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The Past as Legacy and Project: Postcolonial Criticism in the Perspective of Indigenous Historicism

ARIF DIRLIK

"Men [and women] make their own history, but they do not make it just as they please; they do not make it under circumstances chosen by themselves, but under circumstances directly encountered, given and transmitted from the past. The tradition of all the dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brain of the living."[1] After nearly a century-and-a-half, Marx's statement still provides a most cogent affirmation of historicity against both a libertarian obliviousness to the burden of the past and a determinist denial of the possibility of human agency. But I begin with this statement for still another reason. While Marx's own work lies at the origins of so much of present-day theorizing about society and history, against our theory-crazed times, when once again the logic of abstraction seems to take precedence over the evidence of the world, the statement is comfortingly common-sensical.

Issues of historicity and common sense are both pertinent to the problem I take up in this discussion. The problem derives from a paradox in contemporary cultural criticism and politics. In academic circles engrossed with postmodernity/postcoloniality as conditions of the present, it is almost a matter of faith these days

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that nations are "imagined," traditions are "invented," subjectivities are slippery (if they exist at all), and cultural identities are myths. Claims to the contrary are labeled "essentialisms" and are dismissed as perpetuations of hegemonic constructions of the world. The denial of authenticity to cultural claims beyond localized constructions is accompanied by the denial to the past of any authority to authenticate the present. In the words of one "postcolonial critic," criticism, if it is to be thoroughly antihegemonic, needs to learn from the experiences of "those who have suffered the sentence of history-subjugation, domination, diaspora, displacement." Recognition of these experiences

> forces us . . . to engage with culture as an uneven, incomplete production of meaning and value, often composed of incommensurable demands and practices, produced in the act of social survival. . . . It becomes crucial to distinguish between the semblance and similitude of the symbols across diverse cultural experiences . . . and the social specificity of each of these productions of meaning as they circulate as signs within specific contextual locations and social systems of value. The transnational dimension of cultural transformation—migration, diaspora, displacement, relocation—makes the process of cultural translation a complex form of signification. The natural(ized), unifying discourse of 'nation', 'peoples' or authentic 'folk' tradition, those embedded myths of culture's particularity, cannot be readily referenced. The great, though unsettling, advantage of this position is that it makes you increasingly aware of the construction of culture and the invention of tradition.[2]

As if by some devilish design to mock the postcolonial argument, cultural politics in our day exhibits an abundance of such claims to cultural authenticity which, rather than disappear, would seem to be proliferating in proportion to the globalization of postmodernity—with deadly consequences for millions. Cultural nationalism, ethnicism, indigenism have emerged as markers of cultural politics globally; over the last decade ethnicity has moved to the center of politics, overshadowing earlier concerns with class and gender. Claims to cultural authenticity, moreover, have been accompanied by efforts to discover or restore authentic pasts as foundations for contemporary identity, most urgently among those who have suffered "the sentence of history."

The most basic problem presented by this paradoxical situation is the disjuncture between cultural criticism and cultural politics. Even as cultural criticism renders the past into a plaything at the hands of the present, the burden of the past haunts contemporary politics in a reassertion of cultural identities. Postmodern/postcolonial criticism would seem to have little to say on this situation, except to insist even more uncompromisingly on its own validity. Where the postmodern/postcolonial intellectuals themselves are concerned, the repudiation of essentialized identities and authentic pasts seems to culminate in a libertarianism that asserts the possibility of constructing identities and histories almost at will in those "in-between" spaces that are immune to the burden of the past (and the present, in its repudiation of "foundational" structures). Ironically, however, postmodern/postcolonial critics are unwilling to accord a similar liberty to those who seek to invoke the past in the assertion of cultural identities. They label all such attempts as misguided (or ideological) essentialisms that ignore the constructedness of the past. That groups that have "suffered the sentence of history" are internally divided and differentiated is not a particularly novel insight; what seems to be new about the current historical situation is the erasure in the name of difference of differences among such groups in their efforts to cope with "the sentence of history," especially those efforts that contradict the new ideology of postmodernism/postcolonialism. "In-betweenness," universalized as a human condition and extended over the past, is thus naturalized in the process and becomes a new kind of determinism from which there is no escape. At the same time, the label of *essentialism,* extended across the board without regard to its sources and goals, obviates the need to distinguish different modes of cultural identity formation that is subversive not only of critical but also of any meaningful political judgment. Below I address some questions raised by these different modes of cultural identity formation. To assert that cultural identity is ambiguous and the historical materials out of which it is constructed are invented is in some ways to state the obvious. The questions are, what do different modes of identity construction imply intellectually and politically, and how do we construe the relationships they presuppose between the present and the past? The discussion is organized around three questions that I take to be critical to distinguishing among these identity formations: (a) What is their relationship to power? (b) Are the pasts out of which they are formed reified pasts or pasts recog-

nized in their historicity? and (c) What relationship do they establish between the past as legacy and the past as project? My critique of the discourses on these questions, both in legitimations of power and in postmodern/postcolonial responses to it, is informed strongly by a perspective afforded by indigenism, the ideological articulation of the aspirations to liberation of those native peoples—designated the Fourth World in recent years—that I take to be the terminally marginalized of all the oppressed and marginalized peoples around the world. The discussion draws most directly on articulations of indigenism in North America and, to a lesser extent, among the peoples of the Pacific.

CULTURAL IDENTITY AND POWER

Leslie Marmon Silko prefaces her novel *Ceremony* with a song-poem (also entitled "Ceremony") that tells the reader that the story she is to tell is more than just a story:

> I will tell you something about stories,
> [he said]
> They aren't just entertainment,
> Don't be fooled.
> They are all we have, you see,
> all we have to fight off
> illness and death.
>
> You don't have anything
> if you don't have the stories.
>
> Their evil is mighty
> but it can't stand up to our stories.
> So they try to destroy the stories
> let the stories be confused or forgotten,
> They would like that
> They would be happy
> Because we would be defenseless then.[3]

There may be a postmodern ring to the idea that stories create reality—the idea that drives Silko's narrative—but the intention is anything but postmodern. *Ceremony* is about the recovery of identity destroyed by war and cultural incoherence through a reliving of ancient stories; as a story itself, *Ceremony* seeks to create

a reality for native peoples different from the one that is in the process of destroying them. The theme of restoring an indigenous identity by salvaging the native past from its distortions in Euro-American historiography is a common one among indigenous peoples from Native Americans to the Australian aborigines, from Hawai'ians to the Indians of Chiapas. As Haunani-Kay Trask, leader of the Hawai'ian sovereignty movement, puts it,

> Burdened by a linear, progressive conception of history and by an assumption that Euro-American culture flourishes at the upper end of that progression, Westerners have told the history of Hawai'i as an inevitable if occasionally bitter-sweet triumph of Western ways over "primitive" Hawai'ian ways. . . . To know my history, I had to put away my books and return to the land. I had to plant *taro* in the earth before I could understand the inseparable bond between people and *'aina* [land]. I had to feel again the spirits of nature and take gifts of plants and fish to the ancient altars. I had to begin to speak my language with our elders and leave long silences for wisdom to grow. But before anything else, I needed to learn the language like a lover so that I could rock with her and lie at night in her dreaming arms.[4]

"Indigenous peoples," according to Cree author George Manuel, who is also the founding president of the World Council of Indigenous Peoples, are peoples "descended from a country's aboriginal population and who today are completely or partly deprived of their own territory and its riches."[5] They have been described also as "the fourth world: the world on the margin, on the periphery."[6] Annette Jaimes describes the various aspects of indigenism as follows:

> In terms of economics, the Native peoples tend to have communal property, subsistence production, barter systems, low impact technologies and collective production. . . . In terms of political relations, Native people have consensual processes, direct "participatory" democracy, and laws embedded in oral traditions. . . . In respect to their social relations, they differ [from modern society], generally, in terms of matrilineality versus patriarchy, extended versus nuclear families, and low versus high population density. . . . Finally, regarding differences in world view, the Native peoples are polytheistic, derive an understanding of the world from the natural order's rhythms and cycles of life, and

include animals and plants as well as other natural features in their conceptions of spirituality.[7]

The goal of indigenism, then, is to restore these features of native life, which have been associated in Euro-American historiography with "primitivism." Fundamental to indigenism is the recovery of land and, with it, the special relationship to nature that is the hallmark of indigenous identity.

