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POETICS FOR A PLANET

*Discourse on Some
Problems of Being-in-Place*

Ivan Brady

We are dwellers, we are namers, we are lovers, we make homes and search for our histories. And when we look for the history of our sensibilities, . . . it is to . . . the stable element, the land itself, that we must look for continuity.

—Seamus Heaney,
“The Sense of Place”

The great function of poetry is to give us back the situations of our dreams.

—Gaston Bachelard,
The Poetics of Space

A poetics must return to a way of dreaming works and the declarations that accompany them, of conceiving their possibility, and of working for their reality.

—Fernand Hallyn, *The
Poetic Structure of the World*

Author’s Note. I thank Yvonna Lincoln, Norman K. Denzin, John F. Sherry, Jr., Stephen Saraydar, Tracy Lewis, and Sara Varhus for their generous comments on earlier drafts of this chapter. I am also grateful to Beth Messana and Crystal Knowland for technical support along the way.

Stonehenge, Wessex Chalklands, July 21, 1997

A Gift of the Journey

Magical megaliths. Stonehenge. Sun mask. Druid dance. The hand brushes the obelisk—mossy green and grey, cold for a summer's day—dragging fingertips across the texture. Braille for a pulse? We want to touch the mystery of this place, even as the mind's eye squints for a glimpse of deeper meanings, sequestered in time and cultural distance, some of which seem to be murmured in the eclipse of stones at dusk and dawn. But the magic does not reside in the stones themselves. It is embedded in the reading, the immersion of self in place, and the puzzle of the circle that only gets more puzzling when spotted by the eye of the sun. Like the morning dew, this Druid magic is tied to a clock of nature. It emerges from nowhere and disappears just as mysteriously with the heat of midday—or too much inspection. Poets who would see this clearly must chase the beams gently, introspectively, as they refract on the traces of magicians and astronomers who have danced through the bosom of these stones in patterns and rhythms we hope are coded within us all. The experience steps us into another reality and with all the power of ritual turns day to dream, taking us out of ourselves for a while to show us something about ourselves—about how we have been and where we think we used to be—a kind of mythopoeic archaeology. The best poets still know how to do it. Magic, it seems, is a gift of the journey.

This is a poem I wrote about method (Brady, 2003b, p. 34). It suggests that one can get to know places marked as culturally distant through careful reflections on current experiences, that is, introspectively and imaginatively, relative to whatever hard facts or remnants may appear to lie at hand. That is how landscapes become semi-otically rich, historical, and perhaps even sacred. They are projections of self, of each of us—all of us—now and before. But interpreting such investments from previous inhabitants is extraordinarily difficult, if for no other reason than the

fact that even with widely shared constructs about the meaning of this place or that in any society, individual interpretations can vary widely. The same place can mean different things to different people in intensity of social and emotional commitment, if not in more dramatically different terms, even when they engage it on the same culturally standardized premises (e.g., when Americans visit the Grand Canyon or some other richly defined sacred national retreat). A sense of place, especially sacred space, shows all the volatility and variations of ritual inferences

for these reasons (Brady, 1999). Moreover, as an interpreter from another cultural epoch, excavating that information in some semblance of its original form from an otherwise mute landscape cannot be done without a code or guide, living or otherwise, to the semiotic investments of those who have passed that way before and perhaps are no longer represented there (cf. Lame Deer & Erdoes, 1972, pp. 96–107). And even then, interpretations of artifact use or texts slide into the soup of polyvalence and multivocality and themselves become creative rejuvenations of performances tied through time to a sea of shifting landscapes—to the intertextualities of life that we study as ethnographers. For these and other reasons, places such as Stonehenge and the great petroglyph areas of the American Southwest are steeped in mystery, compelling and interesting in the shadows of their kinships to us but puzzles that are nonetheless ripe for wide-ranging interpretations.

That said, we must wonder what exactly environmentally concerned critics, such as poet Gary Snyder, nature writer Barry Lopez, mountain climber Jack Turner, and art historian Simon Schama, have in mind when they exhort us to relearn respect for the land we inhabit and to renew our ties to places both sacred and less exalted as a countermeasure to the thoughtless destruction of modern life.¹ I think that what they want us to know is a kind of history that includes, but reaches far beyond, what we can learn from the archaeologies and histories one finds in museums today (which are themselves, of course, specialized interpretations in their own right).² These caring citizens share a quest for personal knowledge, for self-conscious information about being-in-place, and for participation that can catch us in the act of complacency about who we are, where we have been, and where we are going and thereby might change our thinking about the meaning of life in the landscapes of our respective pasts and presents. What they seek is, in that sense, more poetic than scientific. They are committed more to methods of immersion and self-conscious saturation than to those of clinical distancing as forms of learning. Each approach in the extreme begs comparisons of peoples and

their changing environmental circumstances, and each for those reasons is appropriate for pursuing the overall problem at hand, but the various approaches do so on vastly different terms of evidence and reporting. Our critics find common ground in the middle—respect for facts, as they can be determined more or less objectively, that is mixed with the first-person powers of poetic interpretation and representation (not just poetry). The overall effort loops into the area of educated imagination, that is, thoughtfulness focused on what is reasonable and possible in solving puzzles. On that score, poetics and science share common ground. Inference, speculation, and metaphor play an important role in both cases.³ The result, in this case, is approximately what I have referred to elsewhere as “artful science.”⁴ It shows up here as prolegomena to a poetics of place pushed through the following five organizing questions. What are we supposed to learn from such environmental inquiries? What are the sources of information? What are the obstacles in and prospects for doing so? What can we hope to gain? How shall we tell the story?

What follows is an attempt to answer these questions and, in the process, outline a poetics of place with a conscience.⁵ It is rooted in our propensities to make sense of material and imaginative experiences through projections of being-in-the-world and the use of our culturally appropriated bodies—our sensuous-intellectual apparatuses—as the primary instruments for doing so. It draws on landscapes variously described as “home,” “wild,” and “sacred,” where the sensuous is conspicuously brought to the fore through most forms of participation (sites where emotional content often dominates conscious interpretations). It pursues knowledge mostly ignored or formally discounted by the extremes of logical positivism. It advocates as a complement (not as a replacement) *a kind of knowing and reporting* that (a) promotes phenomenology as a philosophy that puts the observer (the seeker, the knower) upfront in the equation of interpreting and representing experience; (b) pushes interpretive anthropology back into the loop of sensual experience, a body-centered position that

includes a consideration of but transcends the sweeping metaphor that everything (e.g., people, landscapes) can and should be rendered as texts to be interpreted; (c) finds some continuity in the structures and orientations of body-groundedness and myth despite important limitations posed by language itself and by epistemic interference between the present and our preliterate past; and (d) gives poets special cachet through their offering forms of knowing and saying (robust metaphors and more) that can engage the senses and visions of being-in-place in ways that both exceed and complement more conventional strategies in anthropology and history. In deference to the critics named and the need for advocacy in the social sciences, all of this is tied to considerations of who we think we are, where we have been, and where we might go from here with the idea of reclaiming respect for the land and its inhabitants, human and otherwise, past and present.

■ OPPORTUNITY: BEING THERE

*I travel your length, like a river / I travel
your body, like a forest, / Like a mountain
path that ends at a cliff / I travel along the
edge of your thoughts, / and my shadow
falls from your white forehead, / my
shadow shatters, and I gather the pieces /
and go on with no body, groping my way.*

—Octavio Paz, *Piedra de Sol*⁶

“Ways of dividing up space vary enormously in intricacy and sophistication, as do techniques of judging size and distance,” Yi-Fu (1979, p. 34) tells us, and if we look for fundamental principles of spatial organization in all cultures, we find them in two kinds of facts: “the posture and structure of the human body, and the relations (whether close or distant) between human beings” (p. 34). We organize the space we occupy through intimate experiences with these two things to make it serve our social and physical needs.⁷ That deeply evolved sense of place is strong and is linked to (among other things) natality, kinship, and mortality—to sacred and

personal space, spiritual help, travel, the seasons, and the calendar (cf. Geertz, 1996, p. 259). Personal space itself is a collecting center for experience and identity construction, as an individual and as a member of groups, and is a center for *recollection* that can be variously hoarded and shared with others through storytelling about life as lived (Brady, 2003b, pp. xiv–xv). Movement in these fields creates histories and also puts an emphasis on the present. Thoughts about past landscapes are necessarily grounded in contemporary processes of mind and knowledge about being-in-place, so the cleavage between now and what we think “used to be” cannot just give itself to us freely sans interpretation. Historical knowledge of any kind involves a culturally constructed, cognitively filtered, and reciprocal process, an apprehension and a *representation* of place to mind and back again, revolving and evolving in its constructions.⁸ It is a mixed conscious and unconscious process, received much like the patterns of puzzlements that we take to task in the circle of stones and, therefore, subject to a variety of selective perception biases and omissions, if not simply paving the high road to inventing the truth that we *need* to find, the conclusions that comfort and support us no matter what the evidence by other calculations.⁹ Context is the key to it. Knowing the context of words, behaviors, and artifacts is practically everything for determining meaning. Whatever Stonehenge or other historical landscapes used to be, the larger point is that they can be known in meaningful elaborations only as they are grounded by perceptions in the moments of our current existence.¹⁰ There is no way to bypass that process. That is the sine qua non of a poetics of place, of being-in-place, and it starts in the ultimate home—the embodied self.

Is there some common ground that can be apprehended through the trowels, brushes, and screens of the senses that will give us a realistic impression of life in ancient places and thereby address the concerns of our environmental critics? We are one species, one subspecies in biological form, embodied more or less the same everywhere, and as conscious beings we need to know (or think we know) where we are before we

are able to choose definitive courses of action. The comparative framework provided by that posture gives us access to other humans through sympathy and empathy, that is, by tapping into “fellow feeling” with speculation and imagination at work, both of which are essential parts of the interpretive equation. Both can also be souped up in special ways by being on-site, in-place—by “being there” (cf. Geertz 1983)—anywhere. That by itself does not guarantee anything specific in terms of knowledge of culture or place. Getting *there* takes existing knowledge from which one can update or launch a new perspective, thereby invoking a boatload of biases and related selective constructions of mind about exactly *where* one is, “home” or not, and so on. But the processes of projecting a physical and cultured self on the places and moments at hand and making sense of them through an educated imagination—no matter how fantastic (we can learn things only in terms of what we already know)—are fundamental to human thought and, thus, to conditions of being-in-place. They provide a context for analogies between things present and past. Guided tours of historical and ancient places rely precisely on such in-person emulations to add realism (literally realization, an internalizing process) to the experience (see also Coles, 1979; Saraydar, 1976; Saraydar & Shimada, 1973). They also generally provide specific scripts or guidebooks to fill in historical details. That combination of “being and seeing” writ large situates itself in what we can call the *sensuous-intellectual continuum*, the biocultural grounding that we all bring to consciousness of being-in-place through our bodies and that, because of its integrated and systemic nature, can be represented in a common frame of reference (Blackburn, 1971). That is what makes us tick and know that we are ticking as sentient beings, as movers and makers of metaphors in place—the baseline of being and seeing and sharing it with others.¹¹

By using this model and relying especially on the comparative strengths of engaging in “parallel enterprises” as humans,¹² it follows that we can tap into the sensuous-intellectual continuum as we know and experience it, heighten consciousness

of our own culturally constructed screens of beliefs and behaviors (with and without scripts of expert testimony), and draw reasonable conclusions about how we are now as beings *in* and *of* place and perhaps what it *might* have been like to have occupied and left our marks on particular landscapes before us.

▣ GETTING THERE: THE ONTOGENY OF SPACE AND PLACE

Man is nowhere anyway/Because nowhere is here/And I am here to testify.

—Jack Kerouac, *Mexico City Blues*¹³

“Getting there” complements “being there” as an important concept in ethnography and must be maintained in any attempt to create a poetics of place. Approaching literature as an existentialist, and thereby leapfrogging any narrowly textual or ethnographic forms of analysis in favor of an anthropology of experience, poet/ethnographer Michael Jackson puts a premium on the meaning in journeying rather than on the stacked-up facts that an ethnographer is likely to report after having reached and researched a destination. Jackson (1995) argues that “the authenticity of ethnographic knowledge depends on the ethnographer recounting in detail the events and encounters that are the grounds on which the very possibility of this knowledge rests” (p. 163). Getting to that point cognitively is seldom discussed in any ethnographic context. But that is where a phenomenological account of being-in-place must begin. Let me start with myself, going and being nowhere in particular (something on the order of my current employment), just negotiating my own existence in space and place.¹⁴

For me, *space* is transparent, ethereal, abstract, a vacuum cornered in the mind’s eye abstractly as empty geometry. It is a cognitive and culturally defined container of sorts into which concrete and meaningful things can occur or be put. *Place*, in my comfortable view, is a filled space, tangible, concrete, habitable, traversable, or defined specifically against such interests as those unavailable

for human occupation (e.g., mountain peaks). It is the geography of earth, mind, body, and lived experience, the semiotically enriched site of events human and otherwise. It is where whatever happens in my experience does happen. My experience also leads me to believe that all people make something special of their engagements with the properties of place, including drawing boundaries of time, space, consciousness, and memory of being in it to orient and define themselves (see also Basso 1996a, 1996b; Feld, 1982; Feld & Basso, 1996; Low & Lawrence-Zúñiga, 2003; Yi-Fu, 1979). They make life-in-place meaningful and push it way beyond shelter making and survival (Danesi & Perron, 1999, p. 137). They turn it into signifying systems, render it in signs and images of themselves, apprehend it through metaphors and imagery of their own making—their languages, cultures, and histories—and use it to govern relations among families, native and stranger, own and other, things near and far, things past and future, and the everyday realities of being in particular places. They mark it with their embraces and alienations of kinship in a composite world, their horizons and trails of history, and the eschatologies of their fears. They find it in the high peaks of their hearts and minds and externalize the imprints of both in the physical world by accident and by design while exploring, claiming, residing, nurturing, repelling, depositing, building, storying, and sometimes even erasing the paths of their lives. For these reasons, as soon as we start identifying features of landscape (peopled or not) and marking off boundaries (actual or implied), we situate ourselves in particular concepts of place—in something approximating, by structure and category, the worldviews and histories of the cultures whose members “make sense” of these experiences—ours and those of others.

Nevertheless, thinking about space as a container for place can be misleading for analytic purposes (cf. Hirsch & O’Hanlon, 1995; Low & Lawrence-Zúñiga, 2003), especially when one projects that sequence on the ontogeny of place in individual experience (cf. Thompson, 1989,

p. 127)—the essence of a phenomenological stance.¹⁵ The conceptual relationship between space and place is transitional and metonymic, but not necessarily unidirectional in our emerging consciousness. The connection of bringing place to consciousness creates the illusion that its meaning is a function of the landscape itself, something external and discovered, shaped beyond us. But as Schama (1995) says, “Before it can ever be a repose for the senses, landscape is the work of the mind. Its scenery is built up as much from state of memory as from layers of rock” (pp. 6–7). A sense of being-in-place is given to us cognitively at some deep level, but it is also appropriated by culture and rendered meaningful in a variety of ways. It is a manufactured concept, a pan-human construct that anchors our sense of meaningful location—our *position in space* relative to other specific people or things (including social distance between persons or objects)—and it comes to mind only as our representational capacity makes the world appear twice: “once as a recalcitrant external reality and again as a malleable inner actuality” (Brann, 1991, p. 7).¹⁶ Places in this way are turned into cultural products, and our experiences of them, as Casey (1996) argues persuasively, are “never precultural or presocial” (p. 17). From a phenomenological perspective, the ontogeny is such that we emerge consciously *in* an occupied place and abstract the concept of space from that. In a phenomenological account, place is prior to space. It is *where* being-in-the-world happens.¹⁷ The *how* of it includes concrete immediacy in perception: Lowe (1982) says, “Before anything else, it is for me a real, pretheoretical world, wherein I undertake everyday living. This is my primary reality” (p. 170).¹⁸ Moreover, Casey (1996) continues, even though a phenomenological approach has “its own prejudicial commitments and ethnocentric stances,” its commitment to concrete description honors the experiences of its practitioners. That connects both the anthropological field-worker and the indigenes in place: “Both have no choice but to begin with experience. As Kant insisted, ‘there can be no doubt that all our knowledge begins with experience’” (p. 16; see also Csordas, 1994).¹⁹

■ IMAGINATION: PRIMARY TRANSPORT

I think I have told you, but if I have not, you must have understood, that a man who has a vision is not able to use the power of it until after he has performed the vision on earth for the people to see.

—Black Elk, *Black Elk Speaks*²⁰

We can add poets to the list of those conjoined by a phenomenological perspective (Heidegger, 1971) and use that thought to invite a deeper investigation of the role of imagination and creativity in constructing a poetics of place. Because places function as grounds for our projections of self and culture and a history of both—one private, the other public, all of it personal—and because we convert our place experiences into the “idioms” (the language and images) of the world as we know it, believe it, see it, and ordinarily argue it, the content may include what noninitiates see as mythical impossibilities (including landscapes peopled by spirits, etc.).²¹ That interiorizing and largely unconscious process is often taken for granted or conflated with the significance that people assign to what they see as the dominant or “definitive” contents of particular landscapes. These are specific constructs for mentally centering and filing one kind of experience or another, including the circumscriptions of turf traveled on foot or touched only in our imaginations. Thus, place is defined by what we see in terms of landscape features through projections of self and culture and, therefore, by fantasy and wish fulfillment and other trappings of consciousness in the identity of the perceivers. For these same reasons, Thompson (1989) sees history as

an imaginary landscape—a tableau of battles for some, a mural of scientific discoveries and technological inventions for others; and for those who avert their eyes from horizons of mystery or hallways of propaganda, there still remains an internal cinema of unconsciously edited perceptions in which self is the *figure* and nature the *ground*. (p. 127)

In fact, he suggests that “consciousness itself, as either a Buddhist heap (*skandha*) or a scientific narrative, is a landscape, for one cannot know without a world” (p. 127). Life in this sense is a constant process of negotiating landscapes (internal and external), and interpretation is as necessary to the process as is breathing, no matter how bizarre or fantastic it may seem from the outside looking in.

These creative dimensions, flexibilities, and transitive minglings of process pose a variety of analytic problems and beg the question of how we will tell the stories of places that structure our lives.²² The concept of place cannot in any absolute way be separated from its contents—from the meanings assigned to its location and the activities or features marked in association with it. It cannot be seen as a “thing in itself.” That would require an unobtainable absolute or clinical view beyond the cultural constructions of human consciousness (and that is why both logical positivism and, ultimately, hermeneutic “bracketing” fail here). But we can get closer to the essence of the concept of place—to the concrete and the sublime and largely ineffable qualities of it as a stabilizing, orienting framework for action—by looking for common denominators in the diversity of the meanings assigned to it by ourselves and others. Whatever they are, they ultimately form a comparative context with a personal sense of home at the center.

■ UNIVERSAL PLACE: HOME AND HEARTH

He had no use for sensual gratification, unless that gratification consisted of pure, incorporeal odors. He had no use for creature comforts either and would have been quite content to set up camp on bare stone.

—Patrick Suskind, *Perfume*²³

“Like a mirror,” Snyder (1990) writes, “a place can hold anything, on any scale” (p. 25). Everyone knows that it holds a sense of “home” at its roots.²⁴

We all have homes, and in some ways none of us has the same one. Individual perceptions and experiences vary to the point where even family experiences shared in the same geographic location, in a common dwelling, and in the same hearth from childhood to old age do not produce clones. There are always individual versions of the experience. We mark them with personal names and related claims, and we spend time pooling them more or less in our stories and related interactions with others as a way of constructing the social reality of events that define home for all. Home is, in this sense, a place held in common by experience but unpackable in its semiotic particulars as a single version for each person involved. It is never “a seamless whole, a single story. Our imaginations set free in us other selves that seldom see the light. We lead several lives in the course of one” (Jackson, 1995, p. 161).

Despite sometimes radical differences in cultural content, in this ego-centered and relativistic way our homes are the essence of our being-in-place and our becomings in life. Even at their weakest and most fragmented moments, they are grounded in bodily experiences as emotionally loaded and semiotically coded memories, either positive or negative, and they all have a networking or centrifugal quality attached to them. These bundles of thoughts and emotions fan out as meaningful expectations about how life is or ought to be in relations with others, intersecting with the hearths and homes in surrounding neighborhoods and regions and ultimately linking up with the natal centers, the fetal and fatal places, the ancestral turfs of the rest of the world. Various physical and cultural processes make that a shifting landscape, including natural disasters, the aggrandizements and failures of colonial expansions and conquering economies, the fortunes and misfortunes of war, and the furrows of migration plowed by things such as homesteading, job seeking, refugee evacuations, and the influential cultural ship jumpers—the beachcombers of life—crossing into the frontiers of strangers and making homes there. Although certain adaptations must be made in new places (including the option of “going home”), on some

scale migrants always carry their homes with them in the form of the languages, cultures, and traditions that defined their natal places (Jackson, 1995; Marshall, 2004). There is security in the transportable nest of knowledge that we call culture—the histories and desires embedded in knowing how to make and provision a hearth, in deciding who should share it and the wedding bed, and in determining where all of it literally might be placed.²⁵

One good bet nowadays is that most people will not place a long-term hearth in what they consider to be a wilderness area. Doing so through the orientations and transport of modern culture puts many elements of the environment at risk, including one’s own body—especially for the uninitiated. That would also constitute yet another episode in—a continuation of powerful forces already set in motion by—colonization and urbanization. But these concerns can also be very misleading. Wilderness has always been fundamental to human experience. For hundreds of thousands of years, nature has been more than a place to visit. Snyder (1990) says that it *is* home, a territory with more *and* less familiar places. Some “are more difficult and remote, but all are *known* and even named” (p. 7).²⁶ Nonetheless, some places in our modern experiences remain decidedly “wild,” beyond the pale of what most of us would consider comfortable and secure habitation. What urbanites see as wilderness today helps to define the centering concept of home place in the breach, that is, by conceptualizing what is plainly *not* home—and that can foster two dramatically different consequences. One is to relegate such areas to a netherland of mind, out of sight and out of concern, thereby letting the strip-and-sweep policies of economic development take their tolls on these places unnoticed. Such culture runs its course, economies are stimulated, hearths get provisioned by the substantially employed, the rich get richer, ancestral places get erased at exponential rates, and no one except the developers, the politicians, the people exploited on the margins, and a few odd ethnographers seem to care. The other consequence is to recognize wilderness as foundational to our

history of being-in-place in the long run as humans, let alone what is arguably a key to the future of the planet itself. This reaction shows up as an attempt to cherish and preserve what remains as wilderness, to learn from it some of the things we used to know about sustaining ourselves in body and spirit, and that in turn makes every such experience a candidate for creating sacred space. Mindful of the foundations of body and home, let me consider each of the categories of wild and sacred landscapes in more detail and then talk about their relationships and how we story them in ways that matter.

■ WILD PLACES AND THE ASSEMBLY OF ALL BEINGS

The rain comes over the hills, / like fluttering birds it comes. / I stand in my brother's tears / happy as the running stream. / Ho! Brother. / Tread upon the wide plains. / Lonely rugged mountains rule the land.

—Archie Weller, "The Hunter"²⁷

"Wild" places, such as home turf and sacred spaces, are sites where emotional content often dominates interpretations. If you say that you are going to live "in the wild" or "go wild" or just be "wild at parties," no one ever thinks that you are about to be placid and contemplative. Internally, we are in fact rooted in whatever was and is wild by our biology—by our "creatureliness." As a conscious motivation, aiming to "be wild" is a commitment of an embodied self to irregular and emotionally stimulating conditions. Externally, wild is a condition of landscape that modern Westerners might contemplate in fantasy or engage in person as adventurers, explorers, or castaways, among other marginal categories of being. The point is that being of the flesh and working in and with wild things in wild areas is a source of special identity for most of us, a marker of unusual boundaries. When *wild* becomes a *where*, it generally transforms into *wilderness*, a condition of wild landscape, a place where meaning

abounds. It is, therefore, ripe picking for poets and artisans of all types, for all who would love its riches and lament its losses. It forms another "architectonic" link to the peoples and processes that are fundamental to a poetics of place.²⁸ But *where* is it? Gone? Seldom near? Far away and gasping for breath under the crush of a global economy? Or, is it somehow all of the above yet always with us? Snyder (1990) has some answers.

A Western sense of the "wild" is a place where "nature" rules—a place marked by ancient and eternal activities, untamed animals, uncultivated plants, and "an ordering of impermanence," if not "unruliness, disorder, and violence" (Snyder, 1990, p. 5). Although wilderness cannot be seen in any way other than through the screens of culture, it is commonly thought of as an environment that is culturally unbuilt, ungoverned, unscarred, or otherwise unmodified by humans. Encountering it always gets our attention in special ways. *Where* we find it is important. It is not confined to isolated mountains, deserts, or forests. Snyder (1990) reminds us that "a ghost wilderness hovers around the entire planet; the millions of tiny seeds of the original vegetation are hiding in the mud on the foot of an Arctic tern, in the dry desert sands, or in the wind" (p. 14). He suggests that it may, in fact, return at some point, although not in "as fine a world as the one that was glistening in the early morning of the Holocene" (p. 14). Wildness, on the other hand, is now and has always been everywhere with its "ineradicable populations of fungi, moss, mold, yeast, and such that surround and inhabit us. Deer mice on the back porch, deer bounding across the freeway, pigeons in the park, spiders in the corners" (p. 14). Urbanites live constantly in a sublimated or ignored wildness in this sense (bug and vermin exterminators take care of the rest), and although it can be a source of both reverence and wonder for the people who case its margins, enter it, and dwell in it for any length of time, the wilderness where wildness dominates is often consciously displaced, moved to its own outback in the geography of our minds until it shows up in a television travelogue or the vicarious thrill of adventure novels or Arctic explorer accounts-turned-coffee table displays.²⁹

The wilderness that most people know is “a charade of areas, zones, and management plans that is driving the real wild into oblivion” (J. Turner, 1996, p. 23). It is a nice place to visit through the glass of an automobile in the national parks of Nairobi or Yellowstone or in the few brave steps from the paved roads that roll through these areas like carpets for the conquering kings.³⁰ Few would want to live there. The farmers of these margins get a little closer to the culturally untamed, but only on the other sides of their fences. More than anyone, their job for thousands of years has been to erase the wilderness, homestead its meadows, tame its grasses, and replace its original animals with liveries and livestock. But all of the farmers in the world cannot hold a candle to the environmental corruptions and erasures of the great urban developers. Our wild landscapes have changed as wildernesses have disappeared.

Snyder (1990) asks us to stand up and be counted on this both intellectually and ecologically:

Wilderness is a place where the wild potential is fully expressed, a diversity of living and nonliving beings flourishing according to their own sorts of order. In ecology we speak of “wild system.” When an ecosystem is fully functioning, all members are present at the assembly. To speak of wilderness is to speak of wholeness. Human beings came out of that wholeness, and to consider the possibility of reactivating membership in the Assembly of All Beings is in no way regressive. (p. 12)

But we have to ask how that can be done. How will we know when it *is* being done? Where is the map for being-in-place this way? Some of the answers lie in history. Others lie in the politics and sensitivities of the moment. The only sure way of putting them together is to increase one’s awareness of and participation in the landscapes of lived experience.³¹ Moreover, raising the stakes on both our being-in-place and having been there, Lopez (1990b), asserts,

A sense of place must include, at the very least, knowledge of what is inviolate about the relationship between a people and the place they occupy,

and certainly, too, how the destruction of this relationship, or the failure to attend to it, wounds people. Living in North America and trying to develop a philosophy of place—a recognition of the spiritual and psychological dimensions of geography—inevitably brings us back to our beginnings here, to the Spanish incursion. (p. 41)

It brings us back to the history of a place whose home crossings have uprooted practically everything indigenous and wild and have pushed it around in a movable tragedy of cross-cultural casualties and increasingly fluid disconnections from the land itself. That marks a dramatic change from what was once kindled and supplicated in the worldviews of many people, including Native Americans (see, e.g., Deloria, 1993), to something profane and dangerous. Setting overromanticized views of noble savages and pristine nature aside, one can discover that both kinds of circumstances—supportive and accommodating or dangerous to one’s well-being—can hold value as “sacred” at one level or another. Only corruption kills the prospect altogether.

■ SACRED SPACES AND MYTH

There is a place of great importance to me on a pine-skirted plateau in Utah’s Uinta Mountains. Elk and deer weave trails of meaning through the trees and into the escape of cliffs and heavy timber; coyotes plant scat, gorged with hair and bone, among sagebrush and juniper. The place resounds with voices of birds and small mammals, and a thousand smells of the wilderness. To me, this place is cleanly holy. I cannot explain why; I only know that for twenty years it has filled me with awe and yearning, and solitude and peace. It is a space of great sacredness, seldom visited, always appreciated.

—Richard Poulsen, *The Pure Experience of Order*³²

Perhaps no other experiential domain shows the “made” or implied impositions of culture on geography more than places held to be sacred by the

beholders (Brady, 2004). They are precious by definition. On the positive and more conventional side of that, the combination of cultural values and memory applied to such places can produce a poetics of reverie and respect, of awe and mystery, if not specific rituals designed to commemorate and renew such experiences.³⁵ But we know that the same places can be experienced very differently (the “parallax factor”). Unlike stepping in the puddles on a clay road after a rain, one can step in some sacred space as an outsider and never feel the change.³⁴ As Nelson (1983) observes quite correctly,

Reality is not the world as it is perceived directly by the senses; reality is the world as it is perceived by the mind through the medium of the senses. . . . [It] is what we have learned to see through our own traditions, and they do not always line up as equivalents from one culture to the next. The interactions between Koyukon people and nature illustrate this clearly, for theirs is a world in which nature moves with power and humans are bound to a special system of environmental morality. (p. 239)³⁵

Such space is easily trampled by the uninitiated, by the claims of interlopers—the mini-colonials that ethnocentrism makes of us—who see all before them as an unfolding of their own turf. Access to the initiates’ codes can save us from this error, that is, at least remind us that natural landscapes are everywhere more than physiography. They are, first and foremost, repositories of meaning that, not counting our own impositions of view and minus an artifact or two to flag other human presence, are most likely to remain invisible without a living guide.³⁶

Investing the experiences of smell, taste, touch, sight, and hearing in a landscape whose features endear themselves to us or frighten us is a way of appropriating meaningful contexts in which to exist; to act in pleasure and remembrance; to meditate, marvel, and mystery over; to reassure; to reissue; to remember as a reconsideration of life circumstances in plans for the future, for the next step, perhaps for the rest of our lives and the emplotments of our deaths. Such projections can make sacred space in our mind’s eye and the behaviors steered by it; they create places for

communion, ecstatic immersion, or other forms of poetic inspiration, on the one hand, and places for piaculum, supplication out of fear and anxiety (Yi-Fu, 1979), literally places to be avoided except under the most carefully calculated circumstances (e.g., rituals of sacrifice), on the other.³⁷ But the separation of these forms is not always clear because of cross-cultural misunderstandings and the knowledge that opposite interpretations can occupy the same geographic location (Brady, 2003b, pp. 93–100; Fernandez, 2003). There is also always much that appears “in between.” Sacred places can stand alone as territory marked in the minds of those who know of them vicariously or in person. But when engaged in person and recognized as such, they inevitably beg questions of boundaries (where the sacred “ends” and something more secular begins) and thereby form an avenue to liminality, that is, to spiritual or imaginary places and conditions of being not only between particular people and their geography but also in the alignments of persons and spirits in a community that ostensibly shares such views.³⁸ These are “neither here nor there” spaces that become a crossing ground for senses of self and cultures, individuals and gods, powerful landscapes and access to the sublime, among other possibilities. That does not make them any less stimulating to the imagination or diminish the need to know how we, as intruders or observers, might or might not fit into them. On the contrary, once discovered, culturally defined environmental borders are even more likely to be conspicuous and puzzling if for no other reason than the semiotic diversity of their stimulations and expressions.³⁹

■ OPAQUE FACILITATOR: THE NATIVE MYTH-MIND

The leaves on the trees, the grasses on the hills and in the valleys, the waters in the creeks and in the rivers and the lakes, the four-legged and the two-legged and the wings of the air—all danced together to the music of the stallion’s song.

