least, dealing with the fact that actually existing Indian nations like Leech Lake are already modern and diverse. And, of course, colonized. But there lies the rub. If colonization was the vehicle for the arrival of modernity, doesn't one have to discard the latter to get rid of the former? Or if not discard, then disdain it? Or, at the very least, ignore it? I think the decolonization project is actually strengthened and not weakened when indigenous modernity is embraced. To embrace modernity is to usher in other modern concepts (not all of them necessarily, but some of them, and I'd say the ones we want), including the concept of decolonization. It does not require living in the future at the expense of forgetting

the past. Rather, an embracement of indigenous modernity requires a different relationship to the past, one that does not seek to go backward but instead attempts to bring the past forward.

Many indigenous people in the world still live a traditional lifestyle. Pastoralism, as only one example, which accounts for 10 percent of the world's meat production and is practiced on 25 percent of the global land area, is an activity practiced by indigenous people from the Andes to Scandinavia to Africa and beyond. Pastoralists increasingly find their traditional lifestyle under threat thanks to state land mismanagement and eviction, jurisdictional disputes, climate change, and more (Carino 36-38). To be perfectly clear, I think pastoralism should be protected as a mode of production, and that means above all protecting the land rights of the people who practice it. But without claiming to have expertise on all of the world's 370 million indigenous peoples, I would venture a guess that most of them, pastoralists included, are dealing with issues of modernity and diversity in their communities as we speak. I have no problem at all making that claim in the context of the indigenous United States.

Native Americans are indigenous people, but we live rather differently from other Native people around the world, especially those in the global South or the "developing world." This is not to suggest that we are rich and powerful while others are not. "Even in developed countries, indigenous people consistently lag behind the non-indigenous population in terms of most indicators of well-being," writes Joji Carino in *The State of the World's Indigenous Peoples*. "They live shorter lives, have poorer health care and education and endure higher employment rates. Those indigenous people who do enjoy full employment earn significantly less than their non-indigenous counterparts" (22). Carino lists type 2 diabetes and tuberculosis, substance abuse, suicide and incarceration rates, and violent crime as significantly higher in Native communities than among their counterparts. A recent study applying the Human Development Index (which measures a country's achievements in health, education, and standard of living) to indigenous peoples in Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and the United States "showed clearly that indigenous people lag significantly behind the general populations in these countries" (Carino 23). It is oppressive conditions like these that have produced, and are still producing, resistance movements -- for instance, Red Power and the rise of ethnic and Native American studies in the 1960s and 1970s.

Resistance to oppression -- poverty, racism, colonization -- is still very much on the Native American studies agenda, and while it informs indigenism, cosmopolitanism, and tribal transnationalism, it is most clearly (and perhaps most loudly) articulated in the discourse of nationalism. Focus on specific tribal nations, nationalists implore scholars, and the goal of your work is defending some form of sovereignty. Tribal nationalism is a rational response to the political challenges of the present, and it should be supported. At the same time, it is always the most problematic of discourses, no matter whose version of nationalism might be at stake, because it so often relies on essentialist categories, creates and patrols boundaries that are always ultimately arbitrary, and sometimes appears more than happy to substitute political slogans for rational thought. Given the specific history of the indigenous-American relationship, however, it remains indispensable to generating a coherent discourse on cultural survival and economic empowerment, not to mention improving our rankings on the Human Development Index. The question is, can tribal nationalism speak to the modernity and diversity of actually existing Indian nations?

I think it can, but to make this argument I need to explain how I understand tribal nationalism to function. It is not so unlike ethnonationalism in some ways, although they are not the same thing. Canada's Bloc Québécois promotes ethnonationalism for French-language separatists in Quebec, but its claims are rather different, not only politically but historically, from those of the Mohawk nationalists living in neighboring Kahnawake. The primary difference is that Quebeckers have no claim to indigeneity or an



experience of colonization. What unites these two kinds of nationalism, however, is a certain claim that each makes to what Anthony D. Smith calls an *ethnie*, or "preexisting traditions and heritages that have coalesced over the generations" ("Nations"). But that claim is not nationalism itself, or at least not yet. Smith elucidates their historical relationship:

[T]he nation is a sub-variety and development of the *ethnie*, though we are not dealing with some evolutionary law of progression, nor with some necessary or irreversible sequence. While the *ethnie* is an historical culture community, the nation is a community [with a] mass, public culture, historic territory and legal rights. In other terms, the nation shifts the emphasis of community away from kinship and cultural dimensions to territorial, educational and legal aspects, while retaining links with older cultural myths and memories of the *ethnie*. (Ethnic 130, emphasis in original)

For both ethnonationalism and indigenous nationalism, appeals are made to the existence of an *ethnie* that by rights should be considered a nation. But, importantly, another aspect to consider is that key shift from culture to politics, or, put another way, from a discourse of cultural integrity versus assimilation to a discourse of ethnicity versus nationality. The question is not, Are you traditional or assimilated? but rather, Are you an ethnic minority or a nation? Nationalism is thus not the same thing as resistance to assimilation, although that sort of resistance is often part of the program. Tribal nationalism is the politicization of culture for the achievement of national goals, such as land rights and sovereignty, and it amounts to a modernization of an *ethnie*.