"Indigenous ideology," as its proponents present it, defies all the protocols associated with postmodern / postcolonial criticism—to the point where it could be said fairly that it replicates the colonizers' views of indigenous peoples. Not only does it affirm the possibility of "real" native identity, but it asserts as the basis for such identity a native subjectivity that has survived, depending on location, as many as five centuries of colonialism and cultural disorientation. Not only does it believe in the possibility of recapturing the essence of precolonial indigenous culture, but it bases this belief on a spirituality that exists outside of historical time. The very notions of *Indian* or *Hawai'ian* that are utilized to describe collective identities take for granted categories invented by colonizers and imposed upon the colonized in remapping and redefining diverse peoples in a Euro-American reconstruction of space in the process of colonization. An articulate spokesman for indigenous ideology such as Ward Churchill not only utilizes this terminology but also insists that the collectivities thus depicted are "referents" (to recall Bhabha's term in the quotation above) for Indian nationhood, or peoplehood.[8] In all these different ways, indigenous ideology would seem to provide a textbook case of "self-Orientalization" that replays the features ascribed to the Others of Eurocentric modernizationism, which have been analyzed by Fabian in his *Time and the Other*.[9] What Nicholas Thomas says of "New Age primitivism" in Australia could describe equally well the self-essentialization that is a feature of indigenous ideology in general: "Constructing them as culturally stable since the beginning of humanity does imply an ahistorical existence, an inability to change and an incapacity to survive modernity; this essentialism also entails stipulations about what is and what is not appropriately and truly Aboriginal, which marginalizes not only urban Aboriginal cultures, but any forms not closely associated with traditional bush gathering."[10]

Not surprisingly, indigenous ideology has come under criticism from postcolonial positions, or positions that share certain

basic premises with postmodern/postcolonial criticism. Gareth Griffiths, a prominent Australian proponent of postcolonial criticism, wonders, of the protests against oppression of "subaltern people," that "even when the subaltern appears to 'speak' there is a real concern as to whether what we are listening to is really a subaltern voice, or whether the subaltern is being spoken by the subject position they occupy within the larger discursive economy." Griffiths goes on to state that his goal is not to question

> whether the claim of Aboriginal peoples in Australia and elsewhere to restitution of their traditional lands and sacred places, or to the voices and practices of their traditional cultures, is legitimate. Nor do I question the importance of locality and specificity in resisting the generalizing tendencies and incorporative strategies of white society. . . . [I]t is not my business to comment on this. What I am concerned with is the impact of the representation of that claim when it is mediated through a discourse of the authentic adopted and promulgated by the dominant discourse which 'speaks' the indigene within a construction whose legitimacy is grounded not in *their* practice but in *our* desire.[11]

Similarly, but obviously with fewer qualms about offending indigenous sensibilities, a Canadian postcolonial critic writes,

> While post-colonial theorists embrace hybridity and heterogeneity as the characteristic post-colonial mode, some native writers in Canada resist what they see as a violating appropriation to insist on their ownership of their stories and their exclusive claim to an authenticity that should not be ventriloquized or parodied. When directed against the Western canon, post-modernist techniques of intertextuality, parody, and literary borrowing may appear radical and even potentially revolutionary. When directed against native myths and stories, these same techniques would seem to repeat the imperialist history of plunder and theft. . . . Although I can sympathize with such arguments as tactical strategies in insisting on self-definition and resisting appropriation, even tactically they prove self-defeating because they depend on a view of cultural authenticity that condemns them to a continued marginality and an eventual death. . . . Ironically, such tactics encourage native peoples to isolate themselves from contemporary life and full citizenhood.[12]

Nicholas Thomas has observed that cultural studies in the U.S. have been largely silent on the question of Native Americans: "In U.S. journals that address race, more reference is made to racism and colonial conflicts elsewhere—in South Africa or Britain—than to native American struggles."[13] One noteworthy exception that is pertinent to the discussion here may be the questions raised by anthropologist Jocelyn S. Linnekin about the claims to cultural authenticity of the Hawai'ian independence movement. In an article published in 1983, "Defining Tradition: Variations on the Hawaiian Identity," Linnekin argued not only that Hawai'ian society was internally differentiated (and hence not to be homogenized), but that the "traditions" that served as symbols of Hawai'ian nationalism—such as Hawai'ian seafaring capabilities or the "love of the land"—were invented traditions. Especially damaging were the questions she raised about the traditional sanctity of the island of Kahoolawe, used by the U.S. Navy for bombing practices. Her questions were to be used by the navy as legal evidence to justify continued use of the island as a target against Hawai'ian claims to the island's sanctity.[14]

Whether these critiques are based on sufficient readings of indigenous ideology is a question I will take up below. It is necessary here to examine more closely the relationship of indigenous self-assertion to its context in a colonial structure of power. Griffiths's concern that the dominant discourse "speaks" the indigene raises the important question that the reification of indigenous identity not only replicates the assumptions of the dominant discourse, but also opens the way to the "consumption" of indigenism by the dominant society; after all, people who are outside of history are more easily placed in museums and theme parks than those who are part of a living present, and exoticized cultures provide a ready-made fund for the production of cultural commodities.[15] What Griffiths overlooks, however, is that it is the power context rather than the reification that may be the more important problem. As the case of Linnekin shows, the denial of reified pasts is equally open to exploitation by power. Disney these days justifies its constructions of the past or of the Other on the grounds that, since all pasts are invented or constructed, their constructions are as valid as anyone else's. It is arguable that postmodern/postcolonial denials of historical or cultural truths render the past or other cultures more readily available for commodification and exploitation by abolishing the possibility of distinguishing one invention from another. The premise that all

truths are "contingent" truths, without reference to the structures of power that inform them, opens the way to silencing "the subalterns" who cannot even claim authentic custody of their own identities against their "construction" by academic, commercial, or political institutions of power.

The importance of accounting for power relations in judgments on identity formation may be illustrated further by placing indigenous ideology within the context of the current proliferation of cultural nationalisms with which it shares much in common in terms of intellectual procedures. There has been a resurgence in recent years of fundamentalistic nationalisms or culturalisms against Euro-American ideological domination of the world, ranging from Islamic fundamentalism to Pan-Asianism, from assertions in Japan of an ideology of "Japaneseness" to the Confucian revival in Chinese societies. These revivals, while antihegemonic in some respects, are also fueled by newfound power in formerly Third World societies that have achieved success in capitalist development and all of a sudden find themselves in a position to challenge Euro-American models of development. They are also motivated, however, by efforts to contain the disintegrative consequences of such development. The assertion of homogenized cultural identities on the one hand celebrates success in the world economy but also, on the other hand, seeks to contain the disintegrative threat of Western commodity culture, the social incoherence brought about by capitalist development, and the cultural confusion brought about by diasporic populations that have called into question the identification of national culture with the space of the nation-state. Thus the Confucian revival among Chinese populations points to Chinese success in capitalist development to argue that the Confucian ethic is equal, if not superior to, the "Protestant ethic" which Max Weber credited with causative power in the emergence of capitalism in Europe; a "Weberized" Confucianism in turn appears as a marker of Chineseness regardless of time or place. In the idea of a "cultural China" that has been promoted by proponents of a Confucian revival, cultural essence replaces political identity in the definition of Chineseness. At the same time, the idea is one in the promotion of which Chinese states, capital, and academic intellectuals (mostly in First World institutions) have played a crucial part. No less important is the fact that non-Chinese academics in the U.S. closely connected with academic and commercial institutions of power have participated in this revival, and

have even played an important part in legitimizing it; Confucianism, reduced to a few ethical principles conducive to social and economic order, has been rendered in the process into an ideology of capitalist development, superior to the individualistic ideology of Euro-American capitalism in its emphasis on harmony and social cohesiveness. The latter aspect prompted the government of the People's Republic of China, in 1994, to declare a "Confucian renaissance" on the grounds that, with socialism having lost its ethical power to counter undesirable social tendencies, Confucianism might serve as a suitable native substitute.[16] Naturalized as a marker of Chineseness, Confucianism also serves to erase memories of a revolutionary past.