—Black Elk, *Black Elk Speaks*⁴⁰

All other things being equal, language communicates the mental being and moods corresponding to it in the communicator. “In the psychotopographic universe, language is also subject to transformation, and its disintegration from a vehicle for recognizable human communication into something ‘other’—both divine and demonic—also signals the shift in the transcendental world of merged subject and object” (Nelson, 1996, p. 106). That makes the story context or form of communicating voice paramount to its meaning, and it includes stories about place, some of which are focused on places that are both wild *and* sacred. Among the gatherers and hunters of the world, these are sites that are rich with meaning and power and that have multiple uses (e.g., menstrual seclusion, graveyards, ritual initiations) and realities tied to them. They are the stuff of legends tied to human and more-than-human landscapes, and the memories of them “are very long” (Snyder, 1990, pp. 81–82).⁴¹ One reason for “the profound association between storytelling and the more-than-human terrain” in tribal societies, as Abram (1996) suggests, is that it “resides in the encompassing, enveloping wholeness of a story in relation to the characters that act and move within it” (p. 163). Indeed, because “we are situated in the land in much the same way that characters are situated in a story,” the members of a deeply oral culture may experience this relation “as something more than mere analogy; along with the other animals, the stones, the trees, and the clouds, we ourselves are characters within a huge story that is visibly unfolding all around us, participants within the vast imagination or dreaming of the world” (p. 163)—and that is, at best, a shifting landscape, a moving target, but not totally beyond the scope of reclamations.⁴²

From his travels in Australia, Snyder (1990) offers the following “as one example of the many ways [in which] landscape, myth, and information were braided together in preliterate societies”:

We were traveling by truck over dirt tract west from Alice Springs in the company of a Pintubi elder named Jimmy Tjungurrayi. As we rolled along the dusty road, sitting back in the bed of a pickup, he

began to speak very rapidly to me. He was talking about a mountain over there, telling me a story about some wallabies that came to that mountain in the dreamtime and got into some kind of mischief with some lizard girls. He had hardly finished that and he started in on another story about another hill over here and another story over there. I couldn’t keep up. I realized after about half an hour of this that these were tales to be told while *walking*, and that I was experiencing a speeded-up version of what might be told over several days of foot travel. Mr. Tjungurrayi felt graciously compelled to share a body of lore with me by virtue of the simple fact that I was there.

So remember a time when you journeyed on foot over hundreds of miles, walking fast and often traveling at night, traveling night-long and napping in the acacia shade during the day, and these stories were told to you as you went. In your travels with an older person, you were given a map you could memorize, full of lore and song and also practical information. Off by yourself, you could sing those songs to bring yourself back. And you could maybe travel to a place that you’d never been, steering only by the songs you had learned. (pp. 82–83)

Even this little snippet about sacred space illustrates nicely the principle that existential interpretations situated in worldviews give place a temporal dimension and also reflect both the predicaments and the solutions to them posed by changing environmental circumstances.⁴³ Focusing in particular on Native American materials, Leonard and McClure (2004) see such stories as important

because in them the mythic breaks through into our present world, embodying the very kinds of boundary crossing that are so central to all mythological thinking. *Such stories give us a chance to see, to feel, the present of mythic truth in the midst of our perceptions of contemporary reality.* Whether they are the repositories of national or ethnic identity or the site of supernatural revelation or visitation, whether they are actual places where we can stand and hear the echoes of long-ago battles or imaginary places shaped by the requirements of mythic vision, sacred places serve to teach and remind us of who we are and how we ought to behave in our day-to-day lives. . . . Sacred places, especially in the

various senses that Native Americans use the term, call out to us to *become* “down to earth,” to remember and honor and revitalize our essential connections to the earth and the natural world, to the sacred all around us. They invite us to associate the spiritual with such natural material phenomena as mountains, rivers, lakes, trees, and caves. The study of stories about sacred places might just allow us to see such opposed binaries as past versus present, realistic versus mythological, or spiritual versus material as not so mutually exclusive. (p. 320, emphasis added)⁴⁴

Certain places within the mutually owned territory of old cultures, Snyder (1990) says, are loaded with “numinous life and spirit.” They are “perceived to be of high spiritual density because of plant or animal habitat intensities, or associations with legend, or connections with human totemic ancestry, or because of some geomorphological anomaly, or some combination of qualities” (p. 93). They are cultural and spiritual “gates through which one can—it would be said—more easily be touched by a larger-than-human, larger-than-personal, view” (p. 93; see also Deloria, 1993; Munn, 2003). Such sites offer a glimpse of the internal workings of belief and behaviors that put cultural histories into ecologies of place, some of which might be seen as “spiritual game management” (Snyder, 1990, p. 87). They also show us that storytelling is much more than amusement. It is fundamental to human life—especially (it seems) in myth, where one can change the content and bend the structure to achieve common understanding of perennial problems. Indeed, Verene (1976) finds that “human understanding must always have at its center the notion of the myth. In its movement toward the recollecting of origin, it discovers always again the myth, the original power of image-making or mimesis, the science of which, as Vico says, is the first that must be learned” (p. 34).

Within limits of coherence of the whole, consistency of theme, and related structural concerns, myths are a flexible and highly generalizable form of storytelling about the past in personal terms. They are linked to the now and then through one Gordian knot or another in terms

aimed specifically at stirring up something poetic in the audience.⁴⁵ Poetry itself is tied to the context of the immediate and the immanent, to the processes of “being there” and sensual saturation, and to the art of the possible and not necessarily the actual, in or out of what might seem to be an obvious historical or mythological context (Brady, 2003b). Like myth, poetry addresses the long run by allowing for diverse particulars in accounting for events of the moment in forms that tap into the larger continuities and commonalities of being human. Access to some of this material is guaranteed through studies of oral poetry, for much of that is tied directly to the timekeepings and implications of ritual and myth, to stories of origins and the peoplings of landscapes through events and discoveries over time as conceptualized by the tellers—and perhaps defended in what is viewed from other perspectives as a mix of fantasy and reality (Tedlock, 1983, p. 55). In this way, myths provide a complicated source of information on worldviews and associated behaviors that pervades both history (with its mix of literate and preliterate participants) and prehistory (with its exclusively preliterate participants) and thereby helps to frame meaning and action in our lives today.⁴⁶

Schama (1995), in his provocatively aesthetic and historical *Landscape and Memory*, argues that to put that to work in environmental review and renewal, “what we need are new ‘creation myths’ to repair the damage done by our recklessly mechanical abuse of nature and to restore the balance between man and the rest of the organisms with which he shares the planet” (p. 13; see also Kozinets & Sherry, 2004; Leonard & McClure, 2004, p. 324; Richardson, 1975; Saraydar, 1986; Sherry & Kozinets, 2004).⁴⁷ Wondering whether or not this is a cure for what ails us is not “to deny the seriousness of our ecological predicament, nor to dismiss the urgency with which it needs repair and redress” (Schama, 1995, p. 14), but we have to ask about the old ones in the process:

For notwithstanding the assumption, commonly asserted in these texts, that Western culture has

evolved by sloughing off its nature myths, they have, in fact, never gone away. For if, as we have seen, our entire landscape tradition is the product of shared culture, it is by the same token a tradition built from a rich deposit of myths, memories, and obsessions. The cults which we are told to seek in other native cultures—of the primitive forest, of the river of life, of the sacred mountain—are in fact alive and well and all about us *if we only know where to look for them*. (p. 14, emphasis added)⁴⁸

On the premise that “strength is often hidden beneath the commonplace,” Schama’s study is “constructed as an excavation below our conventional sight-level to recover the veins of myth and memory that lie beneath the surface” (p. 14). It is an archaeology of knowledge, another architectural connection to a poetics of place that supplements and gives new instructions to the more parochial endeavors of academic archaeology and history. It is a deeply poetized effort that may coach us into finding something of our internal but dusty guidebooks in the places set aside as wilderness in our cultural traditions and in portrayals of those and other landscapes in writing, painting, and photography, both past and present. It is “a way of looking, of rediscovering what we already have, but which somehow eludes our recognition and our appreciation. Instead of being yet another explanation of what we have lost, it is an exploration of what we may yet find” (p. 14).⁴⁹

Snyder and others share the hope in this. The native myth-mind—first encountered by Europeans in North America by Cabeza de Vaca, last known fully by the Native American Ishi—is “not dead and gone. It is perennially within us, dormant as a hard-shelled seed, awaiting the fire or flood that awakes it again” (Snyder, 1990, p. 13; cf. Saraydar, 1986). This thinking again raises the issue of both myth-time and history in relation to landscape. “We are all capable of extraordinary transformations. In myth and story, these changes are animal-to-human, human-to-animal, animal-to-animal, or even farther leaps” (Snyder, 1990, p. 20) to other shared forms of being-in-place,⁵⁰ including the dreams we have had about such things and the oral and graphic

representations we have left behind in the winding and sometimes broken trails of being human over the long haul. “The essential nature” of being in any part of this equation, Snyder asserts with optimism, “remains clear and steady through these changes” (p. 20). That does not guarantee access to the particulars of our pasts, of course, but it does put us in a perpetual and comparative present of sorts. We cannot lose sight of ourselves even if we try, and yet even when we look closely, we find fuzzy boundaries, much to learn, and much that is known at some level but difficult to express.

■ INTANGIBLE OBSTACLES: BEYOND WORDS

What moves on this archaic force / Was wild and welling at the source.

—N. Scott Momaday,
*The Way to Rainy Mountain*⁵¹

Myth and history are two related ways in which we have kept records of being around as conscious beings-in-place for many thousands of years.⁵² But despite a track record of sameness in narrative form, especially written form, there is nothing in the rulebook that precludes innovation in the presentation of either (Brady, 2004). The pervasiveness of myth in all aspects of our lives shows that not to be a new idea in itself, and history in its most conventional sense, spliced into myth-time as a form of accounting since the advent of writing and the genre building of modern academies, can also be a poem (Brady, 2003b; Denning, 1995, 1998a). Getting at the larger goals of environmental reform staked out here might benefit by building on the kinds of narrative and artistic diversity in Schama’s (1995) compilation, not only by taking a new look at some older ways of telling the story of being-in-place but also by carefully inspecting what exactly is conveyed by such storying by asking about the larger perceptual context.

Reading within and between the lines of Schama’s inspiring work suggests quite readily

that some of what we seek in a poetics of place, both ancient and modern, lies beyond words. Language gathers at the root of all storytelling, including myth, but as Jackson (1995) says, it does not exhaust its content or its possibilities. Experience covers everything. Words do not.⁵³ Consciousness itself is mediated through language, and image and everything that we know emerges in one form or another from experiences of landscape and story. “Such a conception of fieldwork implies a conception of writing” (p. 113) and of language as constitutive of reality, but it does not restrict the inquiry to it even as it puts considerable emphasis on “the creative and ethical domains of human social existence” (Jackson, 1982, p. 2). The oral storyteller and the writer share the task of revealing “people to themselves and to their possibilities” (p. 2).⁵⁴ Furthermore, during this modern age,

one must have recourse to art and literature if one is to keep alive a sense of what hard science, with its passion for definitive concepts and systematic knowledge, often forgoes or forgets. The painter who dispenses with framing in order to reunite the field of artistic vision with the space of the world, or the composer who breaks down the boundaries between what is deemed music and noise . . . find a natural ally in the philosopher who, aware that concepts never cover the fullness of human experience, sees that task of description as more compelling than that of explanation [including descriptions of being-in-place] (Jackson, 1995, pp. 4–5)⁵⁵

Nonetheless, posing a conundrum of sorts, it is through the conveyance forms and content of language and story that we must enter an *analysis* of places and the events that unfold in them. Like the oral performances that house myths in some embrace of the long-run and second-tier translations of them by experts with their own cultural and textual biases, we need to learn how to interpret the places and events of others and relate them to our own sensuous–intellectual experiences with the best possible representations, that is, in a manner true to what we know, think, and *can* say with reasonable persuasion. But the sources of that information and the language we

need to use to understand and communicate it are not always easily obtained—if they are obtained at all.

■ LIMITED OPPORTUNITY: ORAL POETRY AND MYTH

[Secret Road:] There are trees, crags, gorges, rivers, precipitous places of precipitous land, various places of precipitous land, various precipitous places, gorges, various gorges. It is a place of wild animals, a place of wild beasts, full of wild beasts. It is a place where one is put to death by stealth; a place where one is put to death in the jaws of the wild beasts of the land of the dead.

—Bernardino de Sahagún, “Aztec Definitions”⁵⁶

What is lost from, or created and added to, discourse when it is moved from one person to the next in the same culture pool? Across cultural and linguistic boundaries? It is important to remember the dialogic character of such communications and to keep in mind Bakhtin’s wisdom that language never moves through uncluttered space. It is heteroglossic and mutually constructive in all utterances—all contexts of development, reception, and discovery (Holquist, 1981, p. xx; 1990, p. 69). Combined with what can be learned from history, archaeology, and on-site experiences (however changed over time), we can bolster our sense of past landscapes by studying the legends and tales, the myths and meanings, as we discover them through oral and written texts and the performances and translations of each. They all are, at one level or another, functions of language, and in the quest to understand the nature of being-in-place, language and storytelling are essential but also, in some ways, are inadequate to the task.

In some of his pioneering work on Native American narratives, Hymes (1987) points out that ethnopoetics necessarily starts with language (p. 80), that “it is first of all a matter of taking seriously the ways in which narrators select and

group words” (p. 41), and that the stories of Native American oral discourse “are to be heard, or seen, in lines, and thus are a form of poetry” (p. 49; see also Kroeber, 1983; Swann, 1983; Tedlock, 1972, 1983; Zolbrod, 1983). This is fairly recent and profound thinking that runs against the grain of Western ethnocentrism concerning what does and does not count as poetry. As Zolbrod (1983) says, it has taken a while for scholars to recognize that there is a substantial Native American poetic tradition once misperceived as little more than “casual tale-telling” that is conspicuously poetic to those who know how to recognize its “implicit semantic and rhetorical patterns” and who understand that performance and setting have “a bearing on the utterance of a storyteller not evident in ordinary prose” or in “the printed medium conventionally employed by most translators” (p. 227).⁵⁷

This is empowering knowledge. Tedlock (1983) argues that treating oral narratives as dramatic poetry

clearly promises many analytic . . . [and] aesthetic rewards. The apparent flatness of many past translations is not a reflection but a distortion of the originals, caused by the dictation process, the notion that content and form are independent, a pervasive deafness to oral qualities, and a fixed notion of the boundary between poetry and prose. Present conditions, which combine new recording techniques with a growing sensitivity to verbal art as performed “event” rather than as fixed “object” on the page, promise the removal of previous difficulties. (pp. 54–55)

Moreover, taking advantage of the poetic dimension in every act of speech or writing (which is “related but not identical to its linguistic dimension”) and recognizing that all people in the world “continuously produce, reproduce, and revise their own cultures in dialogues among themselves,” with or without ethnographers present, as an act of being human, language’s dialogical potential can be used “to balance each representation with an alternative representation, producing poetry that is built on a process of translation rather than made to resist translation” (Tedlock, 1999, p. 155). But projecting the most modern of mentalities—reading

as an avenue to interpretation—as a facile metaphor on all that we wish to understand (e.g., “reading” oral performances and landscapes) can be an obstacle in the study of both oral *and* written traditions, that is, a problem in translating Native American and comparable oral presentations firsthand and also in deciphering the written translations we get from others before us (see, e.g., Finnegan, 1992; Hymes, 1987; Kroeber, 1983; Saraydar, 1986; Swann & Krupat, 1987; Tedlock, 1983, 1993, 1999). Times have changed, and our sensibilities have changed along with them.

■ PERCEPTUAL OBSTACLES: EPISTEMIC INTERFERENCE

*At first there is just one line, horizontal
/ A second appears / It’s already closer
/ Soon one notices lines everywhere /
They draw rapidly together / Too late one
realizes that / There is no escape.*

—Walter Helmut Fritz,
“Fesselung [Entrapment]”⁵⁸

Texts are an important avenue to the discovery of place in its diverse purchases and appearances everywhere, but using them as evidence for anything is problematic, in part because of the creativities inherent in text construction and reception that change with contexts of interpretation (as we all know and as the history of hermeneutics and interpretive social science in general shows) and in part because of diversity in textual form, performance, and appreciation (cf. Finnegan, 1992, p. xii; Lansing, 1985). Oral or written, they are bound to be multivocal and polyvalent at one level or another and are, therefore, always subject to context-sensitive interpretations that we ourselves impose and that cannot always be determined for the original authors in the case of representations or rereadings. That makes original meanings elusive (cf. Barthes, 1972, 1977; Brady, 1991b; Herzfeld, 2004, p. 39), but it does not preclude the construction of reasonable or agreeable interpretations between author and reader, speaker and hearer, for

communication would then be impossible (Brady, 2003b, p. xxiv). Only the immaculate reception gets foiled in the process, and we do have some empirical data to help us steer and contextualize the problem rationally. But using oral or written texts as an avenue of access to really old things and behaviors is doubly complicated for other reasons as well, not least because we are separated from any possible dialogue with the original authors and from aboriginal conceptions of life in place by fundamental changes in perceptions of the world—by what we can cull from Foucault (1972) as *epistemic interference* in the gaps between prehistory and now, mostly because of the profound changes in our perceptions of ourselves, our products, and our landscapes insinuated through the invention of alphabetic literacy and compounded by the mass production of texts by way of the printing press (Abram, 1996; Lowe, 1982). Our views of the nature of the world and our embodied place in it have changed accordingly.⁵⁹

The rise of alphabetic literacy and its dissemination through printing technology have had a profound effect on what Lowe (1982) calls the “hierarchy of the senses” and, thus, on the way in which we register and store information as humans. One sea change (among others) in this put a special premium on seeing over hearing in the field of perception and provided a means for separating knowledge from speech. Lacking written records, speech in an oral culture fulfills many functions that tend to be compartmentalized in chirographic and typographic cultures. Speech is communication in the latter, and knowledge is primarily preserved by writing. In an oral culture, however, “speech has to fulfill both functions of preserving knowledge as well as of communication, for only in the act of speaking can its knowledge be preserved” (p. 3).⁶⁰ Oral cultures have “an ‘artisan’ form of communication” where “stories arise from the rhythms of a preindustrial order: a world with time to listen, a language that is communal and founded on shared perceptions of reality, a respect for wisdom born of the accrued experience of generations, and a sense of life as still organized around the cycles of nature” (Wolf, 1982, p. 108; see also Feld, 1996). This knowledge

is reinforced through personal experiences and is shared through tellings in oral performances—some ancient, some contemporary. Some with obvious continuity through both. In that connection it is important to recognize that the “residues from the earlier type persist to affect the later one” (Lowe, 1982, p. 2). It follows that aboriginal storytelling “is an art intrinsically at odds with a culture organized around writing and the dissemination of ‘information’” (Wolf, 1982, p. 108), and so it is problematic as a source of ancient anything. By replacing or in other ways influencing folk and oral traditions, written culture undermines our ability to interpret them. The apparent “naturalness” of “seeing” or “reading” knowledge, as opposed to making the more direct connection between oral productions and aural registers, makes all interpretations of preliterate communications subject to deep-seated biases by modern interpreters.

The mix of ancient and modern shows up in contemporary studies of oral narratives and is played out in a synchronic version of epistemic interference that we can call *epistemic pooling*. The pooling part refers to the inevitable mix of diachronic continuities and traces from different traditions that show up at any given moment in history. The principle and context of the problem are encapsulated in Finnegan’s (1992) observation that in folklore studies there is now “a deepening understanding of the *interaction* of oral and written forms as a regular and surprising process across a multi-dimensional continuum, rather than as something which involves bridging some deep divide” (p. xiii, emphasis added; see also Ong, 1967; Rothenberg, 1985, p. xxiii). That is precisely the scenario encountered today by ethnographers, linguists, and folklorists who seek secrets of the past from their contemporaries in other cultures, most pointedly for our purposes here, in the study of oral narratives and poetics as a measure of aboriginal forms of thought and behavior in ancient landscapes.⁶¹ Despite some identifiable presence and separations of those forms in such contexts, the epistemic conditions of current “tribal” tellers are as mixed as anyone else’s. They are modern people as well, and so they are influenced

by the thoughts and premises of literacy at one level or another in text and performance (cf. Bauman, 1992; Finnegan, 1992; Finnegan & Orbell, 1995; Sammons & Sherzer, 2000). Nonetheless, with new sensitivities to the long-run obstacles that separate us, regardless of how subject to muddling they are today, we need to be optimistic. The very fact that there *is* continuity with things ancient in the oral narratives and poetics of some surviving tribal traditions (see, e.g., Perrin, 1987, p. 154) ought to spark our attention and motivate us to refine our methods for studying them. That would help us to get over the hump of what we already know, namely that oral narratives and poetry add an important source to our quest for reclaiming a sense of being in ancient places.⁶²

These are some of the particulars that give motion and distinction to individuals and whole societies. They include fundamental differences that must be taken into account in any attempt to reconcile the separations and connections of language, story, and performance within and between communities, including ethnographers and their informants caught up in the mutually constructing and slippery ventriloquisms (as Dennis Tedlock would say) of speaking for others. That is equally true of attempts to reconcile the separations, and perhaps the traces of continuity, between modern written texts and the aboriginally unwritten (i.e., oral) accounts of being-in-place before the advent of writing (see, e.g., Layton, 1997). It also raises the stakes on the study of sacred space in aboriginal contexts—residual or lasting and reformed in our modern day or not—to something on the order of landscape poetics, to the study of poetics of place on both sides of the cultural fences that divide them. There is no guaranteed method to conquer it all. Meanings can be slippery, fugitive, irreducibly plural things—trains departed from the station leaving only warm tracks behind for us to touch and speculate on (Barthes, 1972, 1977, 1982; Brady, 1991b, pp. 10–11; 2003b, pp. xiii–xiv). But ethno poetic research to date shows plainly that self-awareness and sensitivity to the impositions of cultural biases—the cultural “truths” that we

take for granted, see as “natural” if we are aware of them at all, or favor in some guise as the “truth we need to find” to validate our identities—are “ground zero” for even starting such projects.⁶³ Knowing about them advances the prospect of *resituating* ourselves in myth-time and the history of place through texts and associated images. Like Snyder’s Australian experience, that journey will also run the horizon of the old and the new. It will be history as we see it and live it, and so as we create it, with all of the interpretive problems outlined so far, but with the distinct advantage of locating the experience in a realistic site—the body itself, using language geared to sensuous–intellectual grounding and set analytically in an anthropology of ourselves.

■ ROOT FACILITATOR: POETICS AT HOME

To understand the fashion of any life, one must know the land it is lived in and the procession of the year.

—Mary Austin, *The Land of Little Rain*⁶⁴

Cull out the poets from among the bards and other performers of life as lived, put them on the peaks of what they consider to be their own lives and lands (Suiter, 2002), and they will likely share the experience with you as an epiphany of landscape—a dance with the sublime, the ancient, the foundational, the deeply personal poetry of themselves as beings-in-place (Bachelard, 1964, pp. 214–215).⁶⁵ Ask them how they know so much, and they will tell you that it is a matter of being-in-place for the long run, of internalizing its smells, sounds, and images—its flow of events and articulations of people and things. It is a matter of building an *embodied* history, they will say, and sometimes of launching that history through trips in the wider world and then “coming home.”

We all have been somewhere beyond the homestead and its heather, and we know that returns can have a profound effect on views of the original experiences (Brady, 2003b). For one thing, nothing remains exactly the same. As Merwin (1997) says, “When I come back I find / a place that was never

there" (p. 121). Times, places, and people change right under our noses. But triggered by sensuously doused memories, recombining the local landscape with a head full of new experiences (and absences) can yield a deeply contextualized poetic that both reinforces and redefines one's place *in* place, that is, by reworking the margins of self and other, native and stranger, old and new, even as the experience unfolds.⁶⁶ Conceptually *reregistering* something as simple as place names in this context—for example, by virtue of their marrying "the legendary and the local" (or, say, in the case of Gettysburg, the legendary and the national)—can move the trekkers to special sentiments and symbolism of thought and action. The process is informed by both "being there" and "going there," by a then and a now, and by what we know from encounters with other cultures, including the academic and aesthetic works (e.g., painted, chanted, written) of other places, as pooled and compared with existing knowledge of our own (Agee & Evans, 1960; Brady, 2003b; Heaney, 1980b; Kerouac, 1958, 1959, 1960; Williams, 1973, pp. 1–12).⁶⁷

All of these things "interanimate" in the mind's eye (Heaney, 1980b, p. 148), and they are the kinds of things that the poetic-minded Williams (1973) says can be "summoned and celebrated by the power of poetry" (p. 17). But the mental associations are not unfettered archaic recoveries. Nowadays they are sure to be a mix of the kinds of knowledge learned at home, on one's own through personal experience, and through the social entrainments of formal education (Heaney, 1980b, p. 131). Global networking and vast increases in access to public education, according to Heaney (1980b), ensure that in Ireland, for example, people are no longer innocent and that once local parishes now cast a wider net in the world:

Yet those primary laws of our nature are still operative. We are dwellers, we are namers, we are lovers, we make homes and search for our histories. . . . When we look for the history of our sensibilities, I am convinced . . . that it is to . . . the stable element, the land itself, that we must look for continuity. (pp. 148–149)

And in the weave of personal emotion, myth, and symbol that Yeats once spun so effectively in Irish consciousness of self and place, so too do some of the new poets "weave their individual feelings round places they and we know, in a speech that they and we share; and in a world where the sacral vision of place is almost completely eradicated they offer in their art what Michael Longley has called 'the sacraments we invent for ourselves'" (p. 148). Their work shows that home and sacred go hand in hand as much for the sake of grounded identity—literally for locating a culturally defined self—as for the conservation and defense of an historical sanctuary of collected selves, a community, a plural being-in-place, a gathering of individuals with both shared and redefinable "roots" in matters sacred and profane.⁶⁸ Poetry latches on to that and *represents* for us places that matter plus something as dear as the self to cherish as part of them, as something inter-animating and nuanced with the rest of life and the landscapes of its expression.

Perhaps it is also true that a planet of poets so embodied and emplaced would be much less likely to trammel the very source of its own existence; to cut off the milk, the honey, the aesthetic and ecological sustenance of its forests and waterholes, its peaks and valleys; to shatter the web of life that ties coral reef to caribou, owl and finch to prairie grass, buffalo to ground squirrel, and the winds of Sahara and stratosphere to the quality of life in Chicago, Honolulu, and Madrid. Removal from the thick of it by cultural amnesia or ignorance, ideological preference, or insulated physical means does not give this experience. Personal immersion does. It does not guarantee as a process love or admiration or even acceptance of what is encountered. It does force the issue of participation.⁶⁹ The trick is to do it and to share the experience in ways that matter, perhaps on the order of Yeats, who had, as Heaney (1980b) remarks, a dual purpose: (a) "to restore a body of old legends and folk beliefs that would bind the people of the Irish place to the body of their world" and (b) "to supplement this restored sense of historical place with a new set of associations that would accrue when a modern Irish literature,

rooted in its own region and using its own speech, would enter the imaginations of his countrymen” (p. 135). For that nourishment, I think, we will be well served by turning to the poets of place, Irish or not, American and Australian aborigines included, and find some way of hearing them that both represents them accurately in translation and resonates with our deepest being.

■ HEAVY LIFTING: POETS AT WORK

I think white people are so afraid of the world they created that they don't want to see, feel, smell, or hear it.

—John (Fire) Lame Deer,
*Lame Deer: Seeker of Visions*⁷⁰

To meet the goals of conscience in a poetics of place, to move people to action in environmental reform, we need to get beyond considerations of strictly conventional representations and into something richer, more robust, and more tuned to the wider domains of body-centered experience as an avenue to (among other things) the sublime, to epiphanies of place, at home and elsewhere. And if we succeed to some degree in our reclamations and rehearsals of such experiences through these means, we have to ask not only about the kinds of information mustered in the process but, once again, also about who should tell the story and on what terms (cf. Levenson, 2004; Weinstein, 1990; White, 2004). It cannot be the usual social science sources. They prefer language that has the life of uncommon metaphors and personal participation squeezed out of it. Theirs is a language of mortification, that is, of dead metaphors and dried-up facts applied through distanced, or what are supposed to be clinical, observations (cf. Graves, 1948, pp. 223–224). Poets take a different tack. We all are to some degree defined by where we are, where we have been, and where we think we are going. Our *selves* are insinuated in place culturally, historically, linguistically, and so forth through the usual channels of socialization, enculturation, and individual life experiences. But we are also insinuated in place sensually, as

sentient beings, and poetry marks sensual space more consistently than does any other form of representation (Brady, 2004).⁷¹ Although poetry cannot (and will not try to) free itself completely from the inevitable screens and biases of alphabetic literacy, it uses metaphor as a tool for discovering and positing the relations among things, and a poetic immersion of self in the experience of a much-traveled and culturally marked ancient place has a better chance of getting at a realistic account of such experiences primarily because of its devotion to sensuous particulars. Poets are potentially expert representers who offer comparative experiences in a commonly held domain—that of the body itself—and the ultimate aim of poetic expression is to touch the universal through the particular, to evoke and enter into discourse about the sublime, to move the discourse to what defines us all—what we share as humans.⁷²

This argument may apply to any finely wrought figurative language, whether verse or prose, that is, to *poesis* in general (Hallyn, 1990). Joseph Conrad's powerful prose may have the same effect as, or an even more exalted effect than, finely crafted verse by inspiring its audience with the kind of self-consciousness of being that can change lives (cf. Cushing, 1970; Hinsley, 1999). As verse or prose, the content of poetic representations exceeds the literal: “All poetic language is language strenuously composed beyond the requirements of information and therefore striking, perhaps most striking, when most apparently ‘transparent’” (Vendler, 1985, p. 59). The “surplus” beyond the literal is inference and argument by analogy and allegory, among many other possible tropic combinations and prospects (cf. White, 1978). In its most creative form, poetry, surplus meaning is a protest against the constraints of the ordinary rules of inquiry: “When a rhyme surprises and extends the fixed relations between words, that in itself protests against necessity. When language does more than enough, as it does in all achieved poetry, it opts for the conditions of overlife and rebels at limit” (Heaney, 1995, p. 158). More than simple mimesis, *poesis* is a process of “being” and

“doing” in variable contexts, a dynamic and reflexive process of construction and selection.⁷³ Because its reception depends markedly on the experiences, preferences, and related biases of the receiver (e.g., reader, hearer), trying to legislate the one correct interpretation is futile; no aesthetic experience can be so governed (Brady, 2003b, p. xvii).⁷⁴ Like myth, one has to know how to interpret these creations. To do that successfully, following Jackson (1995), one has to know something about how and under what circumstances they were produced.