For an illustrative example of this historical process, let us consider an essay that has become a classic text in the discourse of American Indian literary nationalism: Simon Ortiz's "Towards a National Indian Literature: Cultural Authenticity in Nationalism" (1981), which argues that Native American literary texts, like those indigenized Catholic rituals at Acoma, are "Indian because of the creative development that the Native people applied to them" (8). That is, "because in every case where European culture was cast upon Indian people of this nation there was similar creative response and development, it can be observed that this was the primary element of a nationalistic impulse to make use of foreign ritual, ideas, and material in their own -- Indian -- terms" (8). This wasn't mere mimicry; it was the modernization of an *ethnie* driven by a "nationalistic impulse." The Pueblos of Acoma have made Catholicism their own, not to assimilate but to remain Pueblo, and for Ortiz this was simultaneously a political attempt to remain separate from other Catholics (and presumably settlers). For Ortiz, who situated his essay in a context of colonization, "this response has been one of resistance; there is no clearer word for it than resistance" (10). Hence, even though written in the language of the colonizer and employing Western aesthetics, Native literature was an assertion of tribal nationalism.

Ortiz identified an important source of any tribe's *ethnie*, its oral tradition, but with a certain caveat:

[I]t is not the oral tradition as transmitted from ages past alone which is the inspiration and source for contemporary Indian literature. It is also because of an acknowledgment by Indian writers to advocate for their people's self-government, sovereignty, and control of land and resources; and to look also at racism, political and economic oppression, sexism, supremacism, and the needless and wasteful exploitation of land and people, especially in the U.S., that Indian literature is developing a character of nationalism which indeed it should have. (12)

Native writers draw from their oral traditions, are inspired by them, or connect to them in some other way, but they are not trying to translate them in an anthropological pursuit of authenticity, nor are they satisfied to only work within that tradition. Other things matter too. In fact, clinging too fast to the oral

traditions of ethnology or fundamental-ism -- that is, demanding authenticity at every turn -- would be tantamount to nestling oneself in an ethnue. Evoking the oral tradition, as every writer associated with the Native American Renaissance overtly did, while moving into other things like politics is the modernization of an ethnue: a rather different kind of relationship to traditionalism and the past.

Thinking in terms of nation and ethnue is different from other models that are now deployed in Native American studies, for example, "peoplehood." Peoplehood is an idea that characteristically identifies specific traits for indigenous groups that distinguish them from other social groups. For Edward Spicer they were land, language, and spiritual life; for Robert K. Thomas they were those things plus sacred history; and for Tom Holm, Diane Pearson, and Ben Chavis the traits were sacred history, ceremonial cycles, language, and homelands. My critique of these kinds of peoplehood paradigms will by now be obvious: first, they cannot account for many of the people who live in the diverse communities they seek to describe; and second, they are too focused on the ethnue instead of the tribal nation. If any peoplehood theory ends up excluding a large segment of the people in question (Christians, English-language monolinguals, etc.), that is a problem with the theory and not the people. It actually departs from a political mode of analysis and moves toward the old ethnographic-formal model of interpretation, which was, as we've observed, interested in formal cultural traits and characteristics. However, peoplehood paradigms do have their uses insofar as they can serve as descriptions of the ethnue, explaining who we are by describing where we came from and what our roots are made of. But this implies adopting a certain amount of historical distance, and I'm not so sure many Native American studies scholars are prepared to do that just yet.

There is something comforting in the rejection of modern things, especially when indigenous people are doing the rejecting. We are, after all, symbols of the past, and we have been positioned as such for a very long time. We supposedly prefer the wisdom of our ancestors to the impersonal facts of science, the spirituality of rituals to the rationality of experiments, and the blood ties of kinship to the agonism of citizenship. We are, like the Na'vi in James Cameron's blockbuster film *Avatar* (2009), so deeply associated with Gaia as to be able to access her data as effortlessly as a white man downloads a computer program. All of this is comforting in a time of planetary crisis -- ecological, political, and personal -- but the danger of this comfort is a romanticization that not only misreads an actually existing Indian nation but actually condescends to it and ultimately excludes it.

My own hope for the future of Native American studies is that we will be able to produce research programs and classroom pedagogies that can account not only for ethnic traditionalism but also for the modernity and diversity that exist in the indigenous world and will continue to exist there in the future. Now, I can imagine that some readers find my endorsements of modernity and diversity to sound assimilationist, but that is not my intention. I am trying to take tribal nations seriously as they actually exist in the world today, and to acknowledge their diversity is not to dismiss traditionalism; nor is a call for modernization an argument against pastoralism or other traditional modes of production. I just don't think Native people should be condemned as inauthentic because they live as modern people in modern times.

In the end, I suppose, I too am seeking a world with room for many worlds, even in the context of the indigenous world. I have in mind an appreciation not only for, say, the Christian hymn-singers chronicled in Michael McNally's great book, *Ojibwe Singers: Hymns, Grief, and a Native Culture in Motion* (2000), but for Native writers like Charles Alexander Eastman, a "Red Progressive" whose endorsements of assimilation programs seem to blind readers (including many of my graduate students) to the fact that Eastman, as Sean Teuton writes, "firmly grounds us in Indian land and history, and even lashes

out against white hypocrisy" (19). Lashing out against white hypocrisy -- against imperialism and war, neoliberalism and poverty, racism and inequality -- is the issuing of anticolonial critique by another name. And that, not new culture wars over identity or traditionalism, is the proper legacy of Native American studies as it was envisioned forty years ago.

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