The tendencies toward the proliferation of fundamentalisms and culturalist nationalisms were no doubt on the mind of Samuel Huntington when he wrote in his celebrated 1993 essay,

> World politics is entering a new phase.... [T]he fundamental source of conflict in this new world will not be primarily ideological or primarily economic. The great divisions among humankind and the dominating source of conflict will be cultural. Nation states will remain the most powerful actors in world affairs, but the principal conflicts of global politics will occur between nations and groups of different civilizations. The clash of civilizations will dominate world politics.
>
> ....
>
> With the end of the Cold War, international politics moves out of its Western phase, and its centerpiece becomes the interaction between the West and non-Western civilizations and among non-Western civilizations....
>
> ....
>
> Civilization identity will be increasingly important in the future, and the world will be shaped in large measure by the interactions among seven or eight major civilizations. These include Western, Confucian, Japanese, Islamic, Hindu, Slavic-Orthodox, Latin American and possibly African civilization.[17]

A critique of cultural "essentialism" that offers no articulated means to distinguish between the essentialism of indigenous ideology and the essentialism of a Confucian revival or Huntington's vision of war among civilizations, may be methodologically justifiable; but it is, to say the least, morally irresponsible and politically obscene. Indigenous claims to identity are

very much tied in with a desperate concern for survival; not in a "metaphorical" but in a very material sense. Indian lands in the U.S., or what is left of them, are not just reminders of a bygone colonial past, but are still the objects of state and corporate destruction in what Churchill describes as "radioactive colonization."[18] In accordance with racist policies in effect since the nineteenth century, according to Annette Jaimes, Indian identity in the U.S. is determined either by the recognition of tribal governments or by what has been described as "the blood quantum," the degree of "Indian blood" in any one individual as certified by the Bureau of Indian Affairs (the minimum for qualification set at "quarter blood").[19] Churchill, who describes the implications of the "blood quantum" as "arithmetical genocide," writes,

> The thinking is simple. As the historian Patricia Nelson Limerick frames it: "Set the blood quantum at one-quarter, hold to it as a rigid definition of Indians, let intermarriage proceed as it has for centuries, and eventually Indians will be defined out of existence." Bearing out the validity of Jaimes' and Limerick's observations is the fact that, in 1900, about half of all Indians in this country were "full-bloods." By 1990, the population had shrunk to about twenty percent.... A third of all Indians are at the quarter-blood cut-off point. Cherokee demographer Russell Thornton estimates that, given continued imposition of purely racial definitions, Native America as a whole will have disappeared by the year 2080.[20]

Cultural identity, under such circumstances, is not a matter of "identity politics" but a condition of survival, and its implications may be grasped only by reference to structures of power. There is a world of difference between a "Confucian identity" promoted by states and capital and intended to carve out a place in a global structure of political and economic power, and an indigenous identity that may be essential to survival as a social and cultural identity against the depredations of power. Postmodern/postcolonial criticism, especially in the U.S., has not only been insensitive to such differences in its unqualified affirmation of "hybridity and heterogeneity" but, as the quotation from Brydon above suggests, quite intolerant of any efforts to "construct" the past differently from what is allowable to "postcolonial critics"; in fact, it is difficult to see how Brydon's "join up or shut up attitude" differs in any significant sense from that of colonialist attitudes toward indigenous peoples.[21]

What renders indigenous ideology significant, however, is not what it has to reveal about postmodern / postcolonial criticism. Its intellectual and political significance rests elsewhere: in its claims to a different historicity that challenges not just postcolonial denials of collective identity but the structure of power that contains it. To criticize indigenous ideology for its reification of culture is to give it at best an incomplete reading. It also disguises the complexity of what indigenous authors have to say about the relationship between culture and history, which is considerably more radical ideologically than is suggested by its apparent culturalism.

CULTURAL IDENTITY / HISTORICAL TRAJECTORY

One of the celebrated conflicts in U.S. letters in recent years is that between the Chinese-American writers Frank Chin and Maxine Hong Kingston. Following the publication of Kingston's *The Woman Warrior* in 1976, Chin launched an attack on the book for its misrepresentation of Chineseness. The attacks continue to this day but have been broadened now to include other prominent Chinese-American writers such as Amy Tan and David Hwang. Chin has accused all of these authors of stereotyping Chinese culture and distorting its realities by adopting what he takes to be a "missionary" view of Chinese society.[22]

Chin's attacks on these authors have been ascribed to his misogynistic attitudes and his envy at their success. Regardless of whether there is any merit to such charges, his own refusal to bring any kind of subtlety to his criticisms has not helped his cause. His insistence that his is the only viable and authentically "Chinese" position has further isolated him and, unfortunately, obviated the need for elaborating on his critique which, I believe, has much to say about the problem of history in a minority group's construction of its ethnicity.[23]

At the heart of this particular controversy is Kingston's (mis)use of Chinese legends and the liberties she took with the interpretation of Chinese characters (namely, the association of the character for woman with the character for slave) in *The Woman Warrior*. Kingston has conceded the liberties she took but has explained them in terms of literary license. Chin has refused to accept this excuse. Legends, to him, represent cultural truths that are not to be tampered with; Kingston's distortions of Chinese legends were all the more serious because, at the insistence of the publisher, she

consented to having *The Woman Warrior* classified as autobiography rather than fiction, as originally intended, which further endowed her distortions with the status of truth. She thus played into the hands of the dominant society's stereotypes of Chineseness.

Kingston herself has expressed regrets that *The Woman Warrior* was indeed received as a description of Chinese society, contributing to the image of an exotic China. This may have something to tell us about the plight of minority literature, but it will not do to ascribe it just to the parochialism of the dominant society, as Frederick Buell has suggested recently.[24] The problem with Kingston's representation of Chineseness may lie not in the distortions of Chinese legends or characters (although these are certainly problems), but in the manner in which the relationship to the past is represented in *The Woman Warrior*. A comparison with Chin's representation of this relationship may lend us a clue. Chin's own work engages in a stereotyping of Chineseness by associating it with certain primordial characteristics; indeed it is arguable that Chin's notion of the cultural endowment of Chinese in his formal statements is one-dimensional in contrast to that of Kingston, who perceives in Chinese culture the location both for oppression and the struggle against it, as personified in the woman warrior.[25] Nevertheless, in his fiction, Chin presents a relationship to the past that resists appropriation into the image of an exotic China. Why one representation should lend itself to appropriation while the other should resist it is an important question that has been sidestepped in the whole controversy.