What I am proposing is much more than a change in writing style. More than selective editing is required to get from here to there in a poetics of place. We cannot revisit foundational human experiences in the wildernesses of our pasts simply by writing up knowledge in the present tense, much as one might do in trying to make a film in the ethnographic present, that is, by erasing traces of modern occupation through selective visions and contrived replications. Poetry offers a difference in forms of knowing as well as representing,⁷⁵ and as Howes (1990) sees it,

No amount of experimenting with one's writing style is going to make up for the deficiency of failing to experiment with one's perceptions or "sensory ratio" first. To understand a culture is to "make sense" of it, . . . [and that] involves more than a "rejection of visualism" . . . or exchanging an ear for an eye. Making sense involves, minimally, learning how to *be of two sensoria* at once and reflecting upon how the interplay of the senses in another culture's perceptual system both converges and diverges from their interplay in one's own [culture]. (p. 69)

What distinguishes the best of this writing—thoughtful prose, not poetry (see, e.g., Ohnuki-Tierney, 1981; Seeger, 1975, 1981; Stoller & Olkes, 1986, 1987)—“is the extent to which expositions on odors, sounds, and tastes are treated as intrinsic to the ethnographic message rather than extraneous. . . . To analyze these expositions [exclusively] as textual markers of having ‘been there’ . . . would be to miss their point” (Howes, 1990, p. 69; see also Stoller, 1987, 2004).⁷⁶ Moreover, the emotional

truths of such experiences are perhaps best communicated emotionally (Sherry & Schouten, 2002, p. 219), and that is an open invitation to poetic bodies everywhere (Joy & Sherry, 2003). They all are equipped to make the case for how they are at any given time, with or without lines of words that by some estimations glow in the dark with eloquence.⁷⁷

Poetry immerses itself and revels in these sensual features (cf. Brady, 2003b, 2004; Carpenter, 1980; Classen, 1993). In so doing, it favors the analytic perspectives embodied in phenomenology and an anthropology of experience. All three perspectives attempt to represent a “natural” and self-conscious emerging in the world, a matter that begins with experiences of space and place and in some ways reaches beyond language itself as a form of knowing.⁷⁸ Each puts the observer upfront in the equation of interpreting and representing experience, starting with an upright and horizontal sentient being, present and accounting for itself. But each has its intellectual and methodological limitations as well. None offers perfect vision. Aside from its own ultimate puzzles (*aporias*) on time and being-in-place, among other considerations, a phenomenological approach has the problem of “tacit knowledge” as a fuzzy but strategic edge that is difficult to know or at least to put into words (Polanyi & Prosch, 1975). It does not deal with the unconscious in any accessible way (Joy & Sherry, 2003, p. 279; Lakoff & Johnson, 1999). The anthropology of experience finds words as subsets, imperfect and selective renderings of the larger realm of what can be known from being alive and awake as a sentient being, and so must find some way in which to account for these experiences. Poets want to stretch the limits of language, to wring everything possible out of words and metaphoric processes, ultimately to reach beyond the shortcomings of language in the landscapes of literature, speech, the sublime, and the ineffable and then pass on the whole bundle to all who will listen. They want work, as Heaney (1995) remarks about Dylan Thomas's early poetry, where “the back of the throat and the back of the mind” (p. 141) answer and support each other. That is both the promise

and the genius of poetry. It might not always apply or be accepted as intended, for any of several reasons.⁷⁹ But the aim and the prospects of putting a finger on “that great unity which is neither here nor beyond” (p. 141), of creating interpretations that “still make a catch in the breath and establish a positively bodily hold upon the reader” when “the wheel of total recognition has been turned” (p. 70), of engaging “the mechanical gears of a metre” that also takes hold “on the sprockets of our creatureliness” (p. 70), and in so many other ways of “recovering a past” or “prefiguring a future” (pp. 8–9), are always there. They are funded by imagination, by a need to articulate with the physical and social environments that surround us, and by an opportunity to communicate about what matters to us as we see it in the experiences of life as lived.⁸⁰

From that robust ground, tracking the sensual and imaginative qualities of experience through the emotionally open and rich language forms of poetry may create desire (one hopes) in the listener or reader to experience the same things in person, that is, in body. Getting to some authentic emulation or understanding of being in ancient landscapes in that context is in part a job for ethnographically informed translators and in part a job for the poets of all cultures; this is not an ethnically proprietary thing (Hymes, 1987). We cannot get there through any procedure that starts by attempting to throw out the single most important elements—the saturations of individual lives as lived, the biases of being personal, interpretive, alive, and awake on a planet that can, in the imaginaries of some, also be inhabited by ghosts of the past and fantasies of the future (cf. Heidegger, 1977, p. 333). That is the stuff of ordinary reality, and it is in terms of such things that we act first as cultured beings. By virtue of its secondary extractions, its focus on stasis (linear “snapshots” of events) rather than kinesis (the simultaneity of immersion or “ongoing film”) and other distancing techniques, hard science cannot ever capture these realities.⁸¹ But neither is just writing poetry enough. Internalizing poesis as experience by immersing in its subjects is what matters most for depth of understanding, and that must be followed by an attempt to make it

as carefully coached and exact a statement (including fantasy) of lived experience as we can.⁸² If the “great function of poetry is to give us back the situations of our dreams” (Bachelard, 1964, p. 15), the great demand of ethnographic poetics is that we render those experiences as clearly and accurately as possible through our sense of being-in-place and the guidance of histories—our own and those of others—that appear to contextualize the material best (Hartnett & Engels, chap. 41, this volume; on the same problem in science, cf. Halryn, 1990). Such analyses can teach us things that are not available in any other way (Brady, 2003b, 2004).⁸³ Among many other possibilities, they can show us mystery and beauty and the need for being in them as we pass through the landscapes of our lives, and that in itself may motivate us to care about repairs where we see breaches in our rights and opportunities to continue.⁸⁴ Poetry, in one very important sense of the term, literally puts it all in place.

■ REPRISE: ROOTS AND FUTURES

[Then:] *The word was born / in the blood, / it grew in the dark body, pulsing, / and took flight with the lips and mouth.*

—Pablo Neruda, “The Word”⁸⁵

[Next:] *Long enough in the desert a man like other animals can learn to smell water. Can learn, at least, the smell of things associated with water—the unique and heartening odor of the cottonwood tree, for example, which in the canyons is the tree of life.*

—Edward Abbey, *Desert Solitaire*⁸⁶

We are trainable, inventive, adaptable, and corporeal beings capable of making new and renewed associations among things and thoughts. With that in mind, and in the interest of breaking free as much as possible from the forces and forms of modern life that have ravaged the earth and its ancient creatures, if we have pumped up the appetite for “a kind of experience deep

enough to change our selves, our form of life” (J. Turner, 1996, p. 104), and if we also realize in the process that “our ecological crisis is not, at the roots, caused by industrialization, capitalism, and technology, but by a particular form of the human self” (p. 104), then self-renewal and reform are the applied agenda at hand. We have asked how to do that and found it to be problematic. What is the instrument? How do we *reimagine*, *reclaim*, and *resurrect* some semblance of participation in the changing environmental circumstances of the past and apply it to the present? Creating and sustaining a passion for place requires both primary and vicarious experience and language suitable for conveying the results realistically, that is, as they are conceptualized and felt and can be explored creatively by the participants through immersions in subject and place. Clinical abstractions tend to defeat that project, or at least they work in the wrong directions. But none of it comes to mind and body unfettered, beyond culture, personal bias, or predilections for certain kinds of interpretations against others.

The critics say that one path to a fair clearing in this, of doing something that counts in the Assembly of All Beings, is new myths, new applications of old myths, and thereby a renewed appreciation of continuities with the poetics and sacred spaces of yesterday. We need to *reengage* the study of myth and legend as embodied in landscapes and modern tellings (see especially Abram, 1996; Basso, 1996a, 1996b; Feld & Basso, 1996; Crapanzano, 2004). To reopen our eyes to the cross-cultural and ecological collisions of modern life, to “reveal the richness, antiquity, and complexity of our landscape tradition” as a way of showing the high cost of doing nothing (Schama, 1995, p. 14), we need to move from our own conceptions of a “natural” reading of cultural values and landscapes—our own blind ethnocentrism—to something larger and more comparative, enlightening, and pragmatic through careful research and carefully reasoned imagination. Each of these efforts is a constructive and transferable source of identity. Each can tell us important things about how we are and where we have been and can thereby mark an important sense of

where we are going from here as humans. But each also has its lacunae, its shortcomings, and its impossibilities, and given that the action of *revisiting* and *reimagining* circumstances *creates* original material, and thus another source of distortion in the effort to recontextualize the past through the present, the bottom line has to be not simply a study of texts and artifacts but rather a critical exercise in the larger and more inclusive realm of an anthropology of experience. To enfranchise that, we need to return consciously to the sensuous (Abram, 1996), to the body as instrument of all we can do and know, and to history and practice with all we can learn about embodiment as sentient beings in the world. Developing an unromanticized but keenly felt sense of being-in-place—of the constructive powers of getting there versus being there along with the knowledge that the basic instrument in the process is our emotionally loaded and culturally coded physical selves—is fundamental to the effort.⁸⁷ The inner and outer landscapes of our bodies are the locations where these things take place. What happens to people under these circumstances is sensuous-intellectual experience, a point of negotiation in the landscapes of life (some of which shows up in worldviews, rituals, etc.), and defines our existence, especially when things go wrong as they have for us today in the “slow-motion explosions” (Snyder, 1990, pp. 4–5) of expanding urban frontiers.

At the heart of these concerns is a primary sense of home and the structures of our very survival. Bass (2000) declares with insight that “the more fragmented the world becomes, the more critical it is that we try and hold the weave of it together, and the more clearly we will notice that which is still full and whole” (p. 73; see also Deloria, 1993; Snyder, 1978). Added to the inevitable conflict of human interests and the natural world, that may be sufficient reason to renew our inquiries among aboriginal cultures “concerning the nature of time and space and other (invented) dichotomies; the relationship between hope and the exercise of will; the role of dreams and myths in human life; and the therapeutic aspects of long-term intimacy with a landscape”

(Lopez, 1986, pp. 368–369). We need to reclaim a sense of sacred space, both as personal enlightenment and in a more applied sense as an avenue to deeper understandings of place that will support commitments to social and environmental security for future generations. To earn constructive influence in the Assembly of All Beings, we need to immerse ourselves in it and be informed by it. We need to know and *reevaluate* the transformations of place and space embedded in the landscapes of history—private and public, national and colonial—including the destruction of meaning in the land by translating encounters with other creatures and cultures into the signs of empire. We need to know the secrets sleeping both in the land and in ourselves, the experiences of being-in-place that once made the wilderness sacred to all who would pass that way or dwell there in shared dominion. We need to rediscover the sacred in the wild and the wilderness in ourselves realistically, but with all the passion of a commitment to survival in an untamed land. We need to *rekindle* our relationship with the wilderness by putting it in the kind of caring custody that we assign to our own ancestries and the offspring who gather at the hearth. We need to be a civilization that recognizes lessons learned from the wild as training for an “etiquette of freedom,” as Snyder (1990, p. 24) says, that “can live fully and creatively together with wildness” (p. 6), and the New World is where we must start growing it. Such commitments can launch the opportunity for developing new sacred space, for resurrecting old myths, and for creating new myths on which to hang our survival in the long run, but only if we find some powerful way of communicating the experiences.

Meaningful life presumes a vital existence in the first place, and as we know and I have said in triplicate here, for humans that is accomplished not only by knowing and doing but by also by sharing the knowledge. *Telling* the story of place means *teaching* it as well, and Gruenewald (2003) has some very specific thoughts on that matter as applied to formal education. He argues that although culture and place are deeply intertwined, our educational system obscures that relationship

by distracting our attention from, and our responses to, the actual contexts of our existences in place (p. 621). We can join our children in the equation of solving some of these problems by giving them firsthand experiences in different places—some wild, some not so wild, but all differentiated by comparisons of the overbuilt urban areas and the never-built few remaining wild areas of the planet. They must be able to distinguish between human social environments and natural environments and, in the process, to recognize that we are biological beings embedded in and embodied by both. Filtered through the social constructions of community talk and marked (one hopes) with some exalted feelings, such experiences may lead them to affinities with the planet otherwise long diminished by a frustrating and destructive search for fulfillment in a scheme of endless wants with limited means. Perhaps it will lead to a taming of the wild in their minds by recognizing and accepting it for what it is—wild, our past, our future, the place that more than any other shows us what we are and are not, where we have been and must be—perhaps by recognizing that the wilderness is ultimately our home, the baseline of the place we call our planet. Better that than building it into oblivion. Better that than squeezing its margins into creature habitats smaller than Japanese hotel rooms, skinning it for its pelts, or corralling it for rodeos, circuses, and zoos of all kinds. Perhaps this montage of old tragedies and new hopes will lead to the consciousness and rituals needed to create the myths of the future, including a philosophy of place less destructive of ecosystem, self, and the long run of humanity. History has shown us that soaking the land with cultural values means investing it with the power to change it and ourselves.⁸⁸ However idealistic and improbable that is in a world beset and distracted by the harsh realities of terrorism and murder endorsed by instructions from imaginary gods, that is power that we can reclaim and use for social and ecological justice in the Assembly of All Beings, humans and nonhumans alike.⁸⁹

The concept of being-in-place embraces all of this, and a poetic underpinning helps to reveal the

process of putting that concept to work in various forms. Poetry can educate and move us into awe, mystery, the sublime, and related realizations by “stirring things up in us.” It thrives on empathy and emulation and draws us into the sensuous-intellectual anchor for all knowing—that which comes from lived experience, where words are a subset of what is known and poetic expression is an attempt to render such experiences in texts and performances in a manner that often enlists the art of the possible more directly than it does the facts of the actual. While invested in radically different traditions of knowing, including an essential association with the multilayered metaphoricity of myth (see, e.g., Barthes, 1972; Dundes, 1984; Graves, 1948; Meletinsky, 1998, p. 153; Schama, 1995; Snyder, 1978; Thompson, 1989), poetry can also yield accurate and detailed information on being and doing and thereby can supplement even more directly the conventional methods and knowledge products of archaeology and history. But a poetic stance (poetry and more) always starts with the truth of raw experience, with life as lived and seen from the inside, from the role of the participant, not from some disembodied tortured analytic imposed from the outside on the premise that our sentient selves get in the way of discovery. By being inherently comparative, a poetic perspective also addresses anthropology’s first principle. It moves us to draw comparisons from our own immersions in life in relation to those of others, as separated from them perhaps by the cultural differences of age, gender, generation, personal characteristics, and favored gods—by the gaps that have always separated “own” from “other” in the landscapes of cultures whose home territories touch but do not match. It begs comparisons between being now and being then, between being one and being other, between being here and being there, and it thereby situates itself in our experience as fundamental to knowing other people, their histories, and the environmental complications of being-in-place today.⁹⁰ It gives us knowable contexts for constructing more or less satisfying meanings about the nature of the world and our place in it. In that respect, it enters the concerns of art and

science with the opportunity to inform in both. The problem in each domain is to learn how to listen, especially when the poesis is not drawn from our own cultural wells.

The particulars of preliterate experiences in wild and sacred space are more or less lost to us as modern peoples through the displacements and reorientations of language and the concomitant separation of knowledge and thought that has come with writing, the cultural erasures and amalgamations of colonialism, and the appetites of mindless urbanization. But the important lessons of being a long-run creature in and of place are not. They are just too often obscured by the pace and rapacious confusions of modern life. A conscientious effort to develop a poetics of place, with careful attention paid to the sensuous and intellectual components of our existence that are laced into our own and other cultural traditions, and to the possibilities of both *reimmersing* and *reinventing* ourselves in the process, might bring us as close as we ever can be to the peaks of our human ancestry. Coupled with a critical use of the archaeologies, histories, and museologies of the day, that may give us our best glimpse of being-in-place in ancient circles of stones, our best claim on the spaces of ancestral voices, longings and desires, catastrophes and dilemmas, joys and defeats, the dreams of old horizons, and the life forms that contextualized all of it prior to the great steerage of alphabetic literacy, the indelible footprints of Columbus on the New World, and the launching of a loop of Western industrialism into outer space that has left no part of the planet untouched by its influence. Careful attention paid to, and a willingness to act in, that context may open the agenda of self-renewal and reform with greater wisdom and less complacency about the circumstances of our lives as lived. As interloper in an anthropology of experience, a poetics of place wants to insinuate itself in this milieu by starting with what makes us the same, the commonalities of sentient beings as seen through the great diversities of our collective meaningful existences. Being action oriented, it strives to know such things in every way possible and to defend them where they promote greater harmony in the

Assembly of All Beings. In more ways than one, that is essential ethnography.⁹¹



■ CODA

I know that it is unusual to put theory in the same box with passion and commitment in the study of anything (Noam Chomsky to the contrary), and I know that I have romped through a whole industry of specialized interests in as many disciplines on the way to this point. So, a pithy review of the structure of the argument—the landscape of this text, if you will—might be useful in conclusion. Here is what I think I have done. In the interest of developing a conscientious and environmentally concerned poetics of place, including cultivating sources of information on experiences at “home” and in modern and ancient landscapes that might best be described as “wild” and “sacred” (while discounting, for the purposes of this chapter, detailed discussions of the archaeologies and histories housed in museums that are themselves specialized interpretations of related materials), I have emphasized the need for (a) “being there” (on-site, grounded in the sensuous-intellectual continuum of the body itself, imagination, and home experience, a data source that is fundamental to interpreting experience and transfers to ancient contexts mostly by educated analogy); (b) accounting for “getting there” in personal and epistemological terms; (c) studying “tribal” poetics and myths as sources of body-grounded information (albeit complicated) on worldviews and associated behaviors that pervades both history and prehistory and is embedded in oral performances (a source of hard data and, given the paucity of expert native performers, scarce opportunity) and written texts (a source of hard data and plentiful opportunity provided by secondary observers), with the caution that we need to learn how to interpret poetics and mythical thought in those contexts, especially in the light of epistemic problems insinuated in Western perceptions since the development of writing and mass production printing and in the light of certain inadequacies of language itself to convey experience.

As models of and for interpreting these materials, I have compared (a) scientific approaches (especially logical positivism with its distancing techniques) and (b) artisan frameworks (with their essential immersion techniques, including nonverbal representations and poetics) and collected them under the heading of “artful science.” I have cultivated the good fit of phenomenology as a philosophical underpinning for an anthropology of experience and for poetics as a way of knowing and communicating experiences of being-in-place. I have also given poetry per se special cachet under this umbrella, both because of and despite its composition beyond the requirements of basic information and because it is body grounded and can be a powerful source of communicating at both a sensuous and an intellectual level. Unlike the prerequisites for scientific discovery and representation, phenomenology, poetics, and an anthropology of experience put the observer upfront in the interpretive equation as an active participant. Each of these sources has its lacunae and other shortcomings relative to the other sources. But the composite attention paid to them in accounts of being-in-place and to culture as something constructed out of the interplay of the senses, filtered through imagination and the historical shapings that individuals and groups get from socialization and enculturation in particular traditions and perpetuate by storytelling, can give the overall effort an authenticity complementary to, but otherwise unavailable through, more conventional thinking in philosophy, anthropology, history, geography, and the social sciences in general. The end result has important applications in active research, formal education, and concerns for the quality of life on the planet.

■ NOTES

1. Geertz (1996) writes that the anthropology of place has a “sort of preludial quality, as if it marked the beginning of something that will reach far beyond the matters under immediate consideration” and that it “can be brought to bear on the grand complexities that plague the world” (p. 262). The current argument moves in that direction.

2. I do not wish to slight the academic disciplines of archaeology and history. So, too, for not reviewing the successes and failures of museology—that complex blend of representational problems in archaeology, history, and performance studies. Museums are an important area of contest on problems of ethnographic representation, authenticity, and the like (see especially Karp & Levine, 1991). I cannot burden the current argument with all of these asides. But I must argue in the same breath that what is presented here is relevant to the practitioners of those fields, including the politics of their reclamations and presentations, if one accepts the necessity of putting the observer in the equation of interpretation (e.g., compare the themes of this work with Allison, Hockey, & Dawson, 1997; Clifford & Marcus, 1986; Clifton, 1990; Denning, 2004; Gewertz & Errington, 1991; Greenblatt, 1991; Hobsbawm & Ranger, 1983; Hodder, 1982, 1987, 1989; Marcus, 1998; Metcalf, 2002; Pluciennik, 1999; Pratt, 1992; Wolf, 1992; see also Hartnett & Engels, chap. 41, this volume). Excising the observer is, for me, an unacceptable fiction; (and, of course, that begs the whole issue of postmodernism and its various levels of intellectual shootouts and misfires (Brady, 1998; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, 2002; Lincoln & Denzin, 2003b). Moreover, I have poets and their fictions in the mix of all of it (Brady, 2003b). Given Western conventions aimed at protecting science from art and vice versa, that is guaranteed to be controversial.

3. Roughly speaking, “Metaphor, calling one thing by the name of another, is not a strange poetic event. It is at the heart of language, and the direction of the metaphors is important. The body’s influence [sensation and perception] spreads outwards, to features of the environment, and inwards to the mind” (Aitchison, 2000, p. 124; cf. Brady, 1991a, pp. 69–71; Snyder, 1990, p. 16). On body-grounded metaphors and the use of them in science and everyday life, see Brady (2003b, 2004), Brown (2003), Danesi (1999, p. 111), Fernandez (2003), Gibbs (1994), Hallyn (1990), Kövecses (2002), Lakoff and Johnson (1999), Laughlin, McManus, and d’Aquili, (1992), Midgley (2001), Montgomery (1996), and M. Turner (1996).

4. For more on the concept of artful science, see Brady (1991a, 1991b, 2000, 2003a, 2003b, 2004) and Brady and Kumar (2000).

5. What I mean by poetics follows Hallyn (1990) in his study of abduction in science. He does “not use the term poetics in the Aristotelian sense of a system of normative rules, but rather in the sense that one speaks about the poetics of Racine or Baudelaire,

namely to designate a collection of choices made at different levels (style, composition, thematics . . .) by an author or a group. On the one hand, these choices lead to operations that inform the concrete work. On the other, they are loaded with meanings that more or less both determine and are determined by the artistic endeavor, for which the work is the result and sign. Ultimately, a study of poetics, in the sense understood here, comes down to what Umberto Eco calls ‘the plan for shaping and structuring the work.’ It is the program for the execution of a work, informed by presuppositions and exigencies whose traces one can locate, on the one hand, in explicit declarations, and on the other, in the work itself, to the extent that its completed form, with respect to other works, gives witness to the intentions that presided over its production. A poetics must return to a way of dreaming works and the declarations that accompany them, of conceiving their possibility, and of working for their reality” (pp. 14–15).

6. Paz (1981, p. 15). Compare Schama (1995, pp. 367–374).

7. Yi-Fu (1979) says, “The organization of human space is uniquely dependent on sight. Other senses expand and enrich the visual space” (p. 16). Sound “enlarges one’s spatial awareness to include areas behind the head that cannot be seen,” and it “dramatizes spatial experience. Soundless space feels calm and lifeless despite the visible flow of activity in it, as in watch[ing] events through binoculars or on the television screen with the sound turned off” (p. 16). In his view, “Taste, smell, and touch are capable of exquisite refinement. They discriminate among the wealth of sensations and articulate gustatory, olfactory, and textual worlds,” whereas “odors lend character to objects and places, making them distinctive, easier to identify and remember” (p. 10). And he asks, “Can senses other than sight and touch provide a spatially organized world? It is possible to argue that taste, odor, and even hearing cannot in themselves give us a sense of space?” (p. 10). Fortunately, “The question is largely academic, for most people function with the five senses, and these constantly reinforce each other to provide the intricately ordered and emotionally charged world in which we live” (p. 10). See also Ackerman (1990) and the “sensorium of the blind” described by Kuusisto (1998). The concept of place is also a product of the various cultural experiences, themes, and beliefs about the circumstances and transformations of lives as lived through the senses. But that does not mean that all cultures put the same hierarchical valuations on sensory experience or that they represent the senses in

storytelling about life as lived in the same ways (Brady, 2003b, pp. 93–101; Carpenter, 1980; Joy & Sherry, 2003; Mitchell, 1983; Nelson, 1980, 1983).

8. The logic here is the ordinary logic of understanding for humans and their conjectural mentalities. It is both structural and hermeneutic in process (Brady, 1993), but I have conceptualized it as a progressive hermeneutic, as more of a spiral than the classic “hermeneutic circle,” to accommodate the accretions and shifts of knowledge that occur through time (see also Brady, 1991b).

9. There is a scholarly danger in that, of course, especially when one seeks the truth of “what actually happened” exclusive of the experiences of being there in body and spirit (Denning, 2004), or vice versa, by thinking that one can rely only on the intuitions of body and tacit knowledge to apprehend the particulars of cultural performance. But we need to accept the fact that multiple reality frameworks can be applied to all experience and then do our best to defend the one we prefer to all others *without* deprecating or dismissing out of hand competing arguments and systems of signification from, say, the tribal world. On allowing “sufficient cognitive ‘space’ for conflicting ontologies to coexist,” see Layton (1997, p. 128).

10. See Brady (in press) and Denning (1974, 1980, 1988, 1995, 1996, 1998a, 1998b, 2004).

11. The semiotics of talk and thought, artifact and architect, testament and text, teacher, trainer, seer, shaman, priest, and dreamer—the meaningful landscapes of “everyman” particularized in individual groups—are precisely the kind of information that is likely to dissipate with the death or disappearance of whole cultures or populations. But alluding at several levels to the kinds of problems identified in a common frame by 18th-century Italian philosopher Giambattista Vico in his *New Science* (Tagliacozzo & Verene, 1976) and to works by various phenomenologists (particularly Merleau-Ponty, 1962), and following an argument made explicit by Howes (1990), we can say that (a) *all of this—culture itself—is “constructed out of the interplay of all the senses”* (p. 68; see also Laughlin & D’Aquila, 1974; Laughlin et al., 1992; Stoller, 1987, 1989; Stoller & Olkes, 1986, 1987), (b) it is embedded in a conjectural mentality that is compelled to make sense of changing environmental circumstances (Laughlin & Brady, 1978), and (c) it is filtered through imagination and the historical shapings that individuals and groups get from socialization and enculturation in particular traditions, including language and its body-grounded metaphors. The resulting

knowledge is perpetuated largely by stories—oral, written, performed in other ways—in units as small as parables, giving new meanings to perceptions of changing environmental circumstances (M. Turner, 1996). Accounts of being-in-place ultimately must reengage this mix of sensuous-intellectual properties and processes—the broad landscape of human experience that forms a body-centered system—to have any legitimate claim to authenticity.

12. Engaging in parallel universes and common projects as sentient beings makes it possible for us to understand each other (Merrell, 2000, pp. 73–74; on Vico’s *fantasia*, thinking through the body, and the age of poetic wisdom, see Verene, 1976; on Quine’s principle of charity and related comments, see Brady, 2000). Thinking “through the body and to sense the world as an order of bodies, with meaning not being separable from bodies,” is difficult to imagine (Verene, 1976, p. 31; cf. Lowe, 1982), but a critical rereading of Vico’s arguments about body-centeredness is nonetheless a reminder that we are all animals—sensuous-intellectual creatures—and that there are some universal responses to things that we all share. The possibilities for understanding the beliefs and experiences of others are grounded both in the common sensory apparatus that we occupy as biological beings and in the comparable modes of thought and action when we respond to the feelings and sensations of environmental stimulation (Merrell, 2000, p. 73). “The body is, so to speak, in the mind. They are both wild” (Snyder, 1990, p. 16). The same possibilities must also be realized *in an interpretive relation* to other communicative organisms (and things that are believed to be animated, e.g., rocks and trees), that is, through the interactive processes that lead to the social construction of reality through whatever cultural screens (Berger & Luckmann, 1966; see also Zolbrod, 1983, pp. 227–228). Compare Wilmsen (1999): “Separate lives are congruent in experience, no matter how disparate their cultural environments. Once the words are learned, native speakers of different languages begin to recognize each other—thirst thick under an arid sun, identical errors in navigating unknown landscapes, parallel blunderings through sexual awakening—in evoked images of their separate experiences. For it is individuals, not cultures, who meet and re-present their contexts to each other” (p. xi). See also Fletcher (1967, p. 197).

13. Kerouac (1959, p. 106).

14. Because we are creatures in and of place—embedded, embodied, and emplaced—it is difficult to extract a proper concept of place for conversation and

instruction (Geertz, 1996). But I do mean to flag the process of being and becoming enplaced as a biological and cultural system that is subject to an inherent creativity of perception and expression and, above all, to inscriptions and transferences between the body and its sociocultural milieu. See Low and Lawrence-Zúñiga (2003), Merleau-Ponty (1962), Miller (1996), and Spiegelberg (1975). To have practical value as a principle, that thought needs to be played out and observed in the everyday world. On mimesis and its complexities, see Taussig (1993). For an exquisite coarticulation of theory and practice in cultural spaces, see Stewart (1996). On living persons and practical problems, see Smith (1997, p. 2).

15. See especially Merleau-Ponty (1962), Spiegelberg (1975), and adaptations of Merleau-Ponty's work in Abram (1996) and Gruenewald (2003). The upshot is that humans enter into a participatory relationship with other phenomena through the multisensory perception of direct experience. On phenomenology and culture, see Csordas (1994), Laughlin and Brady (1978), and Laughlin and colleagues (1992).

16. Thus, meaning is made, not found, and making sense of places is a reciprocal and mutually constructing process, taking shape and acquiring meaning "when the inner realm is projected onto the outer scene" (Brann, 1991, p. 7). Feld (1996) puts it this way: "As place is sensed, senses are placed; as places make sense, senses make place" (quoted in Casey, 1996, p. 19).

17. Ethnographers generally take us to a "location," that is, to a place where *something happens*. Like watching a movie, we seldom have reason to focus on the projector or the serving apparatus. Phenomenology brings the observer's equipment to the fore and makes it part of the equation of meaningful construction and participation. Compare Thompson (1989): "So here I sit, looking at the screen of a Macintosh and in imagination, rolling the screen of history back and forth. Instructed by the natural history of life, I suspect that what I am looking for are not 'events' but thresholds of emergence that are also projections of my own framing of perceptions" (p. 135).

18. Following Lowe (1982), "By 'perception' I do not mean the neurophysiology of perception, or the behavioral psychology of perception, but an immanent description of perception as human experience. . . . Perception as the crucial connection includes the subject as the perceiver, the act of perceiving, and the content of the perceived. The perceiving subject, from an embodied location, approaches the world as a lived, horizontal field. The act of perceiving unites the

subject with the perceived. And the content of the perceived, which results from that act, affects the subject's bearing in the world. Perception is therefore a reflexive, integral whole, involving the perceiver, the act of perceiving, and the content of the perceived" (p. 1). Moreover, according to Feld (1996), "places may come into existence through the experience of bodily sensation, but it is through expression that they reach heightened emotional and aesthetic dimensions of sensual inspiration" (p. 134). Among the Kaluli, "the poetics of place merge with the sensuousness of place as soundscape and with the sensuality of the singing voice" (p. 134).

19. We do not need Kant to tell us how fundamental space and time are to our lives. As Yi-Fu (1979) says, "'Space' and 'place' are familiar words denoting common experiences. . . . Basic components of the lived world; we take them for granted. When we think about them, however, they may assume unexpected meanings and raise questions we had not thought to ask" (p. 3). For some concrete examples, see also Gallagher (1993).

20. Neihardt (1959, p. 173).

21. See the various works by Claude Lévi-Strauss regarding the fantasy factor in all myths (e.g., Lévi-Strauss, 1976). On creativity and imagination in general, see especially Miller (1996). No categories of place have any meaning without imagination. It has a geography of its own—landscapes of fear and comfort where poets of virtual worlds bridge the concrete and the abstract, where the sign and its referent emerge in consciousness as places of soil, rock, sea, air, innumerable critters, and mind (Brady, 2003b). The expression "leap of the imagination" is often heard in discussions of writing, but that may be less of a leap than "a sauntering, a stepping across" into the reality at hand (Bass, 2000, p. 72). See also Caughey (1984), Joy and Sherry (2003), and Wooley (1992). Crapanzano (2004) says, "Like James, the literary critic Jean Starobinski stresses the determining role of the imagination in the perception—the constitution—of reality. 'Insinuated into perception itself, mixed with the operations of memory, opening up around us a horizon of the possible, escorting the project, the hope, the fear, speculations—the imagination is much more than a faculty for evoking images which double the world of our direct perceptions; it is a distancing power thanks to which we represent to ourselves distant objects and we distance ourselves from present realities. Hence, the ambiguity that we discover everywhere; the imagination, because it anticipates and previews, serves action, draws us before the configuration of the realizable

before it can be realized.' . . . Not only does the imaginative consciousness allow us to transcend (*depasser*) the immediacy of the present instant in order to grasp a future that is at first indistinct, Starobinski argues, but it enables us to project our 'fables' in a direction that does not have to reckon with the 'evident universe.' It permits fiction, the game, a dream, more or less voluntary error, pure fascination. It lightens our existence by transporting us into the region of the phantasm. In turn it facilitates our 'practical domination over the real' or our breaking ties with it" (p. 174).

22. On art, science, and humanism, see Bruner (1986, pp. 49–50). On extrapolations from laconic representations as simple as a dateline in a poem, see Richardson (1999b, p. 334) and Brady (2003b, p. xiv). We are compelled to interpret such signs and cues about our environment because, in a general sense, our very existence as human creatures depends on it. Place is the anchor of fundamental human experience. But how do we recognize it? "Do we know enough about it to enjoy a fanciful imagining of passage there? If we visit a place at three separate times, is it still the same place? Does the place remember us? The answers are as much a function of landscape evolving as they are of finders finding what they want or need to see—a cultural meaning and orientation problem with historical implications" (Brady, 2003b, p. xv).

23. Suskind (1986, pp. 147–148).

24. As might be expected, the concept of home as a stable place is deeply embedded in our thinking about writing. On language and embodied space, see Jackson (1995, p. 6) and Low and Lawrence-Zúñiga (2003, pp. 6–7). The real work for individuals centered more or less (cf. Stewart, 1996, p. 3, on Appalachia) in what they recognize and perpetuate as a common home and the wider world, is to determine how all of these rooted poolings of life intersect so as to figure out who and by what commonalities of ancestral experience and related cultural claims should be grouped together by category and actual location and who and what, in our estimation, should not. That is the essence of kinship and a classic set of norms for deciding issues of access and trespass, that is, for deciding who and what are to be included or excluded from particular activities at particular times in the places we call home.

25. On a larger scale, one thinks immediately of America in this context given its history as a collecting point for international migration processes and diverse cultural interests. On travel and uprootedness, see Snyder (1990, pp. 23–26). On travel as metaphor, see Jackson (1995, p. 1) and Van den Abeele (1992).

26. Naming a place is a way of taming it, bringing it at least to the control of a mental appropriation in a familiar set of signs—to the level of place punctuated by the hearths and travels of the imagination if not of the physical self. That is the same process applied through colonial appropriations of others; that is, by translating them into our own cultural system of signs, we render them "subordinate," at least by category of existence. On the importance of naming in human experience, see Cheyfitz (1997) and Aitchison (2000, p. 94ff). Schama (1995) notes, "The wilderness, after all, does not locate itself, does not name itself. It was an act of Congress in 1864 that established Yosemite Valley as a place of sacred significance for the nation" (p. 7). See also Momaday (1969, p. 27).

27. Weller (1990, p. 14).

28. More or less following Bakhtin, by "architectonics" I mean the architecture of connections revealed between individuals and their wider environments, parts to whole in changing landscapes, including other people and other points of view, over time (Holquist, 1990, p. 149ff). Sensitive to readings from both sides of the cultural fences that separate us in fieldwork and life in general, and to the mutual constructions of our interactions under those circumstances, a poetics of place must be dialogic in nature. Furthermore, "a dialogic poetics must first of all be able to identify and arrange relations between points of view; it must be adequate to the complex architectonics that shape the viewpoint of the author toward his characters, the characters toward the author, and of all of these toward each other" (p. 162).

29. Speaking of an incident in the foothills of the Rocky Mountains, Smith (1997) recalls a telling moment "in the description of a colleague who had taken her class to the mountains, sat them in a circle, enticing them, in an ecological exercise, to 'breathe this place, to recollect themselves and their relations to . . . 'reconnect.' Suddenly, the heavy sounds of a cougar circling them can be heard, followed by the instantaneous and terrified evacuation of the place by the recollectors, the breathers, and the reconnectors! Whatever the pedagogy of the place may be, it has little to do with a warm cozy relationship with an imagined nature, and perhaps more to do with the courage to befriend one's own mortality in the midst of the ongoing project of self understanding" (p. 4). The wild inspires us to be practical. It also can be a tough experience (Snyder, 1990, p. 23).

30. Ducking the television travelogues designed to sell products on commercial breaks, the closest we

usually can come to wilderness today is to traffic in its remainder in places such as Yosemite, heavily marked by people—in fact, even created by people in so many important ways, including mapping and marking it as a preserve of sorts (Schama, 1995)—or in the outback stretches of earth where the timid never tread, be it alpine, desert, or swamp (Snyder, 1990, p. 6). Snyder (1990) sees these places as “the shrines saved from all the land that was once known and lived on by the original people, the little bits left as they were, the last little places where intrinsic nature totally wails, blooms, nests, glints away. They make up only 2 percent of the land of the United States” (p. 14).

31. Immersion in the unpared has special merits for helping the process unfold. “A week in the Amazon, the high Arctic, or the northern side of the Western Himalayas,” J. Turner (1996) writes, can show us that “what counts as wildness and wilderness is determined not by the absence of people, but by the relationship between people and place. A place is wild,” he says, “when it is self-willed land. Native peoples usually (though definitely not always) ‘fit’ that order, influencing it but not controlling it, though probably not from a superior set of values but because they lack the technical means. Control increases with civilization, and modern civilization, being largely about control—an ideology of control projected onto the entire world—must control or deny wildness” (pp. 112–113).

32. Poulsen (1982, p. 116).

33. Some sacred spaces, of course, are purely man-made in their physical construction (e.g., the Vietnam memorial in Washington, D.C.), but even these are likely to be landscaped for beauty with a “natural” theme (Osborne, 2001; Véliz, 1996). Others are located in conspicuous landscapes, such as Mount Sinai and Devil’s Mountain, none of which is a “sacred” space in its own right. They are interesting in their irregularities or are novel to people who encounter them as necessary interpreters of space. But that very reading is a primary source of significance—a projection of self, culture, and emotion that occurs somewhat ironically through an appropriation of the otherwise unobtainable by wrapping the experiences in metaphor, by acquiring places in image and imagination, and by bringing them near through semiosis and fantasy, if not actual physical presence. In his analysis of Native American sites, Gulliford (2000) identifies nine categories of sacred places: “(1) sites associated with emergence and migration tales; (2) sites of trails and pilgrimage routes; (3) places essential to cultural survival; (4) altars; (5) vision quest sites; (6) ceremonial

dance sites; (7) ancestral ruins; (8) petroglyphs and pictographs; and (9) burial or massacre sites” (quoted in Leonard & McClure, 2004, p. 321). Building on that and Vine Deloria’s work on Native American sites, Leonard and McClure (2004) identify sacred places on two axes: one that follows “a continuum from historical/actual to imaginary/metaphorical” and one that follows “a continuum from human to divine agency” (p. 325). Deloria gives us four categories “arranged on a scale of ‘agency’—entirely human agency at one end versus the agency of ‘Higher Powers’ at the other” (p. 322). See also Dundes (1984) and Lane (2001).

34. Some sacred sites are deeply personal and private. On places sacred to one person that fail to move another, see Poulsen (1982, pp. 116–117).

35. True to this experience, and illustrative of the power of poetry to address such issues in laconic ways, see the defining principles and irony in Gregor’s (2004) smart poem, “Mammals of North America.” Despite the importance of hunting in both cultures, nothing could be further removed from the place of mammals in the world of the Koyukon (Brody, 1982; Nelson, 1983).

36. Only the overall story form and perhaps the emotions of shared experiences as sentient beings-in-place, especially in the conspicuous places of whatever we can call “nature” today, can frame these inferences for us. The rest must come from material representations (cf. Clarkson, 1998; Hodder, 1982, 1987, 1989; Lewin, 1986; Richardson, 1982; Zolbrod, 1987), from written history, or from that wonderful interim point—a living person whose knowledge pool runs a continuum of semiotica from early tribal history to the present. Such guides are rare, of course, if they exist at all in ultimately reliable forms. They all are influenced by literacy and related forms of communication in the modern world, but they can be found in our current landscapes. On teachers of sacred space, see Layton (1997, p. 122) and Snyder (1990, pp. 12, 78). On contemporary horticultural experts in the American Southwest, see Nabhan (1982). See also Behar (1993), Nelson (1980, 1983), Swann (1983), Swann and Krupat (1987), and Tedlock (1972, 1983, 1990, 1993).

37. Note the irony that what are often held to be the most palatable and picturesque landscapes are also sometimes the least habitable (Barthes, 1972, pp. 74–77). With an overview of the relationships of landscapes, aesthetics, and pleasure as they might obtain in the human species, Brown (1991) says, “One of the fundamental assumptions of evolutionary psychology is that matters closely related to our survival and reproduction have a likelihood of engaging our

emotions. Thus, although there might be little evidence of a general adaptation for an aesthetic sense, a . . . disparate collection of emotion-producing activities and entities may structure what we consider aesthetic. . . . Orians (1980) has examined such matters as the emotional reactions of explorers to different natural settings, the landscaping and planting of parks, and the criteria that make particular pieces of real estate especially valuable, to show that humans seem to have an innate preference for settings that would have been optimal habitats for our Pleistocene foraging ancestors. We like 'lakes, rivers, cliffs, and savannahs,' settings in which food, water, and protection (as in caves) were in optimal combination. Key elements in Orians' arguments are the emotional nature of the human preferences, and comparisons with habitat selection in other species, where its innate component is less questionable. Here the argument is that we have an innate tendency to prefer, seek out, and construct certain kinds of settings because we feel good in them" (pp. 115–116). On forests and the emergence of poetic wisdom, compare Rubinoff (1976, p. 104).

38. This is especially true in the light of the horrifying events of September 11, 2001, in the United States and the country's subsequent declaration of war on terrorism (Lincoln & Denzin, 2003a). The whole problem can be framed in its fundamentals as one of sacred space and what is or is not allowed to take place in it. On poetries of place and the different imaginaries of country and city, see Williams (1973). On entering an age of human flourishing, see Lincoln and Guba (2000). On the Burning Man Project, see Kozinets and Sherry (2004) and Sherry and Kozinets (2004).

39. They are often represented in the mix of more than one culture, society, and/or physical landscape, the kind of heterogeneous zones we find bisected by the colliding margins of cross-cultural frontiers. They are "borderlands" of the here and the hereafter or are "beaches" as Denning (1980, 1996) liberated the concept from the stereotyped margin of surf and sand. On the U.S.–Mexican border, see also Brady (2003b, pp. 89–90). On Chicano narratives and their literary and cultural borders, see Rosaldo (1989). On Australian aboriginal notions of trespass and "spatial prohibitions as a mode of boundary making," see Munn (2003). On frontiers and the possibilities of passing into myth time, see Snyder (1990, p. 14). On the concept of "regeneration through violence," see Slotkin (1973).

40. Neihardt (1959, p. 35).

41. According to Snyder (1990), "For preagricultural people, the sites considered sacred and given

special care were of course wild" (p. 79). He adds, "The idea that 'wild' might also be 'sacred' returned to the Occident only with the Romantic movement" (p. 80).

42. In answering the question of why native cultures in general give so much importance to places, Abram (1996) sees the answer as obvious: "In oral cultures the human eyes and ears have not yet shifted their synaesthetic participation from the animate surroundings to the written word. Particular mountains, canyons, streams, boulder-strewn fields, or groves of trees have not yet lost the expressive potency and dynamism with which they spontaneously present themselves to the senses. A particular place in the land is never, for an oral culture, just a passive or inert setting for the human events that occur there. *It is an active participant in those occurrences* [precisely a poetic posture]. Indeed, by virtue of its underlying and enveloping presence, the place may even be felt to be the source, the primary power that expresses itself through the various events that unfold there" (p. 162). He adds, "It is precisely for this reason that stories are not told without identifying the earthly sites where the events in those stories occur. For the Western Apache, as for other traditionally oral peoples, human events and encounters simply cannot be isolated from the places that engender them. . . . From the Distant Time stories of the Koyukon people, and from the *'agodzaahi* tales of the Western Apache, we begin to discern that storytelling is a primary form of human speaking, a mode of discourse that continually weds the human community to the land. Among the Koyukon, the Distant Time stories serve, among other things, to preserve a link between human speech and the spoken utterances of other species, while for the Western Apache, the *'agodzaahi* narratives express a deep association between moral behavior and the land and, when heard, are able to effect a lasting kinship between persons and particular places. . . . The telling of stories, like singing and praying, would seem to be an almost ceremonial act, an ancient and necessary mode of speech that tends the earthly rootedness of human language. For narrated events, as Basso reminds us, always happen *somewhere*. And for an oral culture, that locus is never merely incidental to those occurrences. The events belong, as it were, to the place, and to tell the story of those events is to let the place itself speak through the telling" (pp. 162–163). See also Basso (1996a, 1996b), Carpenter (1980), Crapanzano (2004), Feld and Basso (1996), and Nelson (1983).

43. On movements toward symbolic order in modern architecture and the idea that every force evolves a

form, compare Poulsen (1982, pp. 118, 123–124). Schama (1995) adds, “And it is just because ancient places are constantly being given the topdressings of modernity (the forest primeval, for example, turning into the ‘wilderness park’) that the ambiguity of the myths at their core is sometimes hard to make out. It is there, all the same” (pp. 15–16).

44. Apropos of the current thesis, Deloria (1993) calls for “the possibility of new sacred places, underscoring even more the present, ongoing nature of the kinds of interactions between the human and the spiritual realms” (cited in Leonard & McClure, 2004, p. 324).

45. By dwelling on the language associated with primary emotions (and, therefore, the limbic system of the brain), poetry is capable of moving us sensuously and emotionally. Speaking of the power of poetry and prophecy, Leavitt (1997) says, “Much of this power is already implied in the nature of language itself. For the speaking subject, a linguistic element—a phoneme or word or grammatical pattern—not only says what it says, but does so cast in a specific form and carrying specific implications. That is to say, each linguistic element carries with it not only a semantic load but also both a material presence as a pattern of sound and a cloud of connotations and colorations picked up through the subject’s life experience and the elements of our own history of use. In some circumstances, people attend not only to what is being said but equally or primarily to the sound- and meaning-resonances of how it is being said. This ‘poetic mode of speech perception’ . . . and production defines . . . the poetic function of language; language carries sometimes actualized but always potential punch above and beyond the punch of information conveyed. The effect may be aesthetic, emotional, or physical” (p. 3). On the “thrill” or “physical emotion” that can come from reading, “the undisappointed joy of finding that everything holds up and answers the desire it awakens,” compare Heaney (1995, pp. 8–9). Bass (2000) notes that the artist has an “imperative to get as close to a thing as possible, not so much to create metaphors as to uncover them; to peel them way back to their source. For me there is undeniable solace and excitement in moving in as close as possible to things, in art, and in the woods—as close as possible to the source” (p. 73). On emotions and landscapes, see also Brown (1991, pp. 115–116).

46. See Abram (1996), Barthes (1972), Benjamin (1969a), Brady (2003a, 2003b), Crapanzano (2004), Gibbs (1994), Hoffman (1999), and Meletinsky (1998). Bachelard (1964), in his classic text *The Poetics of Space*, notes, “Great images have both a history and a

prehistory; they are always a blend of memory and legend, with the result that we never experience an image directly. Indeed, every great image has an unfathomable oneiric depth to which the personal past adds special color” (p. 33). To him, “Primal images, simple engravings are but so many invitations to start imagining again. . . . By living in such images as these, in images that are as stabilizing as these are, we could start a new life, a life that would be our own, that would belong to us in our very depths. . . . And because of this very primitiveness, restored, desired, and experienced through simple images, an album of pictures of huts would constitute a textbook of simple exercises for the phenomenology of the imagination” (p. 33). Schama’s (1995) collection of images and texts presents exactly that—an album of experiences that give us the past (albeit recent) as both imaginative history and a history of the imagination. It directs attention to the nature of landscape as myth, and vice versa, on America’s frontiers and is, therefore, most instructive for our current purposes and fair ground for contextualizing creations and renewals of sacred space.

47. Finding (or reinventing) new leaders for positive turns on sacred space is consistent with the moral and ethical goals of our environmental critics (see, e.g., Snyder, 1990, p. 78). But in the process we must also ask *whether* we really want to renew these things as sacred in our personal lives and to integrate them uncritically in modern views of what is sacred. The relativity of the concept—what is sacred for you is not necessarily the same for others—has led, as J. Turner (1996, p. 22) reminds us, to one violent confrontation after another throughout history. Moreover, a failure to distinguish between formal and popular religions has bastardized the concept in contemporary America. Turner suggests that Disneyland, national parks, the site of President John F. Kennedy’s assassination, and related “pilgrimage sites” are sacred “because of the function of entertainment and tourism in our culture. In a commercial culture, the sacred will have a commercial base. For many people, nothing is more sacred than the Super Bowl” (p. 22). That is not the sense of “sacred” that Snyder has in mind, but whatever the course of action taken, there is huge personal responsibility attached to it, for ourselves and for the collective futures of all who would revisit the savannahs and forests of our beginnings with a sense of respect and preservation rather than rapacious destruction.

48. Consider Schama (1995): “Whether such relationships are, in fact, habitual, at least as habitual as the urge toward domination of nature, said to be the

signature of the West, I will leave the reader to judge. Jung evidently believed that the universality of nature myths testified to their psychological indispensability in dealing with interior terrors and cravings. And the anthropologist of religion Mircea Eliade assumed them to have survived, fully operational, in modern, as well as traditional, cultures" (p. 15). Schama marks his own view as "necessarily more historical, and by that token much less confidently universal. Not all cultures embrace nature and landscape myths with equal ardor, and those that do go through periods of greater or less enthusiasm. What the myths of ancient forest mean for one European national tradition may translate into something entirely different in another" (p. 15). Schama has "tried not to let these important differences in space and time be swallowed up in the long history of landscape metaphors sketched in [his] book. But while allowing for these variations, it is clear the inherited landscape myths and memories share two common characteristics: their surprising endurance through the centuries and their power to shape institutions that we still live with. National identity, to take just the most obvious example, would lose much of its ferocious enchantment without the mystique of a particular landscape tradition: its topography mapped, elaborated, and enriched as a homeland" (pp. 15–16).

49. We are reminded in the process that "understanding the past traditions of landscapes can be a source of illumination for the present and the future," and with a lien on that, Schama (1995) says that it can also be a source for redeeming "the hollowness of contemporary life" (p. 17). This is not a promise of passage into Nirvana, an escape from the evils of the present into something constructed out of blind fantasy and a heavily romanticized past that can be regained in the future. Schama is too much of a realist for that. In acknowledging "the ambiguous legacy of nature myths," he points out that we must also "recognize that landscapes will not always be simple 'places of delight'—scenery as sedative, topography so arranged to feast the eye. For those eyes . . . are seldom clarified of the promptings of memory. And the memories are not all of pastoral picnics" (p. 18).

50. Compare Kroeber (1983): "Evidence of . . . interactivity is likely to impress us most in stories, such as those dealing with Coyote. These we find baffling because Coyote can be animal or man at any time and without any seeming consistency. This is a crucial imaginative point. The Indian imagination is not so rigidly tied as our own to given material forms and patterns. For us, to be 'characters' animals have to be

anthropomorphized. The Indian imagination recognizes Coyote as both animal and man, or either animal or man, the duality in fact making him 'Coyote' rather than 'just' the exceedingly interesting four-footed predator. The complexity of the Indian imagination is germane to the practical core of the hunting songs we are considering here" (p. 329). See also Bright (1987), Buller (1983), Diamond (1986), Ekkehart and Lomatuway'ma (1984), Haile (1984), Hymes (1987), Lopez (1977, 1986, 1990a), Snyder (1990), and Tedlock and Tedlock (1975). On Abram, Merleau-Ponty, and the phenomenological argument that "places are the ground of direct human experience" and associated assumptions about the interactions of the body with things, including the idea that "all objects or things are 'alive' and capable of entering into a relationship with a human perceiver," see Gruenewald (2003, p. 623).

51. Momaday (1969, p. 6).

52. Consider Yi-Fu (1979): "Three principal types [of space], with large areas of overlap, exist—the mythical, the pragmatic, and the abstract or theoretical. Mythical space is a conceptual schema, but it is also pragmatic space in the sense that within the schema a large number of practical activities, such as the planting and harvesting of crops, are ordered. A difference between mythical and pragmatic space is that the latter is defined by a more limited set of economic activities. [On "trails to heaven" and "maps of dreams," see also Brody, 1982, pp. 46–47.] The recognition of pragmatic space, such as belts of poor and rich soil, is of course an intellectual achievement. When an ingenious person tries to describe the soil pattern cartographically, by means of symbols, a further move toward the conceptual mode occurs. In the Western world, systems of geometry—that is, highly abstract spaces—have been created out of primal spatial experiences" (pp. 16–17). Leonard and McClure (2004) argue, "Myths which take us to a sacred place where rejuvenation or immortality is possible—whether that place is a garden, a forest, a mountain, a well, lake, stream, fountain, or river—have the effect of transporting us back to the primordial and womblike condition that preceded our quotidian struggles with money, relationships, and the eventual loss of our physical and mental powers" (p. 325). Compare Brown (1991, p. 116).

53. Snyder (1990) likens language to "some kind of infinitely interfertile family of species spreading or mysteriously declining over time, shamelessly and endlessly hybridizing, changing its own rules as it goes" (p. 7). It is "a mind–body system that coevolved

with our needs and nerves. Like imagination and the body, [it] rises unbidden . . . [with] a complexity that eludes our rational intellectual capacities" (p. 9). However, in developing his anthropology of experience, Jackson (1995) makes the cogent observation that experience, unlike language, "covers everything that is the case. This is why words alone can never do justice to experience" (p. 160). "Words are signs, "stand-ins, arbitrary and temporary, even as language reflects (and informs) the shifting values of the people whose minds it inhabits and glides through" (Snyder, 1990, p. 8). But "no word is able to contain the moods of a moment" (Jackson, 1995, p. 5). "Life eludes our grasp and remains at large, always fugitive," never captured completely (p. 5). It "outstrips our vocabulary" (p. 5). "Like a forest in which there are clearings. Like a forest through whose canopy sunlight filters and fall" (p. 5). "Theodor Adorno called this the untruth of identity, by which he meant that concepts plunder but never exhaust the wealth of experience. Life cannot be pressed [exclusively] into the service of language. Concepts represent experience at the cost of leaving a lot unsaid. So long as we use concepts to cut up experience, giving value to some things at the expense of others, . . . we gain some purchase on the world, to be sure, but claiming that our concepts contain all that can be usefully said about experience, we close off the possibility of critique. It is only when we cease trying to control the world that we can overcome our fixation on the autarchy of concepts" (p. 5). "An anthropology of experience," Jackson says in that connection, "shares with phenomenology a skepticism toward determinate systems of knowledge. It plays up the indeterminate, ambiguous, and manifold character of lived experience. It demands that we enlarge our field of vision to take into account things central *and* peripheral, focal *and* subsidiary, illuminated *and* penumbral" (p. 160). These are the kinds of things, sometimes esoteric, bundled up by deep cultural contexts that are not easily discovered without access to the granaries of knowledge through the people who have built them. And even then, unable to be the "thing in itself," we will always have to settle for partial truths. On the difficulty of describing the experience of the *duende*, see Lorca (1985).

54. Richardson (1999b) observes, "To say that we must be in a story is not to say that we have our destiny already engraved in our neurons or awash in our subconscious. On the contrary, our life story continuously unfolds, shifts, changes. . . . Both place and story have to do with where we are, with location, but the *where* of each is distinct. The poetics of place is preeminently

sensory. Smell, sound, touch, and especially sight are attributes of place, which is consequently visual and spatial. On the other hand, words strung together in speech and in writing constitute stories. Narrative, therefore, is verbal and temporal. In place, our dominant mode of relating to one another is through seeing; in written narrative, it is through reading. Interestingly, we use each mode as a metaphor of the other. When we want to emphasize that we're interpreting what we look at, we speak of 'reading the landscape.' Conversely, we exclaim, 'I see!' to convey the insight gained by reading a text" (p. 332). See also Brady (2003b, pp. xiv–xv).

55. Bass (2000) tells the story of how nature writers at a conference, "much to the initial confusion of some of the audience—kept talking about *specifics*: about buffalo, about native medicines, about narwhals, caribou, grizzlies and ravens; about the things they *knew*—and it was not until the second or third day that the audience began to grumble, 'What about the writing?' The panelists looked at one another in confusion. This *was* the writing. The world they inhabited—the so-called natural world of rock and sand and wood and ice—had become so imbued with power by their living deeply within it that the only language they were comfortable with was that of the specific. So deeply and passionately did they inhabit their landscapes—physically, emotionally, and spiritually—that trees became both trees and metaphors; wolves were both wolves *and* symbols; and the lives, the movements of these things, had a logic and pattern that did not transcend art but became art. They were living in their stories. They had stepped across that line, so that everything was story. They believed intensely in the world in which they lived" (pp. 71–72). This is an ancient process so far separated from contemporary writers by the invention and absorption of alphabetic literacy that the participants failed to recognize it until they were called out for their "absence of writing."

56. de Sahagún (1985, pp. 23–24).

57. Consider Tedlock (1983): "The argument that American Indian spoken narratives are better understood (and translated) as dramatic poetry than as an oral equivalent of written prose fiction may be summarized as follows: The content tends toward the fantastic rather than the prosaic, the emotions of the characters are evoked rather than described, there are no patterns of repetition or parallelism ranging from the level of words to that of whole episodes, the narrator's voice shifts constantly in amplitude and tone, and the flow of that voice is paced by pauses that segment its sounds into what I have chosen to call lines. Of all

these realities of oral narrative and performance, the plainest and grossest is the sheer alternation of sound and silence; the resultant lines often show an independence from intonation, from syntax, and even from boundaries of plot structure. I understand the fundamental sound-shape of spoken narrative in much the same way that Robert W. Corrigan understood drama when he wrote that ‘the playwright—and also the translator—cannot really be concerned with “good prose” or with “good verse” in the usual sense of those terms. The structure is action, not what is said or how it is said but *when*.’ It is above all the *when*, or what dramatists call ‘timing,’ that is missing in printed prose” (pp. 55–56).

58. Fritz (unknown date and source), translated by Thomas F. Powell.

59. My thinking on this builds on Foucault’s concept of *epistemes* as the totality of relations in knowledge of a given epoch (Dreyfuss & Rabinow, 1983; Foucault, 1970, 1972), which I have in this case applied to the separation of human activities before and after the invention of writing and the subsequent proliferations of it through mass production printing. Abram’s (1996) articulate treatment of the distortions posed by studying preliterate through the mentality of alphabetic literacy is applied directly to considerations of place and translation. Lowe (1982) has an extended delineation of the root of the problem: “Recent scholarship reveals that communications media, hierarchy of sensing, and epistemic order change in time. Hence the perceptual field constituted by them differs from period to period. There is a history of perception [that delimits] the changing content of the known” (p. 2), and it has changed dramatically in the communication pools that have separated human societies before and after the advent of writing and its proliferation through mass production printing.

60. Lowe (1982) says, “Without the support of print, speech in oral culture is assisted by the art of memory. Rhythmic words are organized into formulas and commonplaces, then set to metric patterns. In this way, they can be recalled and recited with great facility. That which can be recited and repeated will be preserved. The metric recitation of rhythmic formulas and commonplaces provides a communicational grid to determine knowledge in oral culture. Only those phenomena which fit existing formulas and commonplaces can be preserved as knowledge. The new and distinctly different will soon be forgotten. Knowledge in oral culture therefore tends to be preservative and unspecialized, its content nonanalytical but formulaic”

(p. 3). He adds, “The introduction of written language, whether ideographic or alphabetic, and its preservation in some type of manuscript constituted a chirographic culture. Although it took a long time to accomplish, writing eventually detached knowledge from speech and memory. A written language preserved knowledge after the act of speech and beyond the lapse of memory. One could go over a piece of writing at will, learn it, and criticize it; whereas formerly, in an oral culture, knowledge depended on the performance of the speaker” (p. 3). On the modernization of myth, see Barthes (1972).