The part history plays in mediating the Chinese-American relationship to the Chinese past is crucial, I think, to understanding the difference. While complex, Kingston's representation of the past relegates it to a Chinese space, which then haunts the Chinese-American as burden or promise, but in either case as a legacy from a different time and place (*haunts* in an almost literal sense, as she uses the metaphor of *ghosts* to depict the presence of the past in the present). Chin in his fiction is relatively unconcerned with Chinese culture—except in relationship to the Chinese-American; it may be suggested even that he substitutes the culture of the Chinese-American as he understands it for Chinese culture. The relationship of Chinese-American to Chinese culture in his representation is a relationship both of sameness and difference, mediated by a history that is grounded in a U.S., not a Chinese, temporality. The difference between the two representations is the difference between Chinese culture as a past legacy

that continues to haunt the American Chinese, versus Chinese culture as a source of struggle to define a Chinese-American identity that defies "death by assimilation" while reaffirming its irreducible Americanness. In this latter case, the past serves not merely as legacy to be left behind as the ghosts of China themselves eventually recede to invisibility; rather, it is a fundamental moment in the creation of a Chinese-American history even as that history is distanced from its sources in China. What makes Chin's version resistant to exoticism, as well as to assimilation, I think, is its claim to a Chinese-American historicity that derives its trajectory from the reworking of past legacy within an American topography, that makes it as American as any other history but at the same time proclaims a historicity that is different from, and challenges, American history as represented in dominant historiography—one that has written the Chinese-American out of history and has denied the Americanness of the Chinese-American in doing so. Also, in this representation, we might note, there is a shift of emphasis (in spite of Chin's own longings) from cultural legacy that resists history to a historical legacy that rephrases the question of cultural identity in terms of its historicity.[26]

Thus, despite his insistence on his being the only "real" Chinese around, it is arguable that Chin is the most "American" of all the Chinese-American writers, and it is his alternative vision of being American, rather than his insistence on his Chineseness, that endows his work with a radicalism that resists appropriation. The complexity of Chin's notion of Chineseness may be gleaned from the following passage in his novel *Donald Duk*:

> A hundred years ago, all the Chinatowns in America were Cantonese. They spoke Cantonese. The only Chinese Donald has any ears for is Cantonese. Donald does not like the history teacher, Mr. Meanwright. Mr. Meanwright likes to prove he knows more about Chinese than Donald Duk. Donald doesn't care. He knows nothing about China. He does not speak Mandarin. He does not care a lot about Chinatown either, but when Mr. Meanwright talks about Chinatown, Donald Duk's muscles all tighten up, and he wants Mr. Meanwright to shut up.[27]

It is Chinatown culture that is Chinese-American culture, and while Chin has taken liberties with representing this culture as a metonym for Chinese culture as a whole, it is Chinese-American

culture that has been his major preoccupation. Early in his career, he acknowledged not only that Chinese-Americans were not recognized as "real" Chinese by those from China, but he complained about the confusion of Chinese-American with Chinese culture.[28] Interestingly from our present vantage point, the happy "in-betweenland" of postcolonialism appeared at the time as "no-man's land." He and Jeffrey Chan wrote of the concept of "dual personality" (the unblendable "blending of east and west") that pervaded studies of Chinese-Americans at the time:

> The concept of the dual personality successfully deprives the Chinese-American of all authority over language and thus a means of codifying, communicating, and legitimizing his experience. Because he is a foreigner, English is not his native tongue. Because he was born in the U.S., Chinese is not his native tongue. Chinese from China, "real Chinese," make the Chinese-American aware of his lack of authority over Chinese, and the white American doesn't recognize the Chinese-American's brand of English as a language, even a minority language, but as faulty English, an "accent." The notion of an organic, whole identity, a personality not explicable in either the terms of China or white America . . . has been precluded by the concept of the dual personality . . . the denial of language is the denial of culture.[29]

The realization of just such a personality, which is not a hybrid of two cultures but a product of historical experience, emerges then as the goal (this may be the reason that Chin consistently uses the derogatory term *Chinaman* to describe his characters, turning the tables on racist usage). The grounds of the experience are very much American, but to resist assimilation the experience must draw upon the Chinese past, the authenticity of which then becomes crucial to the plausibility of a Chinese-American identity. An underlying theme of a novel such as *Donald Duk* (as well as Chin's other writings) is the erasure of Chinese from American history (literally absent from the photograph at Promontory Summit, Utah, where the Union Pacific met the Central Pacific, after Chinese workers had done so much to build the railroad from Sacramento). The goal is to restore that history, but as Chinese, not as shadows of white society:

> "I think Donald Duk may be the very last American-born Chinese-American boy to believe you have to give up being

> Chinese to be an American," Dad says. "These new immigrants prove that. They were originally Cantonese, and did not want to be Chinese. When China conquered the south, these people went further south, into Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, Thailand. They learned French. Now they're learning English. They still speak their Cantonese, their Chinese, their Viet or Lao or Cambodian, and French. Instead of giving anything up, they add on. They're including America in everything else they know. And that makes them stronger than any of the American-born, like me, who had folks who worked hard to know absolutely nothing about China, who believed that if all they knew was 100 percent American-made in the USA Yankee know howdy doodle dandy, people would not mistake them for Chinese.[30]

In *Donald Duk,* legendary Chinese heroes appear as railroad foremen, and the hundred-and-eight outlaws of the Chinese novel *Water Margin* offer their aid in the semblance of "the ghost riders in the sky."

The historicity of identity does not make it any the less whole, nor does the constructedness of the past make it any the less significant in shaping history. Each generation may rewrite history, but it does so under conditions where it receives as its historical endowment previous generations' constructions of the past. For the marginalized and oppressed in particular, whose histories have been erased by power, it becomes all the more important to recapture or remake the past in their efforts to render themselves visible historically, as the very struggle to become visible presupposes a historical identity. In the face of a "historiographic colonialism" that denies them their historicity, capturing the truth of history, of oppression and the resistance to it, is a fundamental task that for its accomplishment requires constant reference to the precolonial past.[31] But it is also the case that those who are engaged in a struggle for identity can least afford to dehistoricize or reify the past, for the struggle is always the struggle for the present and must address not just the legacy of the past but also problems of the present. Cultural identity itself, then, is a terrain of the very struggles that it inspires. Whether it is reified, hybridized, or historicized, the meaning to be attached to alternative constructions of cultural identity is inseparable from the totality of the struggle that provides its context. The Confucian revival, Kingston's feminist construction of China, and Chin's use of popular religious and literary traditions all construct Chineseness differently, but also with different im-

plications for the relationship between culture and history. They also imply different relationships to social and political power.

Chin's use of the past provides a cogent illustration that cultural construction is not a "zero-sum" process (either Chinese or American) or a matter of hybridity or in-betweenness (neither Chinese nor American), but a historical process of production in which the dialectical interaction between past legacy and present circumstances produces cultural identities that are no less integrated for being historical, that derive their trajectories of change from the accretion of experiences that may be shaped by the legacies of the past but also transform the meaning of the latter, and in which local experience interacts with structural context to produce, at once, forces of difference and unity. Cultural essentialism does not consist merely of defining cultural essences, but requires the isolation of culture from history, so that those essences come to serve as abstract markers that have little to do with the realities of cultural identity. Notions of cultural purity and hybridity alike, ironically, presuppose a cultural essentialism; from a perspective that recognizes the historicity of culture, the question of essentialism becomes quite irrelevant. In this sense, assertions of hybridity or in-betweenness as well as claims to cultural purity are equally culturalist, the one because it rejects the spatiality and temporality of culture, the other because it renders into spatial differences what are but the temporal complexities of the relationship between the past and the present. The historicization of culture against such culturalism is also quite radical in its consequences, in that it opens the way to an insistence on different histories which, unlike the insistence on different cultural spaces or spaces in-between, are not to be contained within a cultural pluralism let alone assumptions of cultural unity; hence the resistance to appropriation of a historicized insistence on culture.