61. See Jackson (1995, pp. 156–157). Elsewhere, Jackson (1982) says, “Whenever one retraces one’s steps in the imagination, an inevitable transformation occurs. One gives thought to things one did without thinking. One replaces words actually said with a vocabulary of one’s own choosing. Face-to-face reality is subverted by a second order—written reality. Life gets rendered as [written] language” (p. 3). In constructing this thesis, Jackson draws “extensively on many studies in the ethnography of speaking” in an effort to “avoid any inadvertent domination of the world of preliterate possibilities by the modes of abstract analysis developed in literate cultures” (p. 3). See also Tedlock (1983): “I am reminded of the Zuni who asked me, ‘When I tell these stories do you picture it, or do you just write it down?’” (p. 55). On Geertz and cultures as “texts” to be read, see also Tedlock (1999, p. 161).

62. Anthropologists are generally happy to declare that shamanism (the world’s oldest profession) is the root of all performative art—a point made effectively by the ethnopoet Rothenberg (1981; see also Rothenberg & Rothenberg, 1983) and the anthropologist Harner (1990), among others. That links us to the Paleolithic era (ca. 100,000 years ago) and opens up ethnographic inquiry to what we are considering in the current work—an enlarged sense of communal ties through the history of talk, performance, myth, poetry, and being-in-place.

63. For various expressions of the same topic, compare Abram (1996), Abu-Lughod (1988), Basso (1996a, 1996b), Brody (1982), Clifton (1990), Damon (2003), Dundes (1972), Feld (1982), Feld & Basso (1996), Howes (1990), Hymes (1987), Jackson (1982), Kroeber (1983), Lavie (1991), Layton (1997), Metcalf (2002), Munn (2003), Nabhan (1982), Ricoeur (1991), Rothenberg (1972, 1985), Rothenberg & Rothenberg (1983), Swann & Krupat (1987), B. Tedlock (1992), D. Tedlock (1972, 1983, 1993, 1999), Zolbrod (1983, 1987).

64. Austin (1997, p. 61).

65. The concept of the sublime as “tending to inspire awe usually because of elevated quality (as of beauty, nobility, or grandeur) or transcendent excellence” figures into our sentient existence and survival prospects in several ways. Brown (1991) says, “One of the fundamental assumptions of evolutionary psychology is that matters closely related to our survival and reproduction have a likelihood of engaging our emotions. Thus, although there might be little evidence of a general adaptation for an aesthetic sense, a . . . disparate collection of emotion-producing activities and entities may structure what we consider aesthetic” (p. 115), including the experiences of being-in-place. Writing about Burke, Bromwich (1997) says, “Burke’s conclusion is that the feelings of the sublime and the beautiful in life, . . . which may also be excited by moments of works in art, are an inseparable condition of existence” (p. 30). They push the edges and the limits of human nature. The theorist’s job “is to show how the affective powers of the sublime and beautiful can be causes of mental activity without ideas or images. At the very end, he will offer a possible reason why words above all can affect us like this. The mind has a hunger for belief, and it has a natural tendency toward abstraction. The appeal of the sublime and the beautiful must somehow relate to that hunger and that tendency of the mind. And words, which bear no resemblance to things, which at the height of their influence on the passions leave no image at all, are therefore the leading artificial and natural source of our sympathy with the sublime and beautiful” (p. 32). Compare Denzin (1997) and Diamond (1987). Denzin (1997) points out, “Modernist ethnographers (and poets) stood outside their texts so as to produce a sense of awe or reverence or respect for what is being written about. The writer was missing from the text. The postmodern writer also seeks the sublime, but it is a new sublime—a nostalgic sublime that transgresses Diamond’s poetry of pain. The new scribe seeks a sense of respect and awe for the lost writer who experiences what is being written about. What was previously unrepresentable (the writer’s experiences) is now what is presented. Paradoxically, that which is most sought after remains the most illusive” (p. 215).

66. Yi-Fu (1979) notes, “Place can acquire deep meaning for the adult through the steady accumulation of sentiment over the years. Every piece of heirloom furniture, or even a stain on the wall, tells a story” (p. 33). According to Schama (1995), “To see the ghostly outline of an old landscape beneath the superficial covering of the contemporary is to be made vividly

aware of the endurance of core myths. . . . And it is just because ancient places are constantly being given the topdressings of modernity (the forest primeval, for example, turning into the ‘wilderness park’) that the ambiguity of the myths at their core is sometimes hard to make out. It is there, all the same” (p. 16).

67. Historical trekking can be at once a new and a renewed experience. The “new” information (as word, image, symbol, sensation, etc.) builds on the “old” in that process and has the prospect of resorting it all in still newer terms, including the extensive “mazes of resyntheses” of individuals and groups in revitalization movements (Wallace, 1970). Smith (1997) argues, “The relationship between place and language is perhaps best understood through the experience of breakdown—personal and collective—when one experiences the sense that one’s received language, with all of its grammatical enframements and vocabulary tools, is inadequate to express what one is currently realizing to be true about the world” (p. 3).

68. On poets making place an element of their own private mythology as opposed to surrendering obediently to the existing mythology of place, see Heaney (1980b, p. 148). That is a sensuous and intellectual mingling—a tension—of past and present in a nutshell, and therein lies a path to a personal poetics, to a poetry of history and place that speaks to consciousness, commitment, action, and myth—to a possible “marriage between the geographical country and the country of the mind, whether that country of the mind takes its tone unconsciously from a shared oral inherited culture, or from a consciously savored literary culture, or from both . . . that constitutes the sense of place in its richest possible manifestation” (p. 132). See also Graves (1948:14–15) and, of course, Thoreau’s (1854/1995) classic, *Walden*.

69. Poetic experiences also show that immersion in place has its shiftings as well, its contradictions and alienations, and that the alienations of an ethnographer are not restricted to encounters with other cultures (Damon, 2003). Estrangement can happen through the intellectual and aesthetic encounters that one has at home, that is, by freezing moments and interpreting their particulars as both ethnographers and poets must do. On close inspection, everything is strange, and that can be a powerful source of alienation, even from hearth and family (Heaney, 1980b, pp. 137–138). On the other hand, Heaney knows that staying with the comfort and imagination of a summer’s day in a strange and rural landscape can bring forth an aesthetic sense of communion with “prehistoric

timelessness.” These experiences must give way to the imagination, for that is the carpet on which the Muses fly and is the beacon that signals fair landing. The work is subjective, but that should not be a disqualification for anything except mathematics crammed into teaching formulas. Participation and self-conscious interpretation are how we learn about ourselves in place. Nature can be more in our appreciations than can “inanimate stone.” It can be “active nature, humanized, and humanizing” (pp. 144–145).

70. Lame Deer and Erdoes (1972, p. 110).

71. For related work in an anthropological vein, see especially the verse and/or prose of Abu-Lughod (1988), Basso (1996a, 1996b), Brady (2003b, 2004), Cahnmann (2000, 2001), Diamond (1982, 1986, 1987), Farella (1993), Feld (1982), Feld and Basso (1996), Flores (1982, 1999), Hartnett (2003), Heaney (1980a, 1987), Hymes (1995, 2001), Jackson (1995), Kusserow (1998, 1999), Lavie (1991), Lewis (2002), Lopez (1991), Maynard (2003), Nowak (2000), Prattis (1985), Richardson (1982, 1998a, 1998b, 1999a, 1999b, 2001), Rosaldo (2003), Rose (1991), Sherry (1997), Simonelli (2001), Snyder (1969, 1974), Stewart (1996), Suiter (2002), Tarn (1991, 2002), B. Tedlock (1992), and D. Tedlock (1990, 1993).

72. Compare Vendler (1985): “In trying to speak for ‘all men and women,’ the poet risks losing selfhood altogether” (p. 60).

73. Thompson (1989) says, “What frames and defines a world is the act of participating in a context. To take part in something is to take part from an immensity of possibilities” (pp. 129–130). See also Taussig (1993).

74. None of this is to say that poetic texts (including myths) are empty of important or precise information—another blind prejudice of positivistic science (Brady, 1991a, 1991b, 1998, 2000, 2003a, 2003b; Brady & Kumar, 2000)—or to say that creativity in thought and communication enfranchises a free-for-all of interpretation, ungoverned by existing constraints on sensibility, reality, clarity, and possibility (Brady, 2003b, p. xxiv). On the inversions of poetry and myth, compare Barthes (1972, p. 134).

75. Everybody knows that scientific writing differs from poetry in fundamental ways, for example, that scientific writing is more clinical and less given to uncommon metaphors than is poetry. But an important theoretical implication that often goes unappreciated in these discussions is that each form technically plays a different language game; the positivists use language that is supposed to be transparent or invisible, whereas the humanists (and most pointedly the

poets) do exactly the opposite by openly displaying their presence as observers and authors in their works. More than just a difference of “style,” each mode of representation thereby has different criteria for deciding on acceptable or satisfactory forms of expression, and the implications of that are enormous. Changing the language of our descriptions, as Wittgenstein (1974) says, also changes the analytic game itself, including changing the premises for research entry points (Brady, 2004).

76. See also Stoller (1987, 2004) and Joy and Sherry (2003). Yi-Fu (1979) says, “The Eskimos’ sense of space and place is very different from that of Americans” (p. 5). Compare Carpenter (1980) and Dundes (1972).

77. Not all poetry travels with equal effectiveness across personal and cultural boundaries—but then, what does? On the roles of preferences and form, on critics who enter a world not of their own making, and on the importance of slipping any poem into mind with good effect, see Brady (2000, p. 958). On Western ethnocentrism, see Zolbrod (1983).

78. On Australian writer David Malouf and being at a loss for words, see Smith (1997, p. 3). J. Turner (1996), after an encounter with a mountain lion, says, “An aura of prehistory marked the night. Undoubtedly people still have experiences with animals like those of ancient epochs, however unintelligible to our modern lives—unintelligible because we no longer know how to describe them. The vocabularies of shamanism, totems, synchronicities, and She are *tongues again made bold by such experiences*—experiences many believe are irretrievably lost. I believe in the experiences, but I do not understand the vocabularies. I perceive this as my own failing. My life is devoid of practices that might link such events and words. And yet the very existence of such experience is moving—beyond words” (p. 47). Moreover, in a discussion of Hemingway, he asks the question: Where is the point “at which myth and nonlinguistic practices would be required to communicate?” (p. 97). On the whiteness of the page and experiential space beyond writing, see Juarroz (1988, cited in Brady, 1991a, p. 341). On the subjected body exceeding itself and becoming “a space of excess in which the physicality of cultural politics (vocality, tactility, touch, resonance) exceeds the rationalized clarity of ‘system’ and transcendent understanding,” see Stewart (1996, p. 130). Rickman (2002–2003) argues, “Nature is not just a linguistic edifice and language is meaningless if it does not refer beyond itself” (p. 31). See also Maslow (1964) and Sherry and Schouten (2002).

79. Poetry loses, however, if it does not conform to some level to the experience of its audience. We must be able to exchange experiences. On separations of private and public voices, see Benjamin (1969b, p. 156) and Wolf (1982, p. 108). On lyric poetry, see Damon (2003) and Tedlock (1999, p. 56). On poetry and the need for historical contexts, see Hartnett and Engels (chap. 41, this volume). On poetry and the senses, see Stewart (2002). On ways of articulating history and place through poetry and painting, see Brady (2003b).

80. Addressing similar issues, Jackson (1995) says, "I wanted to develop a style of writing which would be consonant with lived experience in all its variety and ambiguity" (p. 4), including consciousness itself as a form of projected and prospective awareness. Consciousness "expresses interrelationships *between* self and other, subject and object, which do not have to be contrived because they are the very precondition of our human situation" (p. 169). Moving in that intellectual zone with an appealing and innovative mixed verse and prose account of his fieldwork in Africa, the poet/ethnographer Wilmsen (1999), knowing little of the local languages as his African journey began, queries himself: "While walking in the debilitating heat, I asked myself how I was going to make my experience intelligible to others" (p. xii). His answer? "It seemed to me that a way to do this lay in exposing the simultaneity of experience in individual life: recurrences in which earlier occurrences resonate—recognized as memories, expectations, reveries, informing each momentary awareness, shaping each" (pp. xi–xii). Wilmsen continues, "I have tried only to translate the texture of experience without claiming it to be mine alone. . . . I wanted to demonstrate that simultaneity of experience is not an exclusive prerogative of today's world but is a condition of being human. . . . I wanted to find a way to express the historicities of persons in contact—to express the fact that there are no alien cultures, only alienating ways of categorizing diversity" (p. xiv).

81. But consider the notion of "messy texts," that is, "texts that are aware of their own narrative apparatuses, that are sensitive to how reality is social[ly] constructed, and that [understand] that writing is a way of 'framing' reality. Messy texts are many sited, intertextual, always open-ended, and resistant to theoretical holism, but always committed to cultural criticism" (Denzin, 1997, p. 224). According to Denzin (1997), "Ethnopoetics and narratives of the self are messy texts: They always return to the writerly self—a self that spills over into the world being inscribed. This is a writerly self with a particular hubris that is neither

insolent nor arrogant. The poetic self is simply willing to put itself on the line to take risks. These risks are predicated on a simple proposition: This writer's personal experiences are worth sharing with others. Messy texts make the writer part of the writing project. These texts, however, are not just subjective accounts of experience; they attempt to reflexively map the multiple discourses that occur in a given social space [see especially Wilmsen, 1999]. Hence, they are always multivoiced. No interpretation is privileged. These texts reject the principles of the realist ethnographic narrative that makes claims to both textual autonomy and epistemological validity" (p. 225). See also Brady (1998, 2000, 2003b, in press) and Marcus (1994).

82. "Theodor Adorno speaks of 'exact fantasy' to describe a genre of writing that is rigorously empirical but, without 'going beyond the circumference' of the empirical, rearranges constellations of experienced facts in ways that render them accessible and readable. It is a method of writing that repudiates the form of lineal and progressive argumentation. It is paratactic. No one element is subordinated to another. Perhaps the term 'exact fiction' best describes such an approach to ethnographic writing" (Jackson, 1995, pp. 163–164). Compare Brady (2003b), Favero (2003), and Metcalf (2002).

83. There are other effects as well. Tedlock (1983) argues, "'Event' orientation, together with an intensified appreciation of fantasy, has already led modern poets to recognize a kinship between their own work and the oral art of tribal peoples. As Jerome Rothenberg points out in *Technicians of the Sacred*, both 'modern' and tribal poets are concerned with oral performance, both escape the confines of Aristotelian rationalism, both transcend the conventional genre boundaries of written literature, and both sometimes make use of stripped-down forms that require maximal interpolation by audiences" (p. 55). These kinds of interests and the focus on poetry and interpretive methods in general in ethnopoetics join up with other forms of experimental texts in making "public what sociologists and anthropologists have long kept hidden: the private feelings, doubts, and dilemmas that confront the field-worker in the field setting" (Denzin, 1997, p. 214). They "humanize the ethnographic disciplines . . . under a postmodern aesthetic assumption concerning the sublime to make what was previously unrepresentable part of the presentation itself" (p. 215). They simultaneously break from and continue "the ethnographic tradition of representing experiences of others," rejecting "the search for absolute truth that is suspicious of totalizing theory," breaking down as part

of the process “the moral and intellectual distance between reader and writer” (p. 215), and perhaps helping to close the gap with fresh approaches to what we, as modern peoples, have lost (or buried or in other ways deprioritized) since the advent of writing and the removal from daily contact with the soil and animals of our ancient selves.

84. Compare Lopez (1990b): “If, in a philosophy of place, we examine our love of the land—I do not mean a romantic love, but the love Edward Wilson calls biophilia, love of what is alive, and the physical context in which it lives, which we call ‘the hollow’ or ‘the cane-brake’ or the ‘woody draw’ or ‘the canyon’—if, in measuring our love, we feel anger, I think we have a further obligation. It is to develop a hard and focused anger at what continues to be done to the land not so that people can survive, but so that a relatively few people can amass wealth” (p. 42).

85. Neruda (1997, p. 213).

86. Abbey (1968, p. 131).

87. Fawning over noble savages or pristine environments and societies only clouds the issue. We need to catch ourselves in the act of oversimplifications and ethnocentric wishes. We need to be cognizant of the fact that, as Hartnett and Engels point out elsewhere in this volume (chap. 41), the life circumstances of the ancients were “like our own world—wracked with political, economic, and cultural dilemmas.”

88. Gruenewald (2003) says, “An expanded framework for analyzing the power of place might include more discussion of Native American and other indigenous traditions, natural history, psychology, anthropology, architecture, sociology, cybernetics, ecological science, and religious studies, as well as all genres of imaginative literature. Once one begins interrogating the power of place as a construct for analysis, one sees that it might be, and increasingly is, applied constructively to any realm of human experience or inquiry. . . . The question is worth asking: Without focused attention to places, what will become of them—and of us?” (p. 646). On poetry in educational research, see also Cahnmann (2003).

89. By writing from their own body-grounded experiences and addressing directly those of others similarly embodied, both personally and conscientiously, poets can dice up what ails us into vivid and believable accounts. That is an empowering and political act, and poets are not strangers to it. On poetry and politics, see Heaney (1995, pp. 1, 7–8), von Hallberg (1987), and Rich (2003). On educational reform and taking “teachers and students beyond the experience

and study of places to engage them in the political process that determines what these places are and what they will become,” see Gruenewald (2003, pp. 620, 640). See also the pioneering and thoughtful work on “investigative poetry” by Hartnett and Engels (chap. 41, this volume) and the powerful testament to poetic rendering as a course of social action in Hartnett (2003).

90. See Lopez (1990b, 1998) and Snyder (1985). In *Arctic Dreams*, Lopez (1986) says that the “ethereal and timeless power of the land, that union of what is beautiful with what is terrifying, is insistent. It penetrates all cultures, archaic and modern” (p. 368). And just as we are necessarily situated in the land, “The land gets inside us, and we must decide one way or another what this means, what we will do about it”—accept it as it is, attempt “to achieve congruence with a reality that is already given a . . . reality of ‘horror within magnificence, absurdity within intelligibility, suffering within joy,’” as one could argue fits the worldviews of the Inuit, or should we take our profound modern ability to alter the land, that is, “change it into something else” (p. 368)? In one respect, there is no choice at all. “The long pattern of purely biological evolution . . . strongly suggests that a profound collision of human will with immutable aspects of the natural order is inevitable” (p. 368). On place, technology, and representation, see also Sherry (2000).

91. Denzin (1997) knows that “good ethnography always uses language poetically, and good poetry always brings a situation alive in the mind of the reader” (p. 26).

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CULTURAL POESIS

The Generativity of Emergent Things

Kathleen Stewart

What follows is a piece of imaginative writing grounded in an intense attention to the *poesis*, or creativity, of ordinary things. This is an ethnographic attention, but it is one that is loosened from any certain prefabricated knowledge of its object. Instead, it tracks a moving object in an effort (a) to somehow record the state of emergence that animates things cultural and (b) to track some of the effects of this state of things—the proliferation of everyday practices that arise in the effort to know what is happening or to be part of it, for instance, or the haunting or exciting presence of traces, remainders, and excesses uncaptured by claimed meanings.

The writing here is committed to speculations, experiments, recognitions, engagements, and curiosity, not to demystification and uncovered truths that snap into place to support a well-known picture of the world. I ask the reader to read actively—to follow along, read into, imagine, digress, establish independent trajectories and connections, disagree. My own voice is particular and partial, tending in this case to be a surreal, dream-like description of ordinary spaces and events. The subject I “am” in the stories I tell is a point of impact meandering through scenes in

search of linkages, surges, and signs of intensity. I suppose that the writing gropes toward embodied affective experience. Finally, the writing is also a set of provocations in that it tries to cull attention to moments of legibility and emergence, to moments of impact (instead of to stable subjects), to models of agency that are far from simple or straightforward, to the vitality or animus of *cultural poesis* in the jump or surge of affect (rather than on the plane of finished representations), and to the still life—the moment when things resonate with potential and threat.

In calling this particular arena of things cultural poesis—the creativity or generativity in things cultural—I am thinking of the ways in which this field of emergent things has been written into cultural theory in various ways by Walter Benjamin, Michel Foucault, Mikhail Bakhtin, Roland Barthes, Gilles Deleuze, Raymond Williams, Donna Haraway, Marilyn Strathern, Eve Sedgwick, Michael Taussig, and others. There are Foucault’s (1990) theses on the productivity and micropoetics of power, Williams’s (1977) attention to emergent structures of feeling, Benjamin’s (1999, 2003) theories of allegory (vs. symbol) and his own nomadic tracking of dream worlds still

resonant in material things, Bakhtin's (1982, 1984) fundamental theorization and elaboration of the social poetics lodged in language, texts, and social worlds, and Barthes's (1975, 1977, 1981, 1985) intense and sustained insistence on the workings of spaces and pleasures in between, or outside, or somehow in excess of the recognized objects we call texts, experience, meaning, concept, and analysis. Deleuze and Guattari (1987) polemicized the conflict between meaning-based models of culture and models that track actual events, conjunctures, and articulations of forces to see what they do. In the wake of their critique, they outlined a theory of the affective as a state of potential, intensity, and vitality (see also Guattari, 1995). Contemporary feminist theorists, notably Haraway (1997, 2003), Strathern (1991, 1992a, 1992b, 1999), and Sedgwick (1992, 1993, 1997, 2003), have carefully—and with enormous creative energy of their own—worked to theorize the generativity in things cultural and to make room for ways of thinking and writing it, as has Taussig (1986, 1992, 1993, 1997, 1999).

Here, I try to incite curiosity about the vitality and volatility of cultural poesis in contemporary U.S. public culture through a story of ethnographic encounters (see also Stewart, 1996, 2000a, 2000b, 2002a, 2002b, 2003a, 2003b).

■ ORDINARY INTENSITIES: AFFECT, VITALITY, GENERATIVITY

This is a story about public circulations in moments of vital impact. It takes place in the United States during an ongoing present that began some time ago. This is a time and place in which an emergent assemblage made up of a wild mix of things—technologies, sensibilities, flows of power and money, daydreams, institutions, ways of experiencing time and space, battles, dramas, bodily states, and innumerable practices of everyday life—has become actively generative, producing wide-ranging impacts, effects, and forms of knowledge with a life of their own. This is what I mean by cultural poesis.

Here, I offer some random examples of the generativity of all things in a state of cultural emergence. The objects of my story are emergent vitalities and the ordinary practices that instantiate or articulate them, if only partially and fleetingly. Caught, or glimpsed, in their very surge to be realized, these are things that are necessarily fugitive, shifting, opportunistic, polymorphous, indiscriminate, aggressive, dreamy, unsteady, practical, unfinished, and radically particular.

The writing here is one that tries to mimic felt impacts and half-known effects as if the writing were itself a form of life. It follows leads, sidesteps, and delays, and it piles things up, creating layers on layers, in an effort to drag things into view, to follow trajectories in motion, and to scope out the shape and shadows and traces of assemblages that solidify and grow entrenched, perhaps doing real damage or holding real hope, and then dissipate, morph, rot, or give way to something new. It talks to the reader not as a trusted guide carefully laying out the perfect links between theoretical categories and the real world but rather as a subject caught in the powerful tension between what can be known and told and what remains obscure or unspeakable but is nonetheless real. Its thoughts are speculative, and its questions are the most basic. What is going on? What floating influences now travel through public routes of circulation and come to roost in the seemingly private domains of hearts, homes, and dreams? What forces are becoming sensate as forms, styles, desires, and practices? What does it mean to say that particular events and strands of affect generate impacts? How are impacts registered in lines of intensity? How are people quite literally charged up by the sheer surge of things in the making? What does cultural poesis look like?

■ DREAMLAND

The roller-coaster ride of the American dream had come into a sharp-edged focus. Good and bad. Winning and losing. Those were your choices. Anxious and haunted sensibilities tracked unwanted influences and veiled threats in idioms

of addiction, trauma, and conspiracy while dreams of transcendence and recluses set afloat reckless hopes of winning or escape. Life was animated in equal parts by possibility and impossibility. We lurched between poles of hope and despair as overwrought dreams flopped to the earth, only to rise up again, inexplicably revitalized, like the monster in a horror movie or the fool who keeps going back for more. Lines of escape were fascinating too—the rocketing fortunes of the rich and famous, the dream of a perfect getaway cottage, the modest success stories of people getting their lives together again. New lifestyles proliferated at the same dizzying pace as did the epidemic of addictions and the self-help shelves at the bookstore.

The political dynamism of this tense mix of dreams and nightmares registered in an everyday life infused with the effort to track and assimilate the possibilities and threats lodged in things. Newly charged forms of the desire to know, to see, and to make a record of what was behind or underneath surfaces and systems formed a network of ordinary practices. Proliferating practices of turning desires and ideals into matter both encoded the everyday effort to master, test, and encounter emergent forces and demarcated a state of being tuned in to the mainstream. The new objects of mass desire promised both inclusion in the very winds of circulation and the nested still life of a home or identity resting securely in the eye of the storm.

As previously public spaces and forms of expression were privatized, previously privatized arenas of dreams, anxieties, agencies, and morals were writ large on public stages as scenes of impact. Yet the world had become weirdly mysterious just when it started to seem like a private life writ large or some kind of collective psyche institutionalized and exported in a global mutation. It was like a net had grown around a gelatinous mutating substance, creating a strange and loose integration of planes of existence and sensibilities. Things had become both highly abstract and intensely concrete, and people had begun to try to track emergent forces and flows on these variegated registers without really knowing what they were

doing. Somehow it was all personal, but it was also something huge flowing through things.

The feminist slogan, “the personal is political,” took on a new charge of intensity and swirled in spinning and floating contexts far beyond any simple ideological clarity or political program.

■ ORDINARY LIFE

We were busy. Homes were filled with the grounding details of getting the rent money together, getting or keeping jobs, getting sick, getting well, looking for love, trying to get out of things we had gotten ourselves into, eating in, working out, raising kids, walking dogs, remodeling homes, and shopping. There were distractions, denials, shape-shifting forms of violence, practical solutions, and real despair. For some, one wrong move was all it took. Worries swirled around the bodies in the dark. People bottomed out watching daytime television. Credit cards were maxed out. There was downsizing and unemployment. There was competition to get kids into decent schools and for them to keep their grades up. Schedules had to be constantly juggled to keep up with dance classes or layoffs. Dizzying layers of tasks filled in the space of a day.

People took walks in their neighborhoods, peering into windows by night and murmuring over beautiful flowerbeds by day. Or, we scrambled to find ways to get to work and back on unreliable buses that quit running at night. We baked birthday cakes or ordered them from the supermarket decorated with Tigger or a golf course. We “flipped off” other drivers, read the luscious novels and sobering memoirs, disappeared into the Internet, and shopped at Wal-Mart and the other megastores because they were cheap, convenient, or new and had slogans such as “Getting It Together” and “Go Home a Hero.”

Positions were taken, habits were loved and hated, dreams were launched and wounded. There was pleasure in a clever or funny image. Or in being able to see right through things. Some people claimed that they could rise above the flow and walk on water. Others wore their irony like an

accessory that gave them room to maneuver. There were all the dreams of purity, martyrdom, a return to nature, getting real, having an edge, and beating the system.

Just about everyone was part of the secret conspiracy of ordinary life to get what he or she could out of it. There were the dirty pleasures of holing up to watch one's secret bad TV show, taking a trip to the mall, working out in spinning classes at the gym, spending nights on the Internet, or playing music loud in the car on the way to the supermarket.

■ GAMES

There were games you could play. One was the driving game of trying to predict when the car up ahead was going to try to change lanes. Some people developed a sixth sense about it. They discovered that if they concentrated on the car they could sense when it was considering a move, even when the driver was not signaling a lane change and when the car itself was not surreptitiously leaning to the edge of the lane or acting "nervous." The game of the sixth sense became a pleasure and a compulsion in itself. It spread fast, even without the usual help of expert commentary.

You could try out this game in supermarket checkout lines too. There the game was to try to size up the flow of a checkout line in a glance. How fast is that cashier? Does that woman have coupons? That one looks like a check writer. That one looks like a talker. But the checkout line game was harder than the driving game. Even a brilliant choice could be instantly defeated by a dreaded price check or the cash register running out of tape. And once you made your choice, you were stuck with it. Already impatient, you might then start to feel a little desperate. You could switch to multitasking—make a phone call, make lists in your head, or get to work on your palm pilot. Or, you could scan the surrounding bodies and tabloid headlines for a quick thrill or an ironic inner smirk at signs of other people's eccentricity or gullibility. Or, you could just check *yourself* out by opening and paging through *Home and Garden* or *Glamour* or *Esquire*. You could relax into the

aura of tactile bodies, living rooms, and gardens that staged the jump from fantasy to flesh and back again right before your eyes. The glossy images offered not so much a blueprint of how to look and live as the much more profound experience of watching images touch matter.

■ ODD MOMENTS

At odd moments in the course of the day, you might raise your head in surprise or alarm at the uncanny sensation of a half-known influence. Private lives and the public world had gotten their wires crossed. Any hint of private movement would be sniffed out and thrown up on public stages, and people now took their cues so directly from circulating sensibilities that the term "hard-wired" became shorthand for the state of things.

Public specters had grown intimate. The imaginary had grown concrete on public stages. All of those bodies lined up on the talk shows, outing their loved ones for this or that monstrous act. Or the reality TV shows, with the camera busting in on intimate dramas of whole families addicted to sniffing paint right out of the can. We would zoom in to linger, almost lovingly, on the gallon-sized lids scattered around on the living room carpet and then pan out to focus on the faces of the parents, and even the little kids, with big rings of white paint encircling their cheeks and chins like some kind of self-inflicted stigmata.

The labor of looking had been retooled and upgraded so that we could cut back and forth between the images popping up in the living room and some kind of real world out there.

America's Most Wanted aired photos of bank robbers with and without beards so that you could scan the faces at the local convenience store looking for a match.

The streets were littered with cryptic, half-written signs of personal/public disasters. The daily sightings of homeless men and women holding up signs while puppies played at their feet could haunt the solidity of things with the shock of something unspeakable. *Hungry. Will work for food. God bless you.*

The sign hits the senses with a mesmerizing and repellent force. Too sad. The graphic lettering that pleads for the attention of the passing cars glances off the eye as something to avoid like the plague. Moving on. But it also holds the fascination of catastrophe, the sense that something is happening, the surge of affect toward a profound scene.

The handmade, handheld sign of the homeless on the side of the road pleads to be recognized, if only in passing. In its desperation, the sign makes a gesture toward an ideological center that claims the value of willpower (“will work for food”) and voices the dream of redemption (“God bless you”). But it is abject; it offers no affect to mime, no scene of a common desire, no line of vitality to follow, no intimate secret to plumb, no tips to imbibe for safety or good health. Instead, it sticks out of the side of vision. The shock of something unreal because it is too real, too far outside the recognized world, unspeakable. There is no social recipe for what you can do about homelessness or even what you can do with your eyes when confronted with homelessness face to face. We live in a profound social fear of encounters like this.

Even to glance out of the corner of the eye at the sign on the side of the road is a dizzying side-step. What the glance finds in the scene it glances at, half panicked, is the excluded other’s abject surge to be included in the wind of circulation—the mainstream. Its message is too stark; it begs. It mimes the discourse of the mainstream to the letter, pushing it to the point of imitation or parody or fraud. It makes the mainstream seem unreal and heartless—dead.

A dollar bill stuck out of a car window gets a quick surge forward from the one with the sign and the heightened, yet unassimilated, affect of a raw contact. “God bless you.”

Now we are trudging the rough terrain of bodies and the sensuous accumulation of impacts.

■ WHATEVER

Jokes had started to circulate about how we might as well wire ourselves directly to sensation buttons and just skip the step of content altogether.

One day an e-mail came her way from Penny, a friend in the neighborhood who liked to keep up a running commentary on quirky characters and scenes spied from her studio windows or fabricated on drowsy afternoon walks. Penny would stop by to report tidbits and then move on. A light touch. When she used the e-mail, it was to forward funny tales filled with delicious descriptive details sent to her from like-minded others building a corpus of matters to chew on. This one told the tale of something that happened shortly after the attacks of September 11, 2001, in a medical clinic where a friend of a friend of Penny’s apparently worked:

Of course, it’s not the big money area and the building is very rinky-dink. Not a big target for anthrax, let’s just put it that way. She works with mothers who have drug abuse problems and the office downstairs treats juvies [juveniles]. Apparently one of the women who works downstairs turned on the a/c [air conditioner] (window unit) and a white dust sprayed out all over her. Yikes. They called the CDC [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention] and men in white suits and gas masks invaded. My friend who works upstairs was dubious—and so the people in her office just stayed and worked while the downstairs was cordoned off and investigated. They rushed the substance off to the lab and put everyone who was in the office on Cipro. Then the test results came back. Low and behold, the substance tested positive for cocaine! So good, isn’t it? They think one of the juvies hid his stash in the a/c when he was afraid of being searched. I think it’s a brilliant idea to start pumping cocaine into the workplace. No need for caffeine anymore. Let’s just move right on up to the next level of productivity inspiration. Whadya say?

■ A LITTLE ACCIDENT, LIKE ANY OTHER

She was in a café in a small town in west Texas. A place where ranchers hang out talking seed prices, fertilizer, and machines and where strangers passing through town are welcome entertainment. The sun had gone down, and she was half-way through her fresh-killed steak and baked potato when the biker couple came in limping.

All eyes rotated to watch them move to a table and sit down. The couple talked intently, as if something was up, and from time to time they exchanged startled looks. When she walked past the couple's table on her way out, they raised their heads and asked whether she was heading out on the west road and whether she could look for bike parts. They had hit a deer coming into town and dumped their bike. The deer, they said, had fared much worse.

The room came to a dead stop as all ears tuned in to the sentience of the crash, still resonating in the bikers' bodies. Slowly, taking their sweet time, people began to offer questions from their tables, drawing out the details. Then other stories began to surface of other deer collisions and strange events at that place on the west road.

As she left, she pictured how, during the days to come, people would keep their eyes open for deer parts and bike parts when they traveled the west road out of town. She imagined that there would be more talk. Conversations would gather around the event and spin off into other questions such as the overpopulation of deer, hunting regulations, and the new law that legalized riding without a helmet. There might be discussions of how to fix bikes (and especially this particular make of bike), what parts might break or twist when the bike is dumped, and who was a good bike mechanic. Or, people might talk about the condition of the roads. The image of hitting the wide open road or surviving the desert injured might come up. The talk might call up anything from the image of sheer speed encountering a deer caught in one's headlights to the abstracted principles of freedom, fate, and recklessness.

But one way or another, the little accident would compel a response. It would shift people's life trajectories in some small way, change them by literally changing their course for a minute or a day. The chance event might add a layer of story, daydream, and memory to things. It might unearth old resentments or suddenly bring a new conflict to a head. It might even compel a search for lessons learned. Resonating levels of body and mind might begin to rearrange themselves into simpler choices—good luck and bad luck, animal

lives lost and threats to machine-propelled humans, risk-taking wild rides and good old common sense.

But for now at least, and in some small way in the future too, the talk would secretly draw its force from the resonance of the event itself. Its simple and irreducible singularity. And the habit of watching for something to happen would grow.

SCANNING

Everyday life was now infused with the effort to track and assimilate the possibilities and threats lodged in things. Newly charged forms of the desire to know, to see, and to record what was behind surfaces and inside systems formed a network of ordinary practices.

She was no different from anyone else. All of her life, she had been yelling "pay attention!" but now she was not sure whether that was such a good idea. Hypervigilance had taken root as people watched and waited for the next thing to happen. Like the guy she heard about on the radio who spends his whole life recording everything he does: "Got up at 6:30 am, still dark, splashed cold water on my face, brushed my teeth, 6:40 went to the bathroom, 6:45 made tea, birds started in at 6:53. . . ."

Or, there was the neighbor on a little lake in Michigan whose hobby was recording his every move on video—his walks in the neighborhood and in the woods, his rides in his Ford Model T, his forays into Polish folk dances where old women went round and round the dance floor together, the monthly spaghetti suppers at the Catholic church in town. He gave one of his videos to her and her friends to watch. They played it one night—three anthropologists peering at whatever came their way from the weird world out there. It was a video of him walking around the lake in the winter snow and ice. They heard his every breath and footstep. There were some deer droppings on the path and some snow piles with suspicious shapes. Then he was walking up to Bob and Alice's cabin (the couple were in Florida for the winter), and he was zooming in on a huge lump of something that was pushing out the black plastic

wrapped around the base of the house. Uh oh. Could be ice from a broken water main. Maybe the whole house was full of ice. The neighbor guy wondered out loud, if in fact it was ice, what would happen when the ice thawed. Could be a real problem. He said that maybe he would send a copy of his video on to Bob and Alice down in Florida. Then he moved on. Back to his breathing and the icicles on trees and his footsteps in the snow. Tracking the banal, scanning for trauma.

The three anthropologists looked at each other. What was that? She was mesmerized by it, like it held a key to how the ordinary could crack open to reveal something big and hidden that it had swallowed long ago. The other two were not so easily swayed. It was some kind of weirdness that pushed banality to the point of idiocy and made no sense at all. A puzzle as to why anyone would want to record the droning sameness of things, looking for something worth noting to come his way. Some strange threat or promise that popped up just for a minute and then sank below the surface again as if nothing had ever happened. A shimmering—there one minute and gone the next. Or maybe some lyrical scene you would want to remember. Something with *meaning*.

All of this watching things was mostly a good-natured thing. Like happy campers, people would put up with a lot of nothing in hopes of a glimpse of something. The ordinary was the mother lode that they mined, hoping for a sighting of a half-known something coming up for air.

It could be that ordinary things were beginning to seem a little “off,” and that was what drew people’s attention to them. Or, maybe the ordinary things had always seemed a little off if you stopped to think about them.

There were the obsessive compulsives who kept track of things because they had to (“Got up at 6:30 a.m., still dark, splashed cold water on my face. . . .”). These people became sightings in themselves.

Or, there were those who gave shape to their everyday by inventing practices of mining it for something different or special. People like her friends, Joyce and Bob, who lived in the woods in New Hampshire. He was a lumberjack. She

cleaned those little 1950s tourist cabins that were called things such as “Swiss Village” and “Shangrila.” She had left her husband and four kids after years of living straight in a regime of beatings under the sign of Jesus. She went out the back window one day and never looked back. Then she met Bob when she was tending bar, and the two took a walk on the wild side together that lasted for a dozen happy years (although not without trouble and plenty of it). He had a drinking problem, and she let him have it because he worked hard. He would hit the bottle when he got home at night and all weekend long. She called him “Daddy” even though she was a good 10 years older and pushing 50.

Joyce and Bob moved from rental cabin to rental cabin in the north woods. They invited raccoons into their cabin as if the animals were pets. They got up at 5 a.m. to write in their diaries, and then when they got home at night they would read their daily entries out loud and look at the artsy photos of treetops and bees’ nests that Bob took. Finally, they were able to get a “poor people’s” loan to buy a little cabin they had found in some God-forsaken place on the north side of the lake and to fix it up. But then a card came from Joyce saying that Bob had left her for “that floozy” he met in a bar.

She wonders whether Joyce still keeps a diary, whether she still fancies the serendipitous discovery of happiness and looks for ways to deposit it in the ordinary, or whether something else has happened to her ordinary.

■ THE ANTHROPOLOGISTS

The anthropologists kept doing the fun things they did together. Like knocking on the doors of the little fishermen’s huts on the frozen lake. They would invite themselves in for a visit, but then they would sit down on the bench and the fishermen would not say anything. Not even “who are you?” or “what are you doing here?” So, they sat together in a wild and awkward silence, staring down into the hole in the ice and the deep dark waters below. The anthropologists could not think of a single question that made any sense at all.

When the anthropologists took walks in the woods, they would come across hunters. The hunters were more talkative than the ice fishermen. That is because they all wanted the friendly, nosy, overeducated strangers to know that they were not “Bambi killers.” Maybe some other hunters were, but not them—the new breed. They were nice, and a lot of them had been to college and had things to say about politics and the environment and the state. Most of the time there was a woman in the group. The others were teaching her to hunt. Everyone—the anthropologists too—would cover when the mean-looking game wardens came around a bend looking for poachers. The wardens were the bad guys. They would drive slowly past in postapocalyptic cars with burned paint and giant guns and spotlights mounted on the hood. They would fix us with hard stares, and you could see the muscles jump under their camouflage hunting suits. These guys were jumpy.

■ BEING JUMPY

Sometimes, the jumpy move would take over. Lingis (1994) saw that this had happened among miners at the Arctic Circle:

The young miner who showed me the mine put out every cigarette he smoked on his hand, which was covered with scar tissue. Then I saw the other young miners all had the backs of their hands covered with scar tissue. . . . When my eye fell on them it flinched, seeing the burning cigarette being crushed and sensing the pain. . . . The eye does not read the meaning in a sign; it *jumps* from the mark to the pain and the burning cigarette, and then jumps to the fraternity signaled by the burning cigarettes. (p. 96)

■ A SLASHING

On the river in Austin, Texas, in the early morning, joggers pass over the long high bridge and stop to stretch their hamstrings on its metal rails. Pairs of friends, about to part for the day, will stop to stare out at the expanse of watery sights laid out

below—fishermen in flat-bottomed boats sit upright in straight-backed chairs, giant blue herons poise on drowned cottonwoods, new limestone mansions perched on the cliffs above throw reflections halfway across the river. Crew boats pass silently under the bridge like human-powered water bugs skimming the surface. Occasionally, a riverboat will thrust itself slowly up the river, dredging the hard mass of the water up and over its wheel. Here, the world-in-a-picture still vibrates, as if it was just at that very moment that the real world crossed paths with an imagined elsewhere and the two realms hung suspended together in a still life.

Sometimes there are scenes of quiet desperation.

Sometimes people leave memorials on the bridge.

One morning, a crude sign appeared, taped to the metal railing. Below it was a shrine—yellow ribbons and a Sacred Heart of Jesus votive candle with half-burned sticks of incense stuck in the wax. The names Angela and Jerry were written in bold letters at the top of the sign, like the names of young lovers repeated over and over in school notebooks or graffitied on train trestles. The star-crossed lovers’ names were harshly crossed out and followed by the words “Relationship destroyed, with malice by Federal Agents & A.P.D. [Austin Police Department] for beliefs guaranteed under U.S. Constitutional Bill of Rights. I miss you Angela, Jessica, & Furry Dog Reef.”

It was signed “Always, Jerry.”

Below the signature were two graphics: the nickname “Yankee Girl” encircled by a pierced heart and a thick black box encasing the prayer “Please Come Back.” Then a final howl and a promise:

Angela, Jessica and Furry Dog Reef. . . . I miss you.

May God have mercy on the souls of the hateful, evil, vindictive people who conspired to take you from me, and did so with success. Angela, I will love you always and forever.

I miss you babe,

Jerry

At the bottom, another pierced heart held Yankee Girl in its wounded arms.

The sign was both cryptic and as crystal clear as a scream. Bitter fury was its vitality and its end. Its drive to a sheer satisfaction quivered like flesh in its wavering letters. It heaved grief and longing at the world not as an outer expression of an inner state but more directly as an act of the senses making contact with pen and paper and matches. Its slashing was like the self-slashing of young women who cut themselves so that they can feel alive or literally come to their senses. It had the same self-sufficient fullness and did not ask for interpretation or dream of a meaning.

This is a sensibility as common as it is striking. It is the kind of thing you see everyday. In the elaborate poetics of graffiti—the signatures left so artfully, the politics of slashing through them, crossing them out, erasing them, replicating them all over town. Or in the signs of the homeless on the side of the road. Or in the countless verbal and visual signs that come to life on the charged border between things private and things public. It is the kind of sensibility that surges through the wild conversation of AM radio talk shows and Internet sites. It adds force to the railing of the enraged in everything from road rage, to letters to the editor, to the face-to-face raging resentments of workplaces and intimate spaces. It permeates politics from right wing to left wing.

Something in its roughened surface points to a residue in things, a something that refuses to disappear. It draws attention, holds the visual fascination of unspeakable things—transgressions, injustices, the depths of widespread hopelessness. What animates it is not a particular message but rather the more basic need to forcefully perform the unrecognized impact of things.

It flees the easy translation of pain and desire into abstract values or commonsense coping. Yet every day its dramas of surge and arrest are bathed in the glow of some kind of meaning or form of dismissal. Then there are these questions: Will the gesture of the slashing shimmer as a curiosity passed on an everyday walking path, and will you feel a little jolt as you pass? Or, will it just go in one eye and out the other?

Sometimes, it might have the vitality of a pure surge pushing back, gathering a counterforce to a

point of intensity that both slashes at itself and spits at the world.

Other times, its very violence means that it will be erased, ignored, or drawn up, like blood in a syringe, to infuse new life into the enveloping categories of good sense, healthy protest, productive acts and lives, and mainstream moods by virtue of its bad example. It will be unwilling and unwitting nourishment for the more settled world of calculation, representation, value, and necessity that gave rise to its spitting fury to begin with. Yet even then, the sign, in its perverse singularity, will peep out of little cracks on barely public stages simultaneously defying and demanding witness. It will remain a partially visible affecting presence because what it registers is not only points of breakdown in “the system” but also lines of possible breakthrough beating unbidden in the blood of the mainstream.

A person walking by such signs might be touched by them or hardened to their obnoxious demands. But either way, a charge passes through the body and lodges in the person as an irritation, a confusion, an amusement, an ironic smirk, a thrill, a threat, or a source of musing. For better or worse, signs that erupt as events teach us something of their own jumpy attention to impacts by leaving visceral traces in their wake.

■ STRESS

The lone body and the social body had become the lived symptoms of the contradictions, conflicts, possibilities, and haunted sensibilities of pervasive forces. Stress was the lingua franca of the day. If you had it, you were onto something, part of the speeding force of things-in-the-making. But it could puncture you too, leaving you alone during times of exhaustion, claustrophobia, resentment, and ambient fear.

The self became a thing filled with the intricate dramas of dreams launched, wounded, and finally satisfied or left behind. You could comfort it like a child. Or, you could look at the outlines of it against the relief of other people’s missed opportunities. Or, you could inhabit it as a flood of

events and relationships caught in a repetitive pattern that you recognized only when you got to the end of a cycle, and by then you were already onto the next one.

There were little shocks in the rhythms of splurging and purging and in the constant edgy corrections of the self-help regimes—take an aspirin a day (or not), drink a glass of red wine a day (or not), eat butter or low-fat margarine or canola oil, eat oatmeal to strip the bad cholesterol from your arteries, eat salmon to add the good cholesterol, try antioxidants or kava kava or melatonin.

The figure of a beefed-up agency became a breeding ground for all kinds of strategies of complaint, self-destruction, flight, reinvention, and experimentation as if the world rested on its shoulders. Straight talk about willpower and positive thinking claimed that agency was just a matter of getting on track, as if all the messy business of real selves affected by events and haunted by threats could be left behind in an out-of-this-world levitation act.

Against this tendency, a new kind of memoir began to work the lone self into a fictional sacrifice powerful enough to drag the world's impacts out onto secret stages. Self-help groups added density to the mix, offering both practical recipes for self-redeeming action and a hard-hitting, lived recognition of the twisted, all-pervasive ways in which compulsions permeated freedoms and were reborn in the very surge to get free of them once and for all.

■ THE BODY SURGES

The body builds its substance out of layers of sensory impact laid down in the course of straining upstream against recalcitrant and alien forces or drifting downstream, with its eyes trained on the watery clouds and passing treetops overhead and its ears submerged in the flow that surrounds it, buoys it, and carries it along. The body surges forward, gets on track, gets sidetracked, falls down, pulls itself up to crawl on hands and knees, flies through the air, hits a wall, regroupes, or beats a

retreat. It knows itself as states of vitality, exhaustion, and renewal. It exerts itself out of necessity and for the love of movement and then it pulls a veil around itself to rest, building a nest of worn clothing redolent with smells of sweat or cheap perfume or smoky wood fires burrowed into wool.

The body cannot help itself. It is an extremist seeking thrills, a moderate sticking its toe in to test the waters, a paranoid delusion looking for a place to hide. It is a bouncing fool throwing itself at an object of round perfection in the dogged conviction that it is on the right track this time. What the body knows, it knows from the smell of something promising or rancid in the air or the look of a quickening or slackening of flesh. It grows ponderous, gazing on its own form with a Zen-like emptiness. As a new lover, it dotes on revealed scars and zones in on freckles and moles and earlobes. As one of the anxious aging, it is drawn to the sight of new jowls and mutant hairs and mottled skin in the bathroom mirror.

The body is both the persistent site of self-recognition and the thing that will always betray you. It dreams of its own redemption and knows better. It catches sight of a movement out of the corner of its eye and latches on to a borrowed intimacy or a plan that comes as a gift to sweep it into the flow of the world and free it of its lonely flesh.

The body consumes and is consumed. Like one big pressure point, it is the place where outside forces come to roost, condensing like thickened milk in the bottom of the stomach. It grows sluggish and calls for sweet and heavy things to match its inner weight. Or salty or caffeinated things to jolt it to attention.

Layers of invented life form around the body's dreamy surges like tendons or fat.

Lifestyles and industries pulse in a silent, unknown reckoning of what to make of all this.

The body builds itself out of layer on layer of sensory impact. It loves and dreads what makes it. At times, it is shocked and thrilled to find itself in the driver's seat. At other times, it holes up, bulks up, wraps itself in its layers. The world it lives in spins with the dancing poles of ups and downs and rests its laurels in a banality that hums a tune of its own.

■ BODY FOR LIFE

She once took up *Body for Life* on the advice of a friend. Between them, it was a joke. They called it their cult. But they also knew that there was something *to* a little extreme self-transformation. Or at least the effort. *Body for Life* was a best-selling book with glossy “before-and-after” pictures of bodybuilders on the inside covers. It started as a bodybuilder’s, movement-building, moneymaking challenge to the unwashed to put down the beer and chips and start loving life instead of just living it, to start thriving and not just surviving. It was “12 weeks to mental and physical strength.”

She was not at all taken with the tanned, oiled, muscle man and muscle woman look on the inside covers, but the little game of moving her eyes back and forth between each pair of before-and-after shots caught her in a spell of momentary satisfaction. The eye jumped happily between the paired scenes. Now fat and pale, now muscled and oily and tan. Peek-a-boo. All of the bodies were white. They made her think of the body displays that she was always running into when she lived in Las Vegas. At the post office, or at the drive-in movie theater, or while waiting in line to get a new driver’s license, there were always half-naked bodybuilders with wet-skinned snakes draped around their necks, or monkeys on leashes, or stars-and-stripes halter tops and permed blond hair.

Her friend called the people in the pictures “beefcakes.” Class seemed to be somehow involved in all of this, but people would swear up and down that those who were into *Body for Life* came from all walks of life. That comfortable claim to plainness emerging out of some kind of mainstream. Some kind of mall culture. Ordinary Americans unmarked by anything but the will to change their bodies and by the real or imagined fruits of their success after those glorious 12 weeks. They were people who had been catapulted out of the back seat of life onto the magic carpet ride that turns flighty self-defeating dreams into vital generative flesh.

They had experienced their breakthroughs when they saw the inspiring photos on the inside

covers, or when they took a good hard look at their own eye-opening “before” pictures, or when—while watching the inspirational video that they could get for a \$15 donation to the Make-A-Wish Foundation—they were suddenly released from the feeling of being alone and felt hope instead. They began to crave the 12-week program even more than they craved a piece of key lime pie or a beer.

There is nothing weird about how this happens. It is laid out step by step like a 12-step program where the spiritual transformation flows directly through the flesh. You follow the steps in the book as if it were a recipe book, consuming each new exercise with relish. You create 12-week goals out of gossamer wishes. Done. You pull your dreams out of their shadow existence into the light of day. Okay then! You harness the force in your own faintly beating desire to change. Wow! Okay. You ask yourself hard questions. You write down the answers. You speak your goals out loud with mimicked confidence every morning and night until the confidence is real. You commit. You focus; forget the zoning out and drifting downstream. You create five daily habits. You imagine other people looking at your new body with gleaming eyes, and you hear their approving comments until the imagining is effortless and part of you. You surrender the negative emotions that hold everyone back, and you start looking forward. You realize that you will never again get sidetracked. Everyone who takes the 12-week challenge feels like a winner. You do not need a carrot on a stick anymore; you take your eyes off the prize (a blood red Lamborghini Diablo) and even consumer fetishism seems to fade into the background of a half-lived past. Now you are consuming your body, and your body is consuming you. It is more direct.

She was not really interested in the inspirational business, however, and she never actually read the book. She passed directly from the game of before-and-after photos to the charts near the end of the book that tell you exactly what you have to do and eat. She got organized. She made copies of the exercise charts so that she could fill one out each day like a daily diary. She memorized the acceptable

foods in the three food groups and stocked up. She ritualized each meal and gleefully took off the 7th day each week, carefully following the instruction to eat exactly whatever she wanted that day and no less. She ordered boxes of the shakes and power bars and began to experiment with the recipes that made the chocolate shake taste like a banana split and turned the vanilla shake into that famous liquid key lime pie. She got the picture. She felt the surge. She let it become a new piece of her skeleton. Then there were the inevitable ups and downs, the sliding in and out of its partial cocoon.

A couple of years later, long after she had consumed the program enough to reduce it to a few new prejudices about how to exercise and how to eat, she drifted into *Body for Life* Community.com and the dozens of listservs and chat rooms in its nest. Some were modeled as Christian fellowships:

The only requirement for membership is the desire to be healthy. This is not just a set of principles but a society for people in action. Carry the message or wither. . . . Those who haven't been given the truth may not know the abundant life we have found—a way out, into life, a real life with freedom.

Other listservs were just organized by state. In any of them, you could click on someone's name and up would pop a *Body for Life* photo, slipping you right into the culture of personal ads. In the chat rooms, things got really concrete. One woman confessed that she could smell the chocolate right through the wrappers in the bowl of Halloween candy by the door, and someone shouted support in capital letters: "HANG IN THERE! YOU CAN DO IT!!!" A man happily obsessed about how to prepare his shakes:

My favorite is chocolate, and to prepare the shake I always use 3 cubes of ice from the Rubbermaid mold, put them (without water) in the jar, and then pour the water in. Use 12 and a half ounces and 1 centimeter, then blend for about 55 seconds. You [have] got to use a stopwatch! I think this is why I love Myoplex, because I blend it for more seconds and I drink it cool without milk or bananas.

People exchanged stories of ongoing tragedies, seeking workout partners to help them

get through the ordeals. Others just focused on keeping up the network connections:

Good morning to everyone. Been off for a few days. Lizzy—sorry to hear about your migraine—scary! Jim—it's true—your pictures don't do you justice! Abs—I love your philosophy! It's true—we become what we think about. Deb—congratulations! Good luck with your photos—can't wait to see your progress! If you find something that covers bruises, let me know—I bruise just thinking about bumping into something. Can't wait to see you all at the upcoming events!

All of these self-expressions are excessive in their own way. They proclaim, confess, obsess, and gush. But that is not because the body really does just get on track and march forward armed with the drama of success and the minutia of disciplinary practices. It is because it slumps and gets sidetracked and rejoins its *Body for Life* self. It is because it wants and it does not want and because it might do one thing or another. It is because it smells its way along tracks, and new tracks intersect the old and carry it away. It is because it catches things out of the corner of its eye, and half-hidden things on the sidelines are always the most compelling.

Body for Life draws its own life from the force of a bodily surge enacting not the simple, deliberate, one-way embodiment of dreams but rather the pulsing impact of dream and matter on each other in a moment when the body is beside itself. Caught in a movement, floating suspended between past and future, hesitation and forward thrust, pain and pleasure, knowledge and ignorance, the body vibrates or pulses. It is only when the body remains partly unactualized and unanchored that it seems intimate, familiar, and alive. This can be lived as an event—a moment of shock, climax, or awakening. But there is also something of it in the banal and quotidian—a continuous background radiation, a humming left unremarked like a secret battery kept charged.

Body for Life says that turning fleeting fantasies into the force of vitality is about making a decision, but making a decision is itself about

playing games, looking at pictures, following recipes, mimicking desired states, inventing social imaginaries, and talking to yourself in the mirror. Getting on track and staying there is not the simple and sober choice of a lifetime but rather a thin line from which you can, and probably will, topple back to ordinary sloppiness or onto an “epidemic of the will” (Sedgwick, 1992) such as excessive dieting. Then the body might swing itself back to a state of moderation or exhaustion, stick its toe in to test the waters, and pull the blankets over itself to hide.

The proliferating cultures of the body spin madly around the palpable promise that fears and pleasures and forays into the world can be literally made vital all-consuming passions. But this promise (and threat) is already there in the body directly engaged by shifting public sensibilities, in the senses retooled and set in motion. Like an antenna, the body picks up pulses that are hard to hear, or hard to bear, in the normalizing universe of cultural codes. It stores the pulses in a neck muscle or a limb, or it follows them just to see where they are going. It dares them and registers their impacts. It wants to be part of their flow. It wants to be in touch. It wants to be touched. It hums along with them, flexing its muscles in a state of readiness.

■ SOMETIMES WHEN YOU HEAR SOMEONE SCREAM . . .

Laurie Anderson had a show at the Guggenheim Soho called “Your Fortune, \$1.” A spooky white plastic owl perched on a stool in a darkened corner spewed out a stream of two-bit advice, trenchant commentary, and stray advertising lingo plucked out of a realm of sheer circulation. The owl’s mechanical yet sensuously grainy voice droned on and on, transfixing her in a flood of Hallmark greeting card schlock. She was fascinated to see how the flood’s ordinary reality seemed to instantly deflate and become both laughable and alarming from the owl’s simple mimicking.

Then it said something that she swore she had already been anxiously chanting to herself.

Sometimes when you hear someone scream, it goes in one ear and out the other. Sometimes it passes right into the middle of your brain and gets stuck there.

It was one of those moments when the indiscriminate flow stops dead in its tracks. The super-saturated soup of sensory images and sounds gently prodding and massaging us like waves lapping a shore takes this opportunity to solidify into something momentarily clear or even shocking. Like a trauma we had forgotten or never quite registered that comes back in a flash. Or like a whiff of something hopeful or potentially exciting passing with the breeze. We perk up in a mix of recognition, pleasure, and alarm.

One minute you are afloat in the realm of sheer circulation. Then some random sound bite hits you with a force that seems to bring you to your senses. We sober up in the face of a cruel lucidity. But it is the hungry sense that has been awakened that drives the world back into the land of enchantment. The waves of desire lap at our feet, and we drift off again, held aloft by the sheer density of images, sensory signals, and objects drawn into play in the dreamworld.

When she heard the owl’s line about screams that pass right into the middle of your brain and get stuck there, she went home and wrote down a story that had been lodged in her psyche ever since she heard it.

The story starts with a question lodged in a tactile sense anxiety and then opens onto an aesthetic scene of the senses. The question: Do you ever wake up in the morning, or in the middle of the night, with a sense of sudden dread and start scanning your dreamy brain for the memory of what you have done or a premonition of what is coming? Some do this all of the time; for them, this is what morning has become.

The aesthetic scene: She has a big iron bed lodged against long wide windows looking onto the back deck. Tropical breezes waft over her in the night, carrying the sweet and fetid smells of kumquat trees and mimosa blossoms. At dawn, there are wild bird cries—mourning doves and grackles and parrots that once escaped their pet cages and now breed in the trees. At certain hours

in the still of the night, the train cries in the near distance. The night pulses with the high lonesome sound of haunted machine dreams roaming the landscape.

When she has guests, she lets them use the iron bed, and they wake up talking about the bed and the wailing train as if they feel pleased to be set down in some kind of American Heartland. But she is only too happy to lay down a pallet on the living room floor and fall into a deep sleep with only the smell of old ashes from the fireplace because she knows why the train sings.

The train sings for Bobby, a homeless drunk who laid himself down on the tracks one night and passed out as if he too could lay down a pallet and escape from his ghosts. He and his old lady had been down at the free concert on the river where some of the street people party hard. The weekly concert was their moment to be at home in public, doing what everyone else was doing, only more. Some would laugh loud or make announcements or give people directions and advice. As the day went to full dark, the power of music would flow out from the stage, touch spellbound bodies, and spread out to the neon skyline reflecting in the dark glassy expanse of the river. There were always graceful moments—a dance gesture, a wide open smile, a sudden upsurge of generosity, the startled gratitude of pariahs who suddenly found themselves seamlessly rubbing shoulders with the housed. There were always crashes too—people falling down drunk in front of the stage; the vomiting; a man huddled and pale, too sick to party; flashes of hope and ease dashed on the rocks of familiar fury, frustration, humiliation, and grief; people making spectacles of themselves. Sometimes there were fights.

That night, Bobby had a fight with his old lady and stomped off alone. He followed the train tracks through the woods to the homeless camp, where he sat on the tracks alone, taking stock in a booze-soaked moment of reprieve. He loved the romance of the high lonesome sound in the distance and the train's promise of tactility and power—the rumbling weight of power incarnate rumbling past, the childhood memory of the penny laid on the tracks, the way the tracks

carved out a “no man's land” where shadows could travel and live.

He laid himself down on the icy cold tracks and closed his eyes, as if tempting fate. As if that simple move held both the possibility of checking out and a dream of contact with a public world that might include him.

Somewhere in the middle of the long train passing over, he raised his head, awakening. They say that if he had not woken up, the train would have passed right over him.

Now the train screams out a warning when it draws close to that place on the tracks not far from her iron bed. It often wakes her. Or it lodges in her sleep and comes as an unknown shock of anxiety in the morning.