Historicizing Chinese culture, Chin's account seeks also to indigenize it in the topography of a new location for history, where it challenges the claims of the dominant culture. But its own claims are those of one group of settlers against other settlers; an assertion that the one group of settlers has the same claims on history as another. What, if any, alternative vision of the future is embedded in this alternative history remains unclear.

This is where the radicalism of indigenous ideology comes in. If Chin indigenizes Chineseness in a new historical location, indigenous ideology historicizes indigenism in the face of a new historical situation but without conceding its topographical claims

and an alternative way of life embedded in that topography. Not only does it insist on a different history, in other words, but it does so through a repudiation of the very idea of history promoted by the settlers; as it refuses to distinguish temporality from spatiality. I suggested above that readings of indigenous ideology that ascribe to it a simple cultural essentialism may not be sufficient. Contrary to critics wedded to ideas of "heterogeneity and hybridity," who see in every affirmation of cultural identity an ahistorical cultural essentialism, indigenous voices are quite open to change; what they insist on is not cultural purity or persistence, but the preservation of a particular historical trajectory of their own. In this case, however, the trajectory is one that is grounded in the topography much more intimately. And it is one that is at odds with the notions of temporality that guide the histories of the settlers.[32]

Silko might be echoing Chin when she writes,

> The people nowadays have an idea about the ceremonies. They think the ceremonies must be performed exactly as they have always been done. . . . But long ago when the people were given these ceremonies, the changing began . . . if only in the different voices from generation to generation, singing the chants. You see, in many ways, the ceremonies have always been changing. . . . At one time, the ceremonies as they had been performed were enough for the way the world was then. But after the white people came, elements in this world began to shift; and it became necessary to create new ceremonies. . . . [T]hings which don't shift and grow are dead things. They are things the witchery people want. That's what the witchery is counting on: that we will cling to the ceremonies the way they were, and then their power will triumph, and the people will be no more.[33]

Change is necessary, but it is to be contained within the history of the ceremonies. And, in this case, the ceremonies are inseparable from the land. Silko's narrative is a confirmation of the coexistence of the timeless and the temporal; a sensibility of timeless validity and the changes that are necessary to sustain that sensibility. The Indian is responsible for both. It was Indian witchcraft that "invented" the whites, who threaten the eternally valid. While the Indian "invention" of the whites points to the Indians' responsibility for their own fate (rather than blaming the whites for it), it also reverses the historiographical relationship by making whites into creatures of a quintessentially Indian history.[34]

Only by overcoming witchcraft can the Indian once again restore the sensibility that is necessary to the sustenance of life.

Indigenism thus conceived is both a legacy and a project (as is ethnicity, when viewed in this perspective). Arguing against the "determinism" of culturalism, Jean-Paul Sartre wrote in his *Search for a Method,*

> The project, as the subjective surpassing of objectivity toward objectivity, and stretched between the objective conditions of the environment and the objective structures of the field of possibles, represents *in itself* the moving unity of subjectivity and objectivity, those cardinal determinants of activity. The subjective appears then as a necessary moment in the objective process. . . . Only the project, as a mediation between two moments of objectivity, can account for history; that is, for human *creativity.*[35]

The project, Sartre noted, contains a "double simultaneous relationship. In relation to the given, the *praxis* is negativity; but what is always involved is the negation of a negation. In relation to the object aimed at, *praxis* is positivity, but this positivity opens unto the 'nonexistent,' to what *has not yet* been."[36]

To an indigenist such as Ward Churchill, indigenism is a "negation of the negation," which also affirms "that which is most alive and promising for the future of the Indian people."[37] By indigenism, Churchill writes,

> I mean that I am one who not only takes the rights of indigenous peoples as the highest priority of my political life, but who draws upon the traditions—the bodies of knowledge and corresponding codes of values—evolved over many thousands of years by native peoples the world over. This is the basis upon which I not only advance critiques of, but conceptualize alternatives to the present social, political, economic and philosophical status quo. In turn, this gives shape not only to the sorts of goals and objectives I pursue, but the kinds of strategy and tactics I advocate, the variety of struggles I tend to support, the nature of alliances I'm inclined to enter into, and so on.[38]

The point of departure for this indigenism is the present, and its goal is not to restore a bygone past, but to draw upon the past to create a new future (which also explains why Churchill uses the term *Indian,* fully aware of its colonial origins, as does Frank Chin

with *Chinaman* and Trask with *Hawai'ian).* In working out the scope of indigenism, moreover, Churchill also strives to account for challenges that are very contemporary, such as problems of class, sexism, and homophobia.[39]

Likewise, Annette Jaimes describes indigenism as a "reworking of ... concepts which are basic to an American Indian identity on the threshold of the Twenty-first century," and Trask, like most indigenous writers, links the struggles for Hawai'ian independence to the struggles of oppressed people around the world.[40] The same is true of writers of the Pacific, such as Albert Wendt and Epeli Hau'ofa, who have affirmed that the effort to recapture a native identity and history may proceed only through struggles against colonialism that nevertheless recognize the historical transformations wrought by colonialism.[41] The effort to overcome Eurocentrism and colonialism does not require denial of an immediate past of which Euro-American colonialism was an integral part but presupposes an identity through a history of which Euro-American domination was very much a reality.[42]

What is of fundamental significance here (and distinguishes these arguments from postcolonialism), however, is a recognition that the common history that united the colonizer and the colonized was also a history of division. What the colonizer may have experienced as unification, the colonized experienced as an oppressive denial of native identity. The insistence on a separate historicity is driven by this sense of division: To liberate native history from "historiographic colonialism," it is necessary not just to revive memories of a precolonial past, but to write the ways in which the precolonial past was suppressed, as well as the ways in which it informed past struggles against colonialism. As the Australian aboriginal writer Mudrooroo Narogin puts it,

> It is no use declaring, as some Aborigines do declare, that the past is over and should be forgotten, when that past is only of two hundred years duration. It is far too early for the Aboriginal people to put aside that past and the effects of that past. Aboriginal people must come to realise that many of their problems are based on a past which still lives within them. If this is not acknowledged, then the self-destructive and community-destructive acts which continue to occur will be seen as only resulting from unemployment, bad housing, or ill-health, and once these are removed everything will be fine.[43]

Narogin's comments show that the struggle over history is no longer just a struggle between colonizer and colonized but among the colonized themselves; between those who would forget the immediate past and those who insist on remembering.[44] Indigenism's insistence on remembering the immediate past distinguishes it from reifications of precolonial cultural markers and renders it fundamentally threatening to the status quo, even when that status quo is redefined in terms of cultural diversity and difference. As Gillian Cowlishaw writes, "Forty thousand years of history and spiritual links with the land gain a more sympathetic hearing than accusations of past injustices and displaying of old wounds received in the struggle for equality."[45] The reasons are not very complex: The reification of the precolonial past may be accommodated within a cultural pluralism much more easily than the insistence on the construction of alternative futures that draw not only on primordial traditions but also on the struggles of the immediate past. The difference is the difference between a multiculturalism that enables assimilation without challenge to the social, political, and economic status quo, and a multihistoricalism that questions the totality of existing relations and the future of the history that legitimizes them.