■ CODA

The stories that make up my story—disparate and arbitrary scenes of impact tracked through bodies, desires, or labors and traced out of the aftermath of a passing surge registered, somehow, in objects, acts, situations, and events—are meant to be taken not as representative examples of forces or conditions but rather as constitutive events and acts in themselves that animate and literally make sense of forces at the point of their affective and material emergence. More directly compelling than ideologies, and more fractious, multiplicitous, and unpredictable than symbolic representations of an abstract structure brought to bear on otherwise lifeless things, they are actual sites where forces have gathered to a point of impact, or flirtations along the outer edges of a phenomenon, or extreme cases that suggest where a trajectory might lead if it were to go unchecked. They are not the kinds of things you can get your hands on or wrap your mind around, but they are things that have to be literally tracked.

Rather than seek an explanation for things we presume to capture with carefully formulated concepts, my story proposes a form of cultural

and political critique that tracks lived impacts and rogue vitalities through bodily agitations, modes of free-floating fascination, and moments of collective excitation or enervation. It attempts to describe how people are quite literally charged up by the sheer surge of things in the making.

My story, then, is not an exercise in representation or a critique of representation; rather it is a cabinet of curiosities designed to incite curiosity. Far from trying to present a final, or good enough, story of something we might call “U.S. culture,” it tries to deflect attention away from the obsessive desire to characterize things once and for all long enough to register the myriad strands of shifting influence that remain uncaptured by representational thinking. It presumes a “we”—the impacted subjects of a wild assemblage of influences—but it also takes difference to be both far more fundamental and far more fluid than models of positioned subjects have been able to suggest. It is not normative. Its purpose is not to evaluate things as finally good or bad, and far from presuming that meanings or values run the world, it is drawn to the place where *meaning* per se collapses and we are left with acts and gestures and immanent possibilities. Rather than try to pinpoint the beating heart of its beast, it tracks the pulses of things as they cross each other, come together, fragment, and recombine in some new surge. It tries to cull attention to the affects that arise in the course of the perfectly ordinary life as the promise, or threat, that something is happening—something capable of impact. Whether such affects are feared or shamelessly romanticized, subdued or unleashed, they point to the generative immanence lodged in things. Far from the named “feelings” or “emotions” invented in discourses of morals, ideals, and known subjectivities (leave that to Hallmark and the Family Channel), they take us to the surge of intensity itself.

My story tries to follow lines of force as they emerge in moments of shock, or become resonant in everyday sensibilities, or come to roost in a stilled scene of recluse or hiding. It tries to begin the labor of knowing the effects of current restructurings not as a fixed body of elements and representations imposed on an innocent world

but rather as a literally moving mix of things that engages desires, ways of being, and concrete places and objects.

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“ARIA IN TIME OF WAR”

Investigative Poetry and the Politics of Witnessing

Stephen J. Hartnett and Jeremy D. Engels

Contemporary intellectual production in the humanities is haunted by two scandalous hypocrisies. First, although *interdisciplinarity* and *excellence* are the catchwords of the era, universities for the most part continue to teach, hire, and tenure according to stultifying genre-bound traditions rather than fresh pedagogical, artistic, or intellectual ambitions. Second, although humanists can build flashy careers using words such as *radical*, *intervention*, *transgression*, and *counterhegemonic*—even while fitting snugly into safe discrete fields—the number of academics doing political work is embarrassingly small. In contrast to these two driving hypocrisies, we invoke the spirit of Ralph Waldo Emerson, who demanded in a sermon essay from 1844 that a poet should strive toward becoming “the Knower, the Doer, and the Sayer.”

Emerson (1844/1982) told his readers that knowing, doing, and saying “stand respectively for the love of truth, for the love of good, and for the love of beauty” (p. 262). Filtered through a postmodern lens, we suggest that knowing indicates the necessity of scholarship, that doing points toward activism and other forms of embodied knowledge, and that saying calls for an examination of and participation in the politics of representation. Read in this way—as calling for the combination of serious scholarship, passionate activism, and experimental representation—Emerson’s transcendentalist dictum serves as a ringing indictment of the hypocrisies described previously and as a clarion call for what we describe in what follows as *investigative poetry*.

Although attempts to define a genre are doomed to failure and inevitably invite a cascade of

Authors’ Note. An earlier version of the material in Section 4 of this essay originally appeared as part of Hartnett (1999); that material appears courtesy of the National Communication Association. Parts of Sections 2 and 4 of this essay appeared in a slightly different form in Hartnett (2003); that material appears courtesy of Rowman & Littlefield Publishers. The authors are deeply grateful for the editorial insights of Norman Denzin and Ivan Brady.

counterarguments, refutations, and modifications, we nonetheless begin with the premise that investigative poetry exhibits these characteristics:

- An attempt to supplement poetic imagery with evidence won through scholarly research, with the hope that merging art and archive makes our poetry more worldly and our politics more personal
- An attempt to use reference matter not only to support political arguments but also as a tool to provide readers with additional information and empowerment
- An attempt to problematize the self by studying the complex interactions among individuals and their political contexts, hence witnessing both the fracturing of the self and the deep implication of the author in the very systems that he or she examines
- An attempt to problematize politics by witnessing the ways that social structures are embodied as lived experience, hence adding to political criticism ethnographic, phenomenological, and existential components
- An attempt to situate these questions about self and society within larger historical narratives, thereby offering poems that function as genealogical critiques of power
- An attempt to produce poems that take a multiperspectival approach, not by celebrating or criticizing one or two voices but rather by building a constellation of multiple voices in conversation
- A deep faith in the power of commitment, meaning that to write an investigative poetry of witness the poet must put himself or herself in harm's way and function not only as an observer of political crises but also as a participant in them

We elucidate these claims in what follows via a series of case studies. It is impossible to begin this essay, however, without noting that arguments over the possible relationships among poetry, politics, and social justice—to say nothing of the methodological criteria offered earlier—are as old as civilization itself. As Birkerts (1987) observes, “The poetry/politics debate began when Plato booted the poet from his ideal Republic, maybe even sooner; it will go on so long as there

is language” (p. 55). But unlike Birkerts and the hundreds of other critics who have weighed in with weighty pronouncements on one aspect of this debate, often in tones that we can only describe as partisan at best and shrill at worst, we want to honor the epic and sometimes comic nature of that debate without descending into it. Instead, we offer readers a series of interlocking readings of some veins of work that we have found to be edifying. Our comments here may be taken, then, not so much as our levying an argument about how we think poets, activists, and scholars should proceed as our sharing some hopefully pedagogical thoughts on the literary and activist inspirations that have fed our fascination with and unbounded support for investigative poetry.¹

Our essay unfolds in four movements. First, to frame our arguments about investigative poetry, we explore the poetic and political possibilities embodied in recent works by Carolyn Forché and Edward Sanders. Forché’s (2003) *Blue Hour* is a haunting, elegiac, and spiritual meditation on the ever-piling wreckage of violence. Sparse and abstract, with words floating in the hushed glimmer of no-where and no-time, Forché’s devastating poems feel like a dismal history lesson detached from history. Sanders’s (2000) *America: A History in Verse* offers a different model. Packed with details organized chronologically, and reading like a catechism of lessons gleaned from the lost fragments of our national history, these celebratory poems offer readers an empowering investigation into the still great promises of the American experiment. By comparing these texts, we establish some of the benefits and consequences of pursuing these different modes of investigative poetry. Second, we review the literature regarding the recent turn across the humanities to a concern with social justice, hence grounding our thoughts about investigative poetry within the tradition of engaged scholars who use their positions as teachers and writers to try to help expand democratic rights, economic opportunities, and cultural aspirations for an ever larger circle of readers, students, and fellow activists. Third, to illustrate some of the promises

and problems with one of the main intellectual traditions informing investigative poetry, we examine the literary, pedagogical, and anthropological ambitions of the movement known loosely as *ethnopoetics*. Although our reading of the various branches of ethnopoetics grants their important roles in initiating conversations about multiculturalism, bringing a literary consciousness to anthropology, breaking down positivism, and criticizing colonialism, our readings of specific ethnopoems finds them to be consistently removed from questions of power. Fourth, we celebrate the dense triumphs of John Dos Passos, the early Carolyn Forché, and Peter Dale Scott, all of whom merge concerns for social justice and a commitment to writing a political poetry of witness in texts that, although historical, political, personal, philosophical, and beautiful, consistently place a critique of power at the center of their work. Taken as a whole, these four sections offer readers a sweeping overview of the opportunities and obligations of both producing and consuming “Aria in Time of War”; that is, we celebrate those who honor the persistence of poetry in the face of horror, who commit their academic work to social justice, and who merge the two—scholarship and poetry—in the political work of witnessing.

■ 1. OSCILLATING BETWEEN
NO-TIME AND THE BLIZZARD
OF FACTS: FORCHÉ, SANDERS, AND
THE QUESTION OF HISTORICAL CONTEXT

We begin with eight haunting lines from “On Earth,” the central poem from Forché’s (2003) unsettling *Blue Hour*:

a random life caught in the net of purpose (p.26)

a search without hope for hope (p. 27)

America a warship on the horizon at morning (p. 29)

and it is certain someone will be at that very moment pouring milk (p. 30)

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aria in time of war (p. 32)

black with burnt-up meaning (p. 35)

history decaying into images (p. 42)

inhabiting a body to be abolished (p. 45)

On and on it goes in relentless ethereal detail, working methodically through a 48-page alphabetically structured poem meant to approximate the feel of a Gnostic abecedarian hymn, ending with but one entry for the letter z: “zero” (p. 68).

These lines prompt readers to wonder about the mysterious relationships among agency and chance, personal volition and historical velocity (“a random life caught in the net of purpose”); to empathically walk a mile in the shoes of someone who bravely, yet apparently fruitlessly, pursues justice (“a search without hope for hope”); to ponder a world in which American power is feared by faraway peoples (“America a warship on the horizon at morning”); to know that despite such fears, someone somewhere is enjoying a quiet moment of sustenance and plenty (“and it is certain someone will be at that very moment pouring milk”); to listen closely to hear whether the explosions of war and the silent misery of poverty are graced with beauty (“aria in time of war”); to ask after all that has been lost in the ever-piling wreckage of history (“black with burnt-up meaning”); to ponder what it means to think historically in a world that appears with each day to possess meaning not from words and sounds and touches and smells but rather from the blinding whirl of mass-produced pictures (“history decaying into images”); and to imagine for a moment what it must feel like to be one of the damned (“inhabiting a body to be abolished”), condemned perhaps to die on death row, or on skid row, or from the torturous spiral into hopelessness, where one inhabits a body that slowly loses meaning. Thus, Forché invites us on a terrifying voyage into the mysteries of life during an age of mass-produced misery.

Readers are left to fill in the blanks as they choose, to complete the jigsaw puzzle of horror by supplying details from their own warehouses

of knowledge and memory and even fantasy, for who can hold such sweeping imagery together without moving from the realm of expertise and experience to imagination and projection? The danger of enabling such projection is that it invites readers to move from thinking about the specific causes and consequences of historical *loss* to nostalgically longing for some abstract *absence*. As LaCapra (2001) argues in *Writing History, Writing Trauma*, this shift from loss to absence is potentially dangerous because “when loss is converted into (or encrypted in an indiscriminately generalized rhetoric of) absence, one faces the impasse of endless melancholy” (p. 46). Moving from the healthy mourning of specific historical loss to the endless web of melancholy is fueled, LaCapra claims, by a tendency “to shroud, perhaps even to etherealize, them [historical losses] in a generalized discourse of absence” that relies on figures that are “abstract, evacuated, disembodied” (pp. 48–49). Forché’s dilemma in *Blue Hour*, then, as in all works that strive to merge hard-hitting politics and joyous poetic reverie while roaming across a wide swath of time, revolves around the question of how to provide a cosmopolitan, truly globalizing perspective on the tragedy of life without falling into the trap of morose and politically paralyzing longing for immaterial absence.²

In her introduction to the magisterial anthology of poems, *Against Forgetting*, Forché (1993) argues, “The poetry of witness frequently resorts to paradox and difficult equivocation, to the invocation of what is *not* there as if it *were*. . . . That it must defy common sense to speak of the common indicates that traditional modes of thought, the purview of common sense, no longer *make sense*” (p. 40). We imagine that most readers will grant the wisdom of this claim, for who has not thrilled at the truth conveyed in an oblique poem or song or dance, bringing a rush of sensemaking greater than anything ever found in dry tomes of history or sociology or political science? And who has not found himself or herself walking through historical wreckage or working through a novel with the eerie sense that he or she were conversing with the dead (Gordon, 1997)? But at what point

does defying common sense and invoking the dead fade into helpless abstraction, into the infinitely repeatable layering of random projections against one another (O’Rourke, 2003)? Like flipping distractedly through 100 channels of late-night television, or watching billboards tick by on some anonymous stretch of highway, don’t such invocations of the dead and such refusals of common sense ultimately leave readers awash in confusion? Where are we? What is the date? What are the stakes? Who are the players? *Why does this matter?*

Sanders’s (2000) *America: A History in Verse* answers these questions on every page. “I love the way my nation seethes/ I love its creativity/ & the flow of its wild needs,” Sanders proclaims in his introduction (p. 9). Channeling the epic and synthesizing sweep of Whitman, Sanders thus offers readers a love poem qualified by the knowledge that “I know of course/ that I have to trace the/ violence of my nation” (p. 8). These poems matter, then, because they aspire to rewrite the history of America circa 1900–1939 and, by investigating specific historical losses, to provide readers with the factual knowledge, rhetorical resources, and political encouragement to try to reclaim the nation’s better half from its lingering—and recently ascendant—demons. Sanders pursues this goal by studying the nation’s players, institutions, struggles, and sounds, which he offers up in newspaper-like snippets organized by years. Thus, whereas Forché’s melancholy *Blue Hour* offers a chillingly beautiful yet ultimately disempowering meditation on absence, Sanders’s *America* offers a compelling, if didactic, tribute to the winners and losers of specific historical battles.

As one of the founders of the 1950s micropublishing culture that freed artists from corporate constraints, as a seminal New York hipster during the beat generation, as an accomplished pre-punk musician, as witness to the travesty of the Democratic Convention in Chicago in 1968, and on and on—in short, as one of those miraculous figures who seem to always be at the center of what is *happening*—Sanders has for the past 50 years or so been a tireless and good-natured gadfly watching America struggle to achieve the glory of its

promises. Given his personal experiences with some of the leading artists and activists who have prompted America's cultural and political changes over the past decades, it comes as no surprise that Sanders reminds readers that history hinges in large part on individual actors exercising agency. *America* accordingly offers a "who's who" catalogue of heroes and villains in action.

For example, here is one of Sanders's many loving tributes to Isadora Duncan, who first danced in America in 1908 and who

based her revolution in Dance
on the natural grace of bodies moving in
Beauty
It was ancient, she said, from the form-loving
Greeks
& so when she showed a nipple or knee
she could claim those ancient roots
She was an advocate of free love
a political radical
& a stunning emblem to the women
who wanted to smoke, strut, paint
write, dance, & fuck more freely. (p. 80)

Sanders (2000) shows us a brave woman dancing her and her sisters' way toward freedom. Close readers might want more poetic detail here. *Just how did she reveal that nipple or knee? What did it look like? How did crowds respond? Were lovers actually thinking of Duncan when they fucked more freely?* But in these poems Sanders is less interested in the micro-logical details than in the ways iconic figures and actions function synecdochically, as representative parts that reveal the majesty of the whole. Indeed, as Sanders (1976) declares in his manifesto *Investigative Poetry*, "the essence of investigative poetry" is to create "lines of lyric beauty [that] descend from data clusters," hence both seducing and empowering readers with "a melodic blizzard of data-fragments" (p. 9). Synecdoche is therefore the rhetorical trope that enables Sanders to weave individual lines of

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beauty into a collective swirl of data fragments and thus to write poetic history.³

Indeed, *America* is based largely on the trope of synecdoche, which hinges on the convertibility between parts and wholes, on the representational electricity assumed to link actors to their epochs. For example, whereas Duncan stands as a representative woman, as the individual embodiment (part) of the period's struggle for women's freedom of mind and movement (whole), so Sanders reverses the equation and offers institutions (wholes) as symbolic aggregates of individual hope (part). Put differently, because even exceptional individuals are only as strong as their larger community bonds, Sanders is obliged to represent not only radical individuals but also the hope-sustaining and change-making institutions that support their visionary work. For example, Sanders's investigations into the struggle against racial violence lead him to celebrate the 1909 founding of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP):

& there comes a time in the time-track
when you work for good, no matter the danger
...
There comes a time—
You can look in photo archives
at the shiny-eyed trash
gathered about a lynching tree
as if it were the homecoming parade
—therefore the NAACP. (pp. 83–84)

Although Sanders is a relentless critic of the "shiny-eyed trash" who choose violence over understanding, readers may wish for more details regarding the pleasures of crowds at lynchings. That is, instead of 4 lines describing the energies of white supremacists, why not 30 lines showing us in more detail what the alluded to—but not cited—"photo archives" teach attentive viewers? More than just a quibble about the focus or length of the poem, such questions carry for investigative poets a heavy methodological burden,

for we proceed with the understanding that just as melancholia stands as the paralyzing result of failed mourning, so simply rebuking one's enemies—even lynch mobs—begins the process of moving from understanding specific historical loss to projecting terms of generalized absence and otherness. In this case, the complexities of white supremacy are glossed within a heroic tribute to the NAACP, but one cannot fathom the gravity of the task faced by the NAACP without a more nuanced understanding of what its members were fighting against. We are thus asking for the poem to accept the admittedly heavy burden of playing a more clearly pedagogical function.⁴

Moreover, without showing us the complexities of the players involved in a given struggle in a clearly pedagogical fashion, much of Sanders's *America* might feel to some readers like an exercise in nostalgia. For example, here is one of his many tributes to the International Workers of the World:

In Fresno '11

another protest for the right of free speech

again the jails were packed

and Wobblies were singing and giving speeches

to supporters and the curious

gathered outside the jail

...

When it was obvious that

more and more Wobblies were coming to Fresno

to commit civil disobedience

the power structure relented

and rescinded the ban on speaking in the streets. (pp. 87–88)

In 1911, the Wobblies were fighting for workers' rights, yet they rocketed into national consciousness a few years later because of their brave stand against America entering World War I. But as

Sanders notes in his poems from the years 1917 and 1918, it would not be long before the Espionage Act was crushing dissent, sending thousands of protesters to jail and shipping boatloads of socialists back to Europe. At the same time, the draft scooped up additional thousands of young men to be marched to their deaths in Europe's lice-infested trenches. Although many readers will thrill at the image of brave Wobblies fighting for justice in Fresno in 1911, the longer view is ultimately one of defeat: the Wobblies were crushed, free speech was curtailed, and America sloughed off to a disastrously bloody war. Regardless of what readers think of this narrative, the pedagogical function of investigative poetry suggests that Sanders should have offered extensive referencing so that readers could make up their own minds about this version of the Wobblies and America during the World War I era, yet no such reference matter is provided.⁵

Nonetheless, despite the sense that it is infused with nostalgia, that it lacks the referencing matter required to help readers take the pedagogical step of beginning their own research, and that it sometimes skims too quickly across the surface of events, Sanders's *America* accumulates into a majestic—even awe-inspiring—narrative, for by moving from the exuberance and genius of individuals (Duncan and her revolutionary dancing) to the strength and dignity of organizations (the NAACP and its fight against racism) to the brave triumph of struggles for freedom (the Wobblies' free speech victory in Fresno in 1911) and back again, zigzagging all the while through a kaleidoscopic montage of historical fragments, the poem offers a model of engaged citizenship, literally a handbook of democracy in action. Indeed, whereas Forché's *Blue Hour* can feel oppressively bleak—"collective memory a dread of things to come" (p. 30), "scoop of earth: slivers of femurs, metacarpals" (p. 51), "your mother waving goodbye in the flames" (p. 68)—Sanders's *America* reminds readers of the bravery of our forebears and thus of our obligations to continue their fights for justice.

In addition to this empowering and activating function, Sanders's *America* relishes the more traditionally poetic slices of joy that slither through

daily experience. Indeed, by juxtaposing horror against the frivolous, joyous, and sometimes brilliant aspects of daily life, *America* provides a startlingly honest glimpse into the lived sensation of watching history crash all around you. Sanders is particularly interested in the relationship between sound and politics, as in this passage about 1925:

George Gershwin's *Piano Concerto*

Prokofiev's *Symphony #2*

Aaron Copeland's *Symphony #1*

and in Chicago Louis Armstrong began the Hot Five recordings

while December 10

the Grand Old Opry began radio broadcasts

Henry Ford, hating jazz

set up a series of folk dances. (p. 245)

One could obviously write hundreds of pages on each of these figures, but Sanders appears to be more interested in letting readers figure out the implications of such juxtapositions. Like Whitman's famous catalogue poems, then, Sanders makes no attempt to dive into the complexity of these figures, instead positioning them as icons loaded with apparently self-evident meaning, as synecdoches meant to suggest the larger forces at play. For example, it is assumed that one reads the line about Armstrong and understands the importance of the Hot Five moving away from big band formats toward what would eventually become hard swinging bebop; it is assumed that one reads the line about the Grand Old Opry and understands the significance of the mass production (via radio, press, and eventually television) of a nostalgia-based, quietly racist, down home country aesthetic; it is assumed that one reads the line about Copeland and understands how he sought to merge the nation's many musical vernaculars into a majestic symphony-of-the-whole; and so on, with readers left to surround each line with their own comprehension. In this sense, then, Sanders appears to be practicing less what

we are calling investigative poetry than a Whitman-like catalogue poetry, for what we have here are not so much investigations into the complexity of specific moments as suggestive shards, fleeting images, and passing glimpses that are meant to be self-evidently and transparently significant (Buell, 1968; Chari, 1972; Mason, 1973; Reed, 1977).

The fact that these terms—self-evident and transparent—stand in absolute contrast to the allusive and impenetrably dense verse in Forché's *Blue Hour* demonstrates how even though both Sanders and Forché strive to write a political and historical poetry of witness, they practice dramatically different forms of investigative poetry. Indeed, the vast aesthetic differences between *Blue Hour* and *America* raise a host of questions about the possible relationships among different forms of poetry, politics, witnessing, and historical scholarship. In fact, the poems addressed here throw the terms listed earlier into question, forcing us to reappraise not only how they speak to each other but also what they stand for in their own right. Before addressing how investigative poetry speaks to these issues, it is necessary to review the ways that contemporary scholars have tried to reconsider and to merge historical, political, and artistic works to produce engaged scholarship that is both witness to and participant in struggles for social justice.

■ 2. SOCIAL JUSTICE AND THE OBLIGATIONS AND OPPORTUNITIES OF ENGAGED SCHOLARS

Although Forché and Sanders both clearly see their poems as fulfilling political roles, their divergent aesthetic strategies might leave readers wondering about how the fight for social justice figures into such work. One way of answering that question is to shift genres and to address the flood of materials calling on scholars to become more active in their communities' various struggles for social justice. Although it is not difficult to piece together a loose genealogy of intellectuals

concerned with issues of social justice over the past centuries, we are glad to see that during recent years scholars across a variety of disciplines have begun arguing in a systematic manner that those teacher-activists committed to the ends of social justice, while still cherishing the wondrously messy means of democratic life, need to approach issues of social justice not only as sites of research but also as sites of engagement with disadvantaged communities (Crabtree, 1998; Frey, 1998; Hartnett, 1998). Located loosely between Forché's melancholic absence and Sanders's exuberant lists, this social justice literature calls for scholarship that speaks to sweeping ideas by paying deft attention to local needs.

Our thinking here is deeply indebted to Dwight Conquergood, a performance studies professor at Northwestern University who spent years doing research on, and advocating on behalf of, the gangs with whom he lived as a neighbor, teacher, and substitute father figure in the decimated Cabrini Green public housing of Chicago. Conquergood lectured widely about his experiences and wrote about them and their implications for academics and activists in two brilliant book chapters (Conquergood, 1994, 1995). Inspired by Conquergood's bravery, Larry Frey, Barnett Pearce, Mark Pollock, Lee Artz, and Bren Murphy, colleagues at Loyola University in Chicago, implored their fellow speech communication scholars in 1996 to conduct research "not only *about* but *for* and *in the interests of* the people with whom" their research was conducted (Frey, Pearce, Pollock, Artz, & Murphy, 1996, p. 117). This means that scholars can no longer assume they are objective outsiders analyzing static objects of inquiry; instead, in this new model of engaged scholarship, researchers become subjects mutually enmeshed in the processes they are studying. Following Conquergood's lead, then, Frey and his colleagues asked engaged scholars to channel their academic work toward pressing community needs and thus to produce works that "foreground ethical concerns," "commit to structural analyses of ethical problems," "adopt an activist orientation," and "seek identification with others" (p. 111; see also Adelman & Frey, 1997).

For specific ways of thinking about the prospects of teaching on, researching about, and fighting for social justice, we have been influenced by Pierre Bourdieu's "For a Scholarship With Commitment," an essay adapted from a presentation he gave as part of a panel organized by Edward Said for the 1999 meeting of the Modern Language Association (MLA). Bourdieu (2000) recommends that scholars hoping to make a difference pursue four goals: (a) "produce and disseminate instruments of defense against symbolic domination"; (b) engage in "discursive critique," meaning analyses of the "sociological determinants that bear on the producers of dominant discourse"; (c) "counter the pseudoscientific authority of authorized experts"; and (d) "help to create social conditions for the collective production of realist utopias" (p. 42). We may conceptualize these imperatives as pointing to four modes of critical activity. First is helping to teach and popularize the critical thinking skills necessary for citizens to become more conscientious consumers of mass media; we may think of this as *debunking cultural symbolism*. Second is demonstrating through rigorous case studies how dominant discourse reflects the economic imperatives of elites; we may think of this as *analyzing class privilege*. Third is revealing and helping others to reveal the political assumptions and biases of experts within specific fields of inquiry; we may think of this as *becoming rhetorical critics*. And fourth is both imagining and advocating alternative ways of being; we may think of this as *inventing new possibilities*. In that same panel, Elaine Scarry put this fourth imperative in lovely terms—terms that would make Emerson and Whitman proud—arguing that teachers of literature and the arts share a special burden to cultivate in both their students and their communities "a reverence for the work of the imagination" (Scarry, 2000, p. 21; see also Becker, 1994). The task, then, is to fulfill Bourdieu's four critical criteria in forms that meet Scarry's aesthetic criteria, hence our fascination with the possibilities of investigative poetry.

The one obvious shortcoming of the suggestions of Bourdieu, Scarry, and their fellow MLA

participants is that even while asking us to pursue scholarship with commitment, they tend to privilege certain traditional forms of textual production, hence excluding (perhaps unwittingly) many genres of human communication. This explains Conquergood's insistence that engaged scholarship and activism must take into account "the embodied dynamics that constitute meaningful human interaction" by striving for "a hermeneutics of experience, copresence, humility, and vulnerability." Recent literature on ethnography and performance studies has demonstrated the many ways these imperatives may be pursued, often with stunning results, yet as we detail in what follows, we fear that much of this work has tended to fall into a troubling pattern of sensationalism and narcissism, celebrating the raw immediacy of personal experience over any attempt to make structural sense of the larger historical, political, and cultural conditions surrounding daily life.

For both would-be investigative poets in particular and engaged scholars in general, then, the methodological conundrum is striving to balance self with society, text with context, the existential delirium of the now with the scholarly rigor of analysis—all the while honoring the obligations to social justice discussed here. Among the many subgenres and submovements within contemporary arts and letters, ethnopoetics stands as a significant attempt to tackle these conundrums; therefore, we turn to the problems and possibilities of ethnopoetics as a case study of how poets have sought to weave historical, political, and personal materials into a poetry of witness.

■ 3. THE LESSONS AND LEGACIES OF ETHNOPOETICS

Ethnopoetics could be labeled investigative poetry's immediate predecessor, for it was a seminal attempt to make poetry political by merging a critique of colonialism, soft anthropology, and a poetics of witnessing. The term *ethnopoetics* was coined in 1967 by Jerome Rothenberg, Dennis Tedlock, and their colleagues. As Rothenberg (1990) argues, the project of ethnopoetics peaked

during the late 1970s before *Alcheringa*, the magazine that Rothenberg and Tedlock founded in 1970 as an exhibition of ethnopoetic practices, finally sputtered out in 1980 (p. 8). Like defining any advanced cultural and/or academic practice, defining ethnopoetics is difficult (p. 8). As Friedrich (in press) argues, the term is "protean" and has adopted many connotations during the past three decades. For example, foregrounding its role in practicing what has since come to be known as multiculturalism, Tedlock (1992) defines ethnopoetics as the "study of the verbal arts in a worldwide range of languages and cultures" (p. 81). Likewise, Rothenberg (1990) argues that ethnopoetics "refers to an attempt to investigate on a transcultural scale the range of possible poetics that had not only been imagined but put into practice by other human beings" (p. 5). For Tedlock and Rothenberg, then, ethnopoetics is an attempt to think about poetry in a global context and thus to consider the roles of poets as witnesses to, critics of, and activists committed to healing the damage wrought by colonialism and violent modernity. Indeed, Rothenberg argues that one of the chief goals of ethnopoetics is to engage in "the struggle with imperialism, racism, chauvinism, etc." (p. 5). That quotation-ending "etc." is significant, for it indicates the off-hand, sloppy way in which much of Rothenberg's work on ethnopoetics collapses specific political crises into one catch-all basket of wrongs—*you know, modernity, colonialism, racism, chauvinism, etc.*

In contrast to that sweeping "etc.," we have argued here that investigative poetry is committed to a version of synecdoche in which grand claims can be supported only through micrological analyses based on deep historical scholarship. We return to this critique of the sloppy uses of "etc." that seem to plague the Rothenberg school of ethnopoetics later, but for now we turn to Friedrich, who argues that the genre falls into two categories: analytic and synthetic. Whereas analytic ethnopoetics operates on a "meta" level by inspecting other ethnopoetic works, synthetic ethnopoetics either creates an anthropological poem that bridges a gap between two cultures or translates a poem from one culture to another; in

both synthetic cases, the goal is to make one culture familiar to another. For example, Friedrich (in press) praises Gary Snyder's "Anasazi" for "converting a foreign culture and poetry into poems that speak to Western, specifically American, sensitivities." Snyder's poem is a fine example of synthetic ethnopoetics, then, because it does the work of anthropology in the form of poetry, both enticing and enabling readers to transcend their provincialism.