The indigenous historical challenge, moreover, is not "metaphorical" but deeply material. The insistence on a special relationship to the land as the basis for indigenous identity is not merely spiritual, an affirmation of an ecological sensibility, but also calls for a transformation of the spatial arrangements of colonialism or postcolonialism. Indigenism, in other words, challenges not just relations between different ethnicities but the system of economic relations that provides the ultimate context for social and political relationships: capitalist or state socialist. In this challenge also lie the possibilities for opening up indigenism to other radical advocacies of social change. Instead of a multiculturalism that presupposes coexistence of multiple ethnicities identified by ahistorical cultural markers, which elevates ethnicity to a determining principle of social life without saying much about the political and economic system as a whole, the historicity of the indigenous argument permits the design of open-ended projects that promise a return to a genuinely common history once the legacy of the colonial past has been erased—not just ideologically but materially as well.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

In his critique of Jocelyn Linnekin's criticisms of the Hawai'ian independence movement, Jeffrey Tobin has called for greater attention to context in evaluating political movements and their constructions of native identity. "It is important," he writes, "to distinguish between discourses that naturalize oppression and discourses that naturalize resistance."[46] Similarly, responding to critiques of "essentialism" by James Clifford and Edward Said, Nicholas Thomas writes that

> what . . . these critiques pass over is the extent to which humanism and essentialism have different meanings and effects in different contexts. Clifford writes as though the problem were merely intellectual: difference and hybridity are more appropriate analytically to the contemporary scene of global cultural transposition than claims about human sameness or bounded types. I would agree, but this does not bear upon the uses that essentialist discourses may have for people whose projects involve mobilization rather than analysis. Said might be able to argue that nativism as a political programme or government ideology has been largely pernicious, but nativist consciousness cannot be deemed undesirable merely because it is ahistorical and uncritically reproduces colonial stereotypes. The main problem is not that this imposes academic (and arguably ethnocentric) standards on non-academic and non-Western representations, but that it paradoxically essentializes nativism by taking its politics to be uniform.[47]

Thomas also recognizes that "nativist-primitivist idealizations can only be productive . . . if they are complemented by here-and-now concerns, and articulated with histories that do not merely recapitulate the 'imperialist nostalgia' of the fatal-impact narrative."[48]

Ironically, the insistence of the postcolonial argument on history conceals a deeply ahistorical reluctance to distinguish anything but the local, imbedded in an ideology of "heterogeneity and hybridity." It is also an argument that undercuts the ability to resist oppression except on the level of "identity politics." It is ironic that the insistence on the inventedness and the constructedness of the past should not be accompanied by a more acute self-awareness of the inventions of postcolonialism itself, but instead should be disguised, as in the case of Linnekin, by

claims to a disinterested search for truth. Viewed from these perspectives, postcolonialism itself appears as a project among competing projects, that reifies into the eternal condition of humanity the endowments of a limited group.[49] In this case, however, the project is one without a future, condemning everyone without distinction to existence in ethnic margins—including those in the margins whose efforts to overcome their marginality are subject to immediate condemnation.

The call for greater attention to political context in evaluations of identity construction is common-sensical to the point of being trivial. Common sense, unfortunately, is never transparent but is loaded with ideological assumptions. The postmodern/postcolonial questioning of identity is itself quite common-sensical; it is when it is generalized and universalized to the point where it will brook no deviation from its own assumptions that it becomes intellectually counterproductive and is driven into a political dead end that extinguishes the possibility of political alternatives. Sharpened awareness of the constructedness of identity or of history may have rendered political and moral choice more complex and difficult; it has not eliminated the necessity of choice. Postmodernism may be an ideology of defeat, as Terry Eagleton suggests, or a "matter of class," as Aijaz Ahmad puts it; in either case, it reifies into a general analytical or political principle what may be but a condition of our times.[50]

In a recent essay, I suggested that indigenism may be of paradigmatic significance in contemporary politics globally.[51] This is not to suggest that indigenism provides a ready-made utopia, as in New Age constructions of indigenism. Indigenous proponents of indigenism are quite aware of the problems of native societies: that they have been disorganized by centuries of colonialism and reorganized in accordance with the political and cultural prerogatives of colonialism, which has led to a social and political disintegration, as well as a nearly total incoherence of native identity, that will take enormous effort to overcome; that their cultures continue to be cannibalized by tourist industries and New Age cultural consumerism, often with the complicity of the native peoples themselves; and that the dream of recovering the land, crucial both to material and spiritual existence, may be just that, a dream.[52] It may be out of this deep sense of the historical destruction of their societies that indigenous writers insist on recovering the process of history "as it really was"—for them. Because indigenous people were written out of history for being

"unhistorical," it becomes all the more necessary to document meticulously the process whereby they were erased from history in order to recover historicity.[53]

The insistence on a separate history is itself not without problems, especially these days when tendencies to the ethnicization or even the biologization of knowledge threatens not only a common understanding of the world, but the possibility of common political projects as well. Although the cannibalization of indigenous cultures (by tourist or anthropologist) is very real, the fact remains that its very reality divides indigenous from nonindigenous projects—especially when issues of identity are framed around spiritualities that are accessible only to those on the inside.

Nevertheless, it is arguable that indigenism is as much a utopian aspiration that seeks to contain and overcome these problems as it is an expression of native sensibilities. The same utopianism—history as project—also offers possibilities of common struggles and aspirations. Indigenous ideology, while insistent on a separate history, also finds common ground with other histories in the problems it addresses. What makes it particularly pertinent in our day are the questions it raises about the whole project of development, capitalist or socialist; although some indigenous writers have pointed to common features between socialism and indigenism, this is a socialism that is far-removed from the state socialisms as we have known them, grounded in the reassertion of community.[54] The indigenous reaffirmation of a special relationship to the land as the basis of a new ecological sensibility obviously resonates with growing ecological consciousness worldwide. The indigenous reassertion of ties to authentic pasts is not as divisive as it may seem, but may contain a lesson that is broadly relevant. If the past is constructed, it is constructed at all times, and ties to the past require an ongoing dialogue between present and past constructions, except in linear conceptions of history where the past, once past, is irrelevant except as abstract moral or political lesson. The repudiation of linear temporality in indigenous ideology suggests that the past is never really past, but offers "stories" that may be required to resolve problems of the present, even as they are changed to answer present needs.[55] The notion of dialogue between past and present also suggests the possibility of dialogue across present-day spaces, among indigenous peoples and with the nonindigenous as well, in which lies the possibility of common understanding as well as common historical projects.

If indigenous ideology claims as its basis an indigenous sensibility, it also opens up to others through problems that cut across any ethnically defined identity, those of class and gender oppression in particular. Just as local political movements in our day have had to reconsider such problems as class, gender, and ethnicity in light of ecological and community needs, indigenous ideology has had to reconsider the meaning of indigenism in light of those problems. Surely such movements may learn from, and cross-fertilize, one another while respecting their different identities. If indigenism does have paradigmatic significance, it is because it shares with other political movements in our day both common problems, and the necessity of common action to resolve those problems.

I cannot think of a better way of concluding this discussion, and illustrating what I have just said, than to quote the eloquent words of a leader of a contemporary movement for indigenous self-assertion that has caught the attention of many in these bleak political times:

> Not everyone listens to the voices of hopelessness and resignation. Not everyone has jumped onto the bandwagon of despair. Most people continue on; they cannot hear the voice of the powerful and the fainthearted as they are deafened by the cry and the blood that death and misery shout in their ears. But in moments of rest, they hear another voice, not the one that comes from above, but rather the one that comes with the wind from below, and is born in the heart of the indigenous people of the mountains, a voice that speaks of justice and liberty, a voice that speaks of socialism, a voice that speaks of hope . . . the only hope in this earthly world. And the very oldest among the people in the villages tell of a man named Zapata who rose up for his own people and in a voice more like a song than a shout, said, **"Land and Liberty!"** And these old folks say that Zapata is not dead, that he is going to return. And the oldest of the old also say that the wind and the rain and the sun tell the campesinos when they should prepare the soil, when they should plant, and when they should harvest. They say that hope also must be planted and harvested. And the old people say that now the wind, the rain, and the sun are talking to the earth in a new way, and that the poor should not continue to harvest death, now it is time to harvest rebellion. So say the old people. The powerful don't listen, the words don't reach them, as they are made deaf by the witchery that the imperialists shout in their

> ears. "Zapata," repeat the youth of the poor, "Zapata" insists the wind, the wind from below, our wind. . . .[56]

The choices may be complex, but they are ours to make.

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NOTES

1. Karl Marx, *The 18th Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* (New York: International Publishers, 1967), 15.
2. Homi Bhabha, "The Postcolonial and the Postmodern: The Question of Agency," in *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994), 171–97, 172.
3. Leslie Marmon Silko, *Ceremony* (New York: Penguin Books, 1977), 2.
4. Haunani-Kay Trask, "From a Native Daughter," in *From a Native Daughter: Colonialism and Sovereignty in Hawai'i* (Monroe, ME: Common Courage Press, 1993), 147–59, 149–54. Roger Moody, ed., *The Indigenous Voice: Visions and Realities* (Utrecht, Netherlands: International Books, 1993), offers the most comprehensive selection I am aware of, of indigenous problems and perspectives. See also Ward Churchill, "A Little Matter of Genocide: Sam Gill's *Mother Earth,* Colonialism and the Expropriation of Indigenous Spiritual Tradition in Academia, " in *Fantasies of the Master Race: Literature, Cinema and the Colonization of American Indians,* ed. M. Annette Jaimes (Monroe, ME: Common Courage Press, 1992), 187–213; Albert Wendt, "Novelists, Historians and the Art of Remembering," in *Class and Culture in the South Pacific,* ed. Antony Hooper et al. (Auckland, NZ and Suva, Fiji: Centre for Pacific Studies of the University of Auckland in collaboration with the Institute of Pacific Studies, The University of the South Pacific, 1987), 78–91; Epeli Hau'ofa, "Our Sea of Islands," in *A New Oceania: Rediscovering Our Sea of Islands* (Suva, Fiji: School of Social and Economic Development, The University of the South Pacific, 1993), 2–16; and Alan Duff, *Once Were Warriors* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1990).
5. Quoted in Ward Churchill, "I Am Indigenist: Notes on the Ideology of the Fourth World," in *Struggle for the Land: Indigenous Resistance to Genocide, Ecocide and Expropriation in Contemporary North America* (Monroe, ME: Common Courage Press, 1993), 403–451, 410.

6. Quoted in ibid., 411.

7. M. Annette Jaimes, "Native American Identity and Survival: Indigenism and Environmental Ethics," in *Issues in Native American Identity*, ed. Michael K. Green (New York: Lang, 1994).

8. Churchill, "Naming Our Destiny," in *Indians Are Us? Culture and Genocide in Native North America* (Monroe, ME: Common Courage Press, 1994), 291–357, 300.

9. Johannes Fabian, *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes Its Object* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983).

10. Nicholas Thomas, *Colonialism's Culture: Anthropology, Travel and Government* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994), 176.

11. Gareth Griffiths, "The Myth of Authenticity," in *De-Scribing Empire: Post-colonialism and Textuality*, ed. Chris Tiffin and Alan Lawson (London: Routledge, 1994), 70–85, 75, 83. The title suggests, in spite of Griffiths's disclaimer, that what he says in this passage would apply to aboriginal claims as well and not just to the dominant discourse. An earlier work leaves no doubt that, under postcolonial conditions, "the demand for a new or wholly recovered pre-colonial reality," while "perfectly comprehensible . . . cannot be achieved," because "post-colonial culture is inevitably a hybridized phenomenon involving a dialectical relationship between the 'grafted' European cultural systems and an indigenous ontology, with its impulse to create or recreate an independent local identity." In Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin, eds., *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-colonial Literatures* (London: Routledge, 1989), 195.

12. Diana Brydon, "The White Inuit Speaks: Contamination as Literary Strategy," in *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader*, ed. Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin (London: Routledge, 1995), 136–42, 140–41; originally published in Ian Adam and Helen Tiffin, eds., *Past the Last Post: Theorizing Post-Colonialism and Post-Modernism* (New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1991). Brydon's arguments are largely directed at Linda Hutcheon, who is much more sympathetic toward indigenous claims against the "settlers." See her "Circling the Downspout of Empire," in *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader*, pp. 130–35. What Brydon has to say reveals more cogently than Griffiths that what postcolonial critics have to say on the subject of indigenism could be said easily without the aid of a "postcolonial consciousness." Thus, a former Smithsonian historian writes, "Those who decry the intrusion of the white presence in Indian history are often simply unwilling to recognize that Indian history is, for good or ill, shaped by the white presence, whether physically, in terms of European immigrants, or intellectually, in terms of Western historical or anthropological theories." Wilcomb E. Washburn, "Distinguishing History from Moral Philosophy and Public Advocacy," in *The American Indian and the Problem of History*, ed. Calvin Martin (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 91–97, 92.

13. Thomas, *Colonialism's Culture*, 172. This is not to say that such discussions do not exist. Thomas has in mind progressive cultural critics. As noted in the previous note, there is no shortage of criticisms of indigenous ideology, albeit without the marker of "postcoloniality." For a more sympathetic criticism

that points out the origin, in Euro-American power and the Euro-American mapping of the world, of the concept of "Indianness" itself, see Robert F. Berkhofer, "Cultural Pluralism versus Ethnocentrism in the New Indian History," in *The American Indian and the Problem of History*, pp. 35–45.

14. Linnekin, "Defining Tradition: Variations on the Hawaiian Identity," *American Ethnologist* 10 (1983): 241–52. For a discussion of the case and the controversy it provoked between Linnekin and Haunani-Kay Trask, see Jeffrey Tobin, "Cultural Construction and Native Nationalism: Report from the Hawaiian Front," in Rob Wilson and Arif Dirlik, eds., *Asia/Pacific as Space of Cultural Construction*, special issue of *Boundary 2* 21:1 (Spring 1994): 111–33.

15. See, also, Thomas, *Colonialism's Culture*, chapter 1, for a discussion of this problem. In the U.S., the New Age craze drew extensively on "tribal cultures" for its lore.

16. For further discussion, see Arif Dirlik, "Confucius in the Borderlands: Global Capitalism and the Reinvention of Confucianism," *Boundary 2* 22:3 (November 1995): 229–73. For the role of the state in this revival, see Allen Chun, "An Oriental Orientalism: The Paradox of Tradition and Modernity in Nationalist Taiwan," *History and Anthropology* 9:1 (1994): 1–29.

17. Samuel P. Huntington, "The Clash of Civilizations?" *Foreign Affairs*, 72:3 (1993): 22–49.

18. Churchill, "Radioactive Colonization: Hidden Holocaust in Native North America," in *Struggle for the Land*, 261–328. Where Indians refuse the use of reservations as dumping grounds, the state uses its power "to disestablish" the reservations, as is the case most recently with the Yankton Reservation in South Dakota. See *Indian Country Today*, 3 August 1995. "Radioactive colonization" is also an ongoing threat in the South Pacific.

19. Jaimes, "Some Kind of Indian: On Race, Eugenics, and Mixed Bloods," in *American Mixed Race: The Culture of Microdiversity*, ed. Naomi Zack (Boston: Rowman and Little, 1993), 133–53, 137.

20. Churchill, "Nobody's Pet Poodle," in *Indians Are Us?*, 89–113. See pp. 92–93 for the quotation.

21. In case this seems like an exceptional case, we may take note here of the special issue of *Public Culture* devoted to the critique of Aijaz Ahmad's *In Theory*, which also came under severe attack for its "transgressions" against postmodern / postcolonial criticism. Rather than address the issues raised by *In Theory*, most contributors to that special issue engaged in ad hominem attacks on Ahmad. Especially noteworthy are the red-baiting comments by Peter van der Veer and the religious bigotry displayed by Marjorie Levinson. *Public Culture* 6:1(1993).

22. Frank Chin, "Come All Ye Asian American Writers of the Real and the Fake," introduction to Jeffrey Paul Chan, Frank Chin, Lawson Fusao Inada, and Shawn Wong, eds., *The Big AIIIEEEEE! An Anthology of Chinese American and Japanese American Literature* (New York: Meridian, 1991), 1–92. All of the above-named authors were excluded from this collection.

23. For a discussion of these various issues, see Edward Iwata, "Word Warriors," *The Los Angeles Times* (24 June 1990).

24. Frederick Buell, *National Culture and the New Global System* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994), 180–81.

25. Chin, "Come All Ye Asian American Writers," passim.

26. I do not wish to overlook here the different experiences of oppression that inform the works of the two authors. Chin is concerned almost exclusively with the oppression of Chinese in general, and the "feminization," in the process, of Chinese men in particular. Kingston is concerned with the "double" oppression of Chinese women, as Chinese and women, the latter including oppression sanctified by Chinese cultural tradition. Although Chin is right to point out that Kingston's portrayal of Chinese tradition as relentlessly oppressive of women plays into the hands of Euro-American stereotypes of China, he nevertheless goes overboard in presenting his own portrayal of idyllic gender relations in Chinese history. All I would like to say on this issue here is that gender relations, too, must be rescued from cultural stereotyping and placed within historical context, as has been argued by writers on Third World gender relations since the publication of *The Woman Warrior.*

27. Frank Chin, *Donald Duk* (Minneapolis, MN: Coffee House Press, 1991), 34.

28. See the interview in Victor G. and Brett deBary Nee, *Longtime Californ': A Documentary Study ofan American Chinatown* (New York: Pantheon, 1973), 359, for the interview. For the confusion of Chinese-Americans with Chinese, which ignores "the obvious cultural differences," see Frank Chin and Jeffery Paul Chan, "Racist Love," in *Seeing Through Shuck,* ed. Richard Kostelanetz (New York: Ballantine Books, 1972), 65–79, 77. This article, incidentally, should put to rest the notion that Chin's recent criticisms of Chinese-American writers are motivated by envy, because he and Chan raise here all the questions that have been brought up again in recent years. At the time, Chin was the only well-known Chinese-American writer.

29. Chin and Chan, "Racist Love," 76.

30. Chin, *Donald Duk,* 41.

31. Calvin Martin, "The Metaphysics of Writing Indian-White History," in *The American Indian and the Problem of History,* 27–34, 33.

32. The very notion of "first nations," which is especially common in Canada and Australia, in this sense, represents a compromise, since it makes it possible to speak of a second, third, etc., disguising within an ordinal succession of arrivals fundamentally irreconcilable ways of life and a history of colonization and repression. Against this compromise, however, we might note a historicization, as in the case of Annette Jaimes, who proclaims that Indian tribes have been open all along to outsiders, as shown in marriage practices, etc., which skirts around the issue of "openness" while making the quite valid point that racial differences were not the most important criteria of difference.

33. Silko, *Ceremony,* 126.

34. Ibid., 135. This appropriation of whites for Indian history seems to have an interesting parallel among Australian aborigines, who have appropriated white social scientists for their own "traditions." Says one, "I am thrilled at the knowledge that has come through archeologists and scientists about the Ab-

origines. To me, it is as though the ancients are trying to relay a message not only to the Aboriginal race, but to the human race." Quoted in Robert Ariss, "Writing Black: The Construction of an Aboriginal Discourse," in *Past and Present: The Construction of Aboriginality,* ed. Jeremy R. Beckett (Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press, 1994), 131–46, 136.

35. Jean-Paul Sartre, *Search for a Method,* tr. Hazel E. Barnes (New York: Vintage, 1968), 99, 101.

36. Ibid., 92.

37. Churchill, "Nobody's Pet Poodle," 107.

38. Churchill, "I Am Indigenist," 403.

39. Ibid., 418–20.

40. Jaimes, "Native American Identity and Survival," 276, and Trask, "Hawai'i: Colonization and Decolonization," in *Class and Culture in the South Pacific,* 154–74, 169–70.

41. Epeli Hau'ofa, "The Future of Our Past," in *The Pacific Islands in the Year 2000,* ed. Robert C. Kiste and Richard A. Herr (Honolulu: Pacific Islands Studies Program Working Paper Series, 1974), 151–70; and Wendt, "Towards a New Oceania," in *Writers in the East-West Encounter: New Cultural Beginnings,* ed. Guy Amirthanayagam (London: The MacMillan Press, 1982), 202–15.

42. I am paraphrasing here Geoffrey M. White, *Identity Through History: Living Stories in a Solomon Islands Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

43. Mudrooroo Narogin(Colin Johnson), *Writing from the Fringe: A Study of Modern Aboriginal Writing* (Melbourne: Hyland House, 1990), 25.

44. Klaus Neumann writes that "these days, Papua New Guineans . . . do not appear overtly interested in being told about the horrors of colonialism, as such accounts potentially belittle today's descendants of yesterday's victims." "'In Order to Win Their Friendship': Renegotiating First Contact," *The Contemporary Pacific* 6:1 (1994): 11–145, 122. Likewise, Deirdre Jordan notes the complaints of adult aboriginal students in Australia about emphasis on white oppression, "which seems designed to call forth in them responses of hostility and racism and which, they believe, causes a crisis of identity." "Aboriginal Identity: Uses of the Past, Problems for the Future?" in *Past and Present,* 109–30, 119. There are others, needless to say, who would suppress the past for reasons of self-interest.

45. "The Materials for Identity Construction," in *Past and Present,* 87–107, 87–88.

46. Tobin, "Cultural Construction and Native Nationalism," 131.

47. Thomas, *Colonialism's Culture,* 187–88.

48. Ibid., 189.

49. Frederick Buell, *National Culture and the Global System,* provides an example of the fetishism of hybridity. Buell is intolerant of any argument that suggests the possibility of integrated identity, and the main targets of his argument are those who would foreground divisions between oppressor and oppressed.

50. Terry Eagleton, "Where Do Postmodernists Come From?" *Monthly Review* 47:3 (1995): 59–70, 66; and Aijaz Ahmad, " The Politics of Literary Postcoloniality," *Race and Class* 36:3 (1995): 1–20, 16.

51. Dirlik, "Three Worlds or One, or Many? The Reconfiguration of Global Relations under Contemporary Capitalism," *Nature, Society and Thought* 7:1 (1995): 19–42.

52. Churchill writes of the "go it alone" approach that he advocates: "I must admit that part of my own insistence upon it often has more to do with forcing concession of the right from those who seek to deny it than it does with putting it into practice." "I Am Indigenist," 432.

53. See, for example, Ward Churchill, "Bringing the Law Back Home: Application of the Genocide Convention in the United States," in *Indians Are Us?*, 11–63. The necessity of documentation is closely related to legal efforts to recover or protect treaty rights. It is also interesting that in a volume such as *The American Indian and the Problem of History*, while most of the nonindigenous contributors speak of different temporalities and conceptions of history, the distinguished indigenous scholar Vine Deloria, Jr., stands out for his advocacy of old-fashioned historical documentation.

54. Churchill, "I Am Indigenist," 409.

55. The rewriting of history implied here is not merely a matter of writing indigenous sensibilities into existing history, but rewriting history in accordance with indigenous sensibility. Lenore Coltheart offers a challenging discussion of the distinction between "history about Aborigines" and "Aboriginal history," in "The Moment of Aboriginal History," in *Past and Present*, 179–89.

56. Subcommandante Marcos, quoted in Alexander Cockburn, "Jerry Garcia and El Sup," *The Nation* (28 August/4 September 1995), 192.