Here is how Snyder (1974) brings the Anasazi to his readers:

Anasazi,
 Anasazi,
 tucked up in clefts in the cliffs
 growing strict fields of corn
 sinking deeper and deeper in earth
 up to your hips in Gods
 your head all turned to eagle-down
 & lightning for knees and elbows
 your eyes full of pollen
 the smell of bats.
 the flavor of sandstone
 grit on the tongue.
 women
 birthing
 at the foot of ladders in the dark.
 trickling streams in hidden canyons
 under the cold rolling desert
 corn-basked wide-eyed
 red baby
 rock lip home,
 Anasazi. (p. 3)

The poem offers a beginner's loving guide to some basic facts about the Anasazi, namely that they live on cliffs in the desert, corn is a major part of their culture, and they live in close proximity with their gods—in short, they are human. Snyder (1974) takes us to a different time and place, to a world he describes in "Control Burn" as one "more/like,/when it belonged to the Indians/Before" (p. 19). Like Rothenberg's "etc.," that poem-closing "Before" indicates the loose way in which this branch of ethnopoetics envisions itself as searching for a premodern, prehistoric, pre-Western world of innocence and virtue. But by conveying his sense of this lost civilization in verse that reads like a series of textbook stereotypes, Snyder teaches us little about the culture of the Anasazi. Indeed, the romanticization of Anasazi life makes the "Before" of "Control Burn" sound like a naïve plea to return to a world that is long gone and to do so while ignoring the fact that even when it existed it was—like our own world—wracked with political, economic, and cultural dilemmas.

Therefore, it is difficult to imagine anthropologists or historians taking such poems seriously. However, for Snyder and some ethnopoets, the function of such poems is not so much to stand as rigorous scholarship as to stand as rhetorical platforms from which to launch scathing critiques of Western modernity. For example, Snyder's (1974) "The Call of the Wild" leaps forward from the Anasazi to offer a blistering critique of "All these Americans up in special cities in the sky/Dumping poisons and explosives" (p. 23). Published amid the war in Vietnam, this clear reference to the saturation bombings sanctioned by President Richard Nixon invites readers to think about the deep historical connections among Indian genocide, environmental destruction, and the butchery under way in the name of defeating communism. By thinking in this multitemporal manner, by holding the Anasazi and the Vietnamese in one's mind at the same time, Snyder gains historical and political leverage for his claim in "Tomorrow's Song" that

The USA slowly lost its mandate
 in the middle and later twentieth century

it never gave the mountains and rivers,
trees and animals,
a vote.

all the people turned away from it. (p. 77)

Reading these lines in the midst of another set of U.S.-triggered wars, raging now in Afghanistan and Iraq, one is struck by the commonsensical—yet so often overlooked—argument that there is an intimate relation between the violence used to demolish nature and the violence used to murder our fellow humans. Indeed, in the face of the well-oiled machinery of death that slaughtered the Indians, that murdered millions of Vietnamese, that is currently leveling Afghanistan and Iraq, and that has left a worldwide trail of ecological destruction in its path, we are struck by how relevant—how powerful—this poem feels 30 years after its first publication (Thomas, 1995).

Whereas Snyder thus uses loosely anthropological poems about the deep past to gain historical leverage for a political critique of the violence of colonialism and ecological destruction, other proponents of ethnopoetics see the genre as more directly concerned with producing a form of cultural criticism that points toward multiculturalism. For example, in his review of ethnopoetics in *Symposium of the Whole: A Range of Discourse Toward an Ethnopoetics*, Turner (1983) argues that ethnopoetics is committed to “making visible.” “The more we are aware of the multiplicity of Others,” he argues, “the more we become aware of the multiple ‘selves’ we contain, the social roles we have ‘internalized’” (pp. 340–341). For Turner, then, ethnopoetics explores the polyglot multiplicity of the social self, thus leading to a self-reflexive humility that opens the door to multiculturalism: “Once they [our tired versions of ‘self’] are ‘made visible’ they are revealed as faintly comic figures. . . . It may be that the recognition of diversity in cultural voices has the therapeutic function of confronting us with the problem of the One and the Many—a new reflexivity in itself” (p. 341). This version of ethnopoetics thus functions as verbal therapy, aspiring to help its readers question their taken-for-granted

cultural assumptions, and includes the assumption that deconstructing tired versions of a unified Western self will help to bridge the distance between these now problematized selves and the multiple Others who linger outside the comfortable living rooms of the West. From this perspective, ethnopoetics aspires to produce cultural criticism capable of functioning both as political engagement and as personal therapy.

Given this framework, let us return to another piece of ethnopoetics, “The New (Colonial) Ball Game” by Robert C. Williamson. A professor of anthropology at the University of Saskatchewan, Williamson specializes in fieldwork on the Inuit Indians. Attempting both to make the humiliations of colonialism clearer for the colonizer and to vent his own frustrations at the difficulty of the process of making the invisible visible, Williamson (1985) offers the following scene:

Then the little man
Who'd just arrived
And felt important
And, of course, responsible
Said nicely, pompously
With British vowels
As tight and round
As his big ass
How everybody should be grateful
For the Christly whites
Who came, of course, to help
And not to satisfy themselves
And here in their own country
For their sakes
We all should
(As it surely must inevitably
Come to be
And the sooner, don't you see

The better for us all)—

Talk White

For once their words will fit

The words we hear the most

OK

Do this

Right now

And hurry, see?

Fuck off. (pp. 189–190)

Brady (2000) claims that “by varying their forms of expression to include poetry, anthropologists attempt to say things that might not be said as effectively or at all any other way” (p. 956). Williamson’s (1985) poem-ending and resounding “Fuck off” surely fits this model, for it is hard to imagine this line finding its way into his professional academic work. So the poem gives Williamson the linguistic latitude to say what he cannot say elsewhere. But does this expressive latitude enable the poet to write a powerful poem? Does the poem show us anything that is not already the subject of hundreds, if not thousands, of stereotypical images? We do not even know where this colonial ballgame takes place, what the date is, who the players are, or what game is being played, so we are in the realm of abstraction, the generic, the ahistorical no-place of generalized anticolonial anger. The same concerns have been raised about Forché’s *Blue Hour*, but at least that poem’s stunning beauty leaves readers awash in reverberating images that (hopefully) provoke further critical reflection. In traditional poetry criticism, such abstract verse might be taken as allegorical, as aspiring to offer a transhistorical moral lesson, yet Williamson’s “Fuck off” hardly counts as an allegory. So even though the poem succeeds as therapy for its author, who must have been carrying that “Fuck off” around with him for quite a while just waiting to launch it into space, the poem fails as a poem and fails as anthropology, amounting ultimately to little more than a

self-serving rant. Moreover, given the professed pedagogical function of ethnopoetics to transcend racism and cultural chauvinism by making the faraway and the strange more human and thus more familiar to Western readers, we would have to say that the poem is a pedagogical failure as well, for it teaches us little about the people being oppressed by the “little man” who speaks with “British vowels.”

We have seen how Snyder merges anthropology, history, and political criticism to produce blistering and beautiful poems that speak directly to the carnage of the war in Vietnam, and we have watched as Williamson uses a poem about colonialism as verbal therapy. To further complicate our treatment of ethnopoetics, let us inquire as well about its practices as a form of cultural translation. *Alcheringa* was among the primary sources of ethnopoetics. Its “Statement of Intention” (1970) claims that “ALCHERINGA will not be a scholarly ‘journal of ethnopoetics’ so much as a place where tribal poetry can appear in English translation & can act (in the oldest & newest of poetic translations) to change men’s minds & lives” (p. 1). For example, consider this version of “What Harm Has She Dreamt?” (1970), a Quechua tribal poem translated in the first issue of *Alcheringa*:

Her long hair is her pillow

the girl is sleeping on her hair.

She cries blood

she does not cry tears

she cries blood.

What is she dreaming?

what harm is she dreaming?

Who hurt her?

who hurt her heart like this?

Whistle to her, whistle, whistle,

little bird

so she wakes

so she wakes now
whistle whistle
little bird. (p. 50)

The poem presumably enables a Western audience to hear a Quechua orator implicate the violence of colonialism, a force so powerful and insipid that it has seeped into the dreams of its victims. The effort is clearly heartfelt, yet without massive prefatory information, we suspect that most readers will learn little from this poem about the tribal culture in question. Where do the tribe members live? Who is causing the tribe's young women to cry tears of blood? These may seem like unfair burdens to place on any individual translation, yet without answering these historically specific questions, the poem/translation cannot help but produce a vague and characterless sense of some premodern other, some far-off culture about which we know little if not nothing. Rather than bridging the gap between smug Western assumptions of privilege and the lived experiences of cultures on the fringes of modernity, those that have been shattered by colonialism, such poems leave readers uninformed, clueless, feeling vaguely touched yet not empowered to take any specific action.

One of the many goals of ethnopoetics was to offer such translations as a corrective to what has been widely criticized as the creeping biases leading to sloppy, if not downright exploitative, translations of the works and cultures of non-Western peoples. As Basso (1988) argues, there is "a growing conviction among linguistic anthropologists that the oral literatures of Native American people have been inaccurately characterized, wrongly represented, and improperly translated" (p. 809). Such translating inaccuracies pose a significant problem for cultural critics from a variety of fields, for as Clifford (1988/1999) demonstrates in *The Predicament of Culture*, anthropologists such as Bronislaw Malinowski allowed their colonial biases to shape their fieldwork on other cultures, hence leading to supposedly scientific reporting that in fact mirrors Western prejudices (pp. 92–113). In response to this anthropological

dilemma, ethnopoets sought to produce translations that were closer to the spirit of their originals, hence trying to bring to Western readers a more authentic sense of the foreign cultures under consideration. Although this is an admirable goal, the fact is that there can be no direct and unclouded transcribing of a tribal poem into forms accessible to Western readers. *All translations are interpretations.*

This fact is demonstrated nicely in *Nineteen Ways of Looking at Wang Wei*, a fascinating study by Weinberger and Paz (1987) of 19 translations of an eighth-century Buddhist poem by Wang Wei. Weinberger and Paz conclude, "In its way a spiritual exercise, translation is dependent on the dissolution of the translator's ego: an absolute humility toward the text. A bad translation is the insistent voice of the translator—that is, when one sees no poet and hears only the translator speaking" (p. 17). But as *Nineteen Ways of Looking* suggests, one always hears the translator speaking—often in rhythms and voices that bring new depth and meaning to the poem. Indeed, because all translations are interpretive acts that, at their best, aspire to fulfill pedagogical and artistic functions, ethnopoets have come to realize that translation is a form of cultural criticism and artistic production in its own right (Alfred, 1999, pp. 55–65; Rosaldo, 1989/1993, pp. 25–87; Smith, 1999). From this perspective, then, translating poems from cultures on the fringes of modernity amounts not so much to a doomed attempt to reclaim a lost past or an unsullied Other as to an attempt to multiply—and hence add diversity to—the voices mingling in our conversations about the norms, obligations, and hopes of modernity.

Given the sweeping nature of that last claim, it is important before closing our discussion of ethnopoetics to add yet another layer of complicating theoretical factors and one more set of readings of ethnopoems. We accomplish both tasks by turning to the work of Ivan Brady, who for many years has been among the leading theorists and artists of this vein of work. Brady is particularly instructive, for whereas we have referred previously to various strains of ethnopoetics, Brady

prefers the term “anthropological poetics.” For Brady (2004), anthropological poetics consists of three interrelated yet distinct categories: “*ethnopoetics*, ‘the emics of native poetries that are midwifed by Western poets’; *native poetry*, the poetry of traditional native poets; and *ethnographic poetics*, the poetic productions of ethnographers” (p. 639). We have already addressed examples of native poetry (the Quechua poem “What Harm Has She Dreamt?”) and “ethnographic poetics” (Snyder’s “Anasazi” and Williamson’s “The New (Colonial) Ball Game”), and so we now focus on Brady’s version of ethnopoetics. In anthropology, “emic” entails using the normative values and symbolic categories of those studied rather than imposing one’s own cultural biases, and a “midwife” is someone who helps in the process of birth in particular and creation more generally (and who may, as in the case of the midwife who birthed the first author’s first child, be a man); thus, for Brady, ethnopoetics relies on the local idioms of groups studied by anthropologists and the flexible forms of Western poetry, translation, and storytelling to aid in the process of creating new forms of expression.

To watch how this process unfolds, we turn to Brady’s (2003) masterful *The Time at Darwin’s Reef: Poetic Explorations in Anthropology and History*. We should note that Brady is an accomplished anthropologist who specializes in Pacific Island cultures, so whereas the ethnopoems and translations discussed previously felt slender on anthropological details, Brady’s poems bristle with a lifetime of research and personal experience; this expertise is reflected in helpful sets of references and introductions to clusters of poems. As evidence of the book’s (and Brady’s) remarkably broad sense of time and place, *Darwin’s Reef* closes with an alphabetical “Place List” and a chronological “Date List,” both of which include information relevant to the other. For example, the Place List begins with “Abaiang Island, February 14, 1840,” closes with “USMCRD, San Diego, California, August 27, 1958,” and includes 60 other place/time entries sandwiched in between (pp. 128–129). Thus, before reading a single poem, readers recognize from glancing through the

Place List and Date List that *Darwin’s Reef* addresses the long history of naval conquest, beginning for the purposes of this book in the South Pacific during the 1840s, culminating in the world’s largest floating arms depot, San Diego, during the late 1950s, and wreaking havoc on all the places in between. The Place List and Date List thus function as semiotic machines of imaginative yet historically grounded suggestions, producing juxtapositions, layerings, and clues meant to lead the reader on geographic and temporal journeys through the wreckage of colonialism.

“Time” at Darwin’s Reef is therefore, as in Snyder’s (1974) *Turtle Island*, less linear than in traditional historical writings and more like the twisting, reverberating, ecological, and even spiritual forms it often takes in folklore. For example, in the poem that names the book, “The Time at Darwin’s Reef”—located with the place and date listings that preface each poem as “Playa de la Muerte, South Pacific, July 4, 1969”—Brady conveys time as “High Time, 1:05 p.m., Fiji time” (local clock time, p. 69), as “Time to Get Down” (from the Cessna flying overhead, p. 69), as “Island Time” (the deep ecological time of natural change, p. 70), as “Copy time in the coral” (the movements of coral reproduction as seen in “ejaculating rocks,” pp. 71–72), as “Magic Time” (p. 73), and so on in a dizzying multiplication of possible times, most of them rooted not in Western notions of clocks but rather in the natural temporal forms of tides, seasons, and life cycles. Taken together, these layered “times” indicate a spiritual sense of completeness, of multiplicities woven into an organic whole, of ecological centeredness.

Lest readers assume that Brady’s gorgeous experiments in temporal confusions lapse into political complacency, “Proem for the Queen of Spain” layers such temporal dislocations against spatial and political fragments, hence creating a sense of bitter poetic judgment. The bulk of the piece is a letter (fictional but true to its historical moment) from Fernando Junipero Dominguez, written in “New Spain” (Mexico) in 1539, in which the writer thanks the queen for bringing to his people “the Embrace of the Mission and the Love of God, Amen” (p. 51). This is a letter, then, that

demonstrates how colonized peoples internalized oppression, in this case in the form of bowing to a foreign god brought to the New World by a foreign empire. Tucked within the letter, however, Brady offers expletive-laced commands from U.S. troops in Vietnam, who shout at the locals "Nam fuckin' xuong dat! Lie the fuck down! Or y'all gonna fuckin' die!" (p. 51). The end matter following the poem provides multiple historical references on the history of Dominguez, so the poem fulfills the pedagogical function of both seducing readers to think historically and then leading them to the necessary information to pursue their own further readings. Much like Snyder's juxtaposing the Anasazi against Nixon's saturation bombing of Vietnamese peasants, then, Brady's inserting dialogue from U.S. soldiers within a 1539 letter to the queen of Spain illustrates a sense of continuity linking the Spanish invasion of Mexico to the U.S. invasion of Vietnam. Against the deeply satisfying ecological times of "Time at Darwin's Reef," then, "Proem for the Queen of Spain" offers a chilling sense of *imperial time*, of the looping repetitive horrors of conquest.

Despite this numbing sense of the ways that imperial powers have savaged weaker peoples for centuries, the bulk of Brady's poems are committed to loving and often gorgeous tributes to the ways that even the strangest Others are in fact not only human but also human in ways that are deeply familiar to Western readers, for as Brady (1991) argues elsewhere, ethnopoems function by "defining the humanity of humankind and positing it as something to be achieved in practice" (p. 6). As demonstrated in *Darwin's Reef*, those practices will be so multifarious, so convoluted, and even so magical that it takes remarkable kindness and patience to appreciate their significance. As Brady (2004) argues, "Ethnographic poets meditate on the ethnographic experience or focus on particulars arranged to elicit themes of general humanity that might apply cross-culturally" (p. 630). Brady's *Darwin's Reef* offers us a glimpse of what such cross-cultural, anthropological, and poetic consciousness might look like, hence expanding our notion of who counts as our brothers and sisters while envisioning a new, better, and

more generous way of being in the world. Thus, although Brady flags these works as "poetic explorations in anthropology and history" in the subtitle to *Darwin's Reef*, our readings of them would add that they are, like Snyder's poems, both politically progressive and deeply spiritual meditations, self-reflexive opportunities for postmoderns to move past irony and cynicism toward something like multicultural commitment.

As demonstrated in the preceding paragraphs, we are deeply moved by Brady's contributions. The only problem—and it is a problem not so much with Brady as with most works of art—is that regimes of truth often obscure the ability or the desire to see another as human. Stereotypes and prejudices cloud judgment, making the generosity demonstrated in Brady's texts a difficult enterprise. Brady (2004) sees the overarching problem of anthropological poetics as one of "plural 'knowables' and the frustrations of choosing among them. (Or having someone choose for you, someone or some institution with the power to enforce the choice, say, society, for example. Or the Taliban. Or your department head)" (p. 632). This is a crucial passage, for we suspect that this parenthetical aside regarding the powers that filter through all life, the powers that allow others to "choose for you," may be the most important blockage preventing the fulfillment of Brady's vision. Indeed, the investigative poetry to which we turn in our closing section begins from the understanding that someone or some structure is always trying to choose for us, meaning that our plural knowables are often the products of oppressive regimes, stultifying cultural norms, or bureaucratic deadweight. Whereas the ethnographic poetry studied here offers us a compelling set of models for thinking critically about and engaging politically in the world—with Brady's *Darwin's Reef* standing as our best exemplar of the rich possibilities of this work—we still want to ask more from investigative poetry, for without a nuanced and pedagogically rich articulation of how multiple forms of power filter through, and sometimes even structure, our contexts of action, we can never know how to rhetorically build consensus and common humanity.

In short, in the final section, we propose—not so much as a critique of ethnographic poetry as a supplement to it—that society’s power to choose for us is not an aside but rather the focal point of poetic criticism. The works we address in what follows thus move away from a sense of anthropological wonder toward hard-hitting political and poetic critiques of specific regimes of power.

■ 4. THREE MODELS OF INVESTIGATIVE POETRY: DOS PASSOS, FORCHÉ, AND SCOTT

The works considered here are immersed completely in, and are fully aware of their complicity with, the contradictions of U.S. power; they accordingly focus on case studies of economic, military, political, and cultural oppression. Indeed, the poems considered in this section work imminently, constructing their investigative poetry from within the very social systems they hope to examine. Whereas the ethnographic poetry considered previously works in an alluring sideways manner, thinking about U.S. power by working along its edges and using anthropology to teach us about the peoples affected by U.S. power, the works considered in what follows take a more direct approach. In fact, Peter Dale Scott, in particular, has been attacked by those who find his poems too political and not poetic enough. Our comments in this section therefore are not meant to stand as normative judgments about what is a better or more powerful form of poetry; rather, we offer them as the final piece of our puzzle, as a closing set of options and models of how our best poets have struggled to merge historical and political criticism in a form of investigative poetry.

First among these models is John Dos Passos’s U.S.A. trilogy, consisting of *The 42nd Parallel* (1930/1969c), *Nineteen Nineteen* (1932/1969a), and *The Big Money* (1936/1969b). The bulk of these sprawling novels consists of traditional narratives following the misadventures of characters confronted with the various economic, cultural, and political complications following from the manic

boom-and-bust cycles of unregulated capitalism and America’s entry into World War I. Each story is followed, however, by short sections titled Newsreels and the Camera Eye and by poetic biographies of the period’s key players. The Newsreels consist of newspaper headlines, snippets of newspaper stories, and snatched refrains from popular songs—*Oh say can you see . . . , Where do we go from here, boys?* Arrayed on the page as a string of disconnected shards of evidence, these Newsreels provide both a clear fore-runner to the form of Sanders’s *America* and an eerie glimpse into the world of popular culture, mass-produced misinformation, and the vast majority of events that have simply fallen into historical oblivion.

The Newsreels are followed by Camera Eye sections in which Dos Passos offers disjointed observations, literally camera shots of turmoil. In this case, we watch the angry response of socialists in Paris to the Treaty of Versailles: “at the République à bass la guerre MORT AUX VACHES à bas le Paix de Assassins they’ve torn up the gratings from around the trees and are throwing stones and bits of castirons at the fancydressed Republican Guards hissing whistling poking at the horses with umbrellas scraps of the *International*” (Dos Passos, 1932/1969a, pp. 396–397). As indicated by the random gaps in the passages just quoted, the confusion as to who is speaking, and the bristling sense of confused immediacy, these sections fade into the stream of consciousness, thus offering readers glimpses into the fractured experience of living daily life amid epochal historical transformations. Dos Passos follows these blasts of existential confusion with poetic biographies, from which we have taken this verse on Randolph S. Bourne:

This little sparrow like man
tiny twisted bit of flesh in a black cape,
always in pain and ailing,
put a pebble in his sling
and hit Goliath in the forehead with it
War, he wrote, is the health of the state. (p. 120)

Made popular in Zinn's (1980) magnificent *A People's History of the United States*, Bourne's phrase has stood for generations as an indictment of U.S. militarism (pp. 350–367). By chronicling the struggles of this largely forgotten figure, Dos Passos's biographical poem enriches our sense of American history, making it more somber and personal. The combination of the explanatory narratives, the evidence-offering Newsreels, the existentially rich Camera Eye sections, and the poetic biographies offers readers four perspectives from which to approach history. Dos Passos thus strives to merge these four modes of writing to form a collective whole capable of thinking simultaneously about the deep structural integrity of history and the baffling, awestruck wonder and confusion that fills each small moment of time.

A second important model of textual production influencing our argument here is provided by Forché's *The Country Between Us* (1981) and *The Angel of History* (1994), her two books prior to *Blue Hour*. Based on her journalistic work in El Salvador during the height of that country's civil war, *The Country Between Us* offers a model for a poetry of witness in which the poet is not only a chronicler of hope and terror but also a participant in the processes she examines. The poems in this remarkable book thus veer from scalding political critiques of Salvadoran tyrants to self-implicating ruminations on how even the most mundane pleasures in the United States bear the stain of the violence our government funds in the Third World. Like so many of us who find that our grassroots political work changes the ways that we think about freedom (Hartnett, 2003; Tannenbaum, 2000), Forché finds that living in close proximity to barbarism in El Salvador casts shadows across daily space. Forché (1981) is thus unnerved by the sense of decadence and ease signaled by "the iced drinks and paper umbrellas, clean / toilets and Los Angeles palm trees moving / like lean women" (p. 17). Like so many of us, she finds the happy ignorance of many Americans regarding the brutality that their country foists on the world to be unbearable. Speaking to a friend, she laments,

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you were born to an island of greed
and grace where you have the sense
of yourself as apart from others. It is
not your right to feel powerless. Better
people than you were powerless. (p. 20)

Many of these better people appear in the pages of *The Angel of History*, where Forché (1994) expands her poetry of witness to encompass the European Holocaust and the impact of the United States dropping nuclear bombs on Japan. Taking her title from the well-known story told in Benjamin's (1940/1969) "Theses on the Philosophy of History," where an angel is blown backward into the future while watching the present produce an ever-growing pile of wreckage (pp. 257–258), Forché tackles the horrors of World War II in personal poems full of stories of her lost relatives and friends. While leading readers on this personally inflected historical journey into barbarism, Forché speculates—frequently through the voices of other writers and philosophers—on the possibilities of forgiveness. Much like Brady's *Darwin's Reef*, then, *The Angel of History* is less an investigative attempt to name names and pinpoint causes than a philosophical attempt to make sense of the persistence of hope in the face of unspeakable suffering. Aphoristic and enigmatic—and thus nearly impossible to quote without including pages of supporting material—the poems accumulate power from their many references to other texts, hence offering readers less a definitive statement than a series of beautiful theses, each equipped with what amounts to a list of suggested readings. Thus, while embodying the wonder and openness of elegant poetry, *The Angel of History* stands ultimately as a pedagogical tool for wondering what it means to cherish art during an age of destruction.

The third, and by far the most important, model of investigative poetry is Peter Dale Scott's *Seculum* trilogy. The first part of the trilogy, *Coming to Jakarta: A Poem about Terror* (1988), has been lauded in *The Boston Review* as "remarkable and unnerving" (Weiner, 1995, p. 31), in

London's *Times Literary Supplement* as "a work of great richness and complexity" (Gunn, 1991, p. 19), in *Parnassus* as "revolutionary" (Campbell, 1993, p. 395), and in a special issue of *AGNI*—by no less a national hero than the Poet Laureate Robert Hass—as "the most important political poem to appear in the English language in a very long time" (Hass, 1990, p. 333). Like these enthusiastic reviewers, we have been deeply impressed by the sophistication and depth of Scott's political analysis, the epic sweep of his historical knowledge, the revelatory honesty of his self-implicating poems, and the sheer beauty of his verse. By interweaving these four qualities—political acumen, historical grounding, self-reflexivity, and poetic beauty—Scott produces what we call *an interdisciplinary aesthetics of provisional eloquence*. That is, by merging the four qualities just noted, and by doing so while confronting a political calamity, Scott provides us with an empowering and elegant example of the search for grace amid terror.

Coming to Jakarta was triggered by Scott's (1988) need to write "about the 1965 massacre/of Indonesians by Indonesians" (p. 24) while simultaneously questioning his own complicity—as poet, professor, one-time diplomat, father, husband, and activist—in the events that led to the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA)-sponsored butchery of more than 500,000 Indonesian "communists" following the coup that replaced Sukarno with Suharto.⁶ For example, in the second poem of *Coming to Jakarta*, we find Scott suffering from

the uprising in my stomach
 against so much good food and
 wine America or was it
 giving one last broadcast too many
 about the Letelier assassins
 the heroin traffic
 a subject I no longer hope
 to get a handle on. (p. 10)⁷

These lines depict Scott as an activist/intellectual speaking publicly about the subterranean links between assassination politics and the drug war, as a typical overconsumer gorged on too much decadence, and as a consummate researcher who, suffering from the nausea brought on by too much familiarity with evil, wishes that the facts would mysteriously vanish into the comforting oblivion of ignorance—but of course they do not.⁸ Instead, history forces itself mercilessly onto Scott (1988), prodding him to engage in a relentless pursuit of *evidence*, dragging him deeper and deeper into both the psychology and the political economy of terror:

Already we are descending
 into these shadows which
 hang about as if there
 were something much more urgent
 left wholly unsaid. (p. 13)

Readers interested in the facts of the Indonesian massacre will find more than 100 sources listed in Scott's notes, which situate Suharto's coup and the ensuing anticommunist genocide within the overlapping politico-economic framework of post-World War II international finance; the transition from modern, empire-driven, and ideologically driven colonialism into the postmodern neocolonialism of multinational corporations, underground think tanks, and globetrotting mercenaries; and the continuing subversion of democratic politics at the behest of the global caste-bound thugs who run secret governments as if they were their own private shooting galleries. The research used to document these charges is breathtaking, thus offering readers a tutorial in how to pursue interdisciplinary political criticism. In this sense, then, Scott is perhaps the most impressive cobbler of what we saw Sanders (1976) refer to earlier as "a melodic blizzard of data-fragments" (p. 9).

But whereas such melodic blizzards might leave many readers baffled, or at least searching for personal relevance in such waves of "data-fragments,"

Scott weaves his remarkable research around and through moments of daily life, hence showing us how power courses through even the most mundane activities. For example, watch here as Scott (1988) links the disparate strands of the international political economy of terror, U.S. weapons manufacturers, Indonesian and Saudi tycoons, the refuse of Nixon's henchmen, and the friendly neighborhood bank:

and I thought of Adnan Khashoggi
 the Indonesian shipping magnate
 Saudi friend of Pak
 Chung Hee and Roy Furmak
 \$106 million
 in Lockheed commissions
 to Khashoggi alone
 and twice that
 amount withdrawn by Khashoggi
 from Rebozo's bank in Key Biscayne
 in May and November '72
 and of Lim Suharto's *cukong*
 who has bought the Hibernian bank
 with a branch on the Berkeley campus
 from profits on arms deals. (pp. 127–128)⁹

Scott's awesome courage in exposing the shadowy operatives and offshore bankers and behind-the-scenes boardroom connections that fuel imperialism, in conjunction with his sweeping grasp of history and his uncanny ability to render such topics in recognizable terms—a *branch on the Berkeley campus*—render *Coming to Jakarta* a world-class example of the detailed historical and political analysis needed to render investigative poetry persuasive.

In fact, it took nearly 15 years following the publication of *Coming to Jakarta* for the mainstream

media to begin to address the underworld U.S.–Indonesia connections first exposed in Scott's poem. For example, it is now known that Freeport MacMoRan, Texaco, Mobil, Raytheon, Hughes Aircraft, and Merrill Lynch (among others) are major financial sponsors of the U.S.–Indonesia Society, a lobbying group cochaired by President Ronald Reagan's Secretary of State, George Schultz, and featuring James Riady as a trustee and John Huang as a consultant. Thus, two of the central figures (Riady and Huang) in one of the Democratic party campaign finance scandals that rocked the Clinton presidency turned out to be significant U.S.–Indonesia Society figures. Press (1997) observed at the time that the society was "a public relations organ for the Suharto regime" (p. 19). Thus, beneath the surface scandal of the Democratic party accepting illegal foreign campaign contributions, journalists found the much deeper scandal of continuing links among Suharto's brutal regime, U.S.-based transnationals, and the U.S. government. That Scott's *Coming to Jakarta* exposed these connections 15 years before the mainstream press would even consider them demonstrates the remarkable depth and courage of the poem's political and historical analysis. Using Scott's *Coming to Jakarta* as a model, then, we argue that investigative poetry uses rigorous research to name names, to show who owns what and whom, and thus to lay bare the institutional and economic structures supporting specific modes of oppression.

Scott's work is just as impressive, however, as an experiment in reconstructing a new and problematic sense of an endlessly compromised self in the face of terror, hence Scott's revelation that

To have learnt from terror
 to see oneself
 as part of the enemy
 can be a reassurance
 whatever it is
 arises within us. (p. 62)

Like the poems of Dos Passos and Forché, then, Scott's poems perform a dialectical interweaving of perspectives. Each well-documented scene of political barbarism segues into personal observations on the nature of complicity, each personal rumination on complicity fades into questions of commitment and the historical obligation of engaged citizens to at least attempt to speak truth to power, and each engagement with the numbing expanse of global power politics, in turn, leads back to the suspicion that perhaps grace can only be found, after all, amid those moments when daily life is lived as an aesthetic experience. Hence the prevalence in *Listening to the Candle* (Scott, 1992), the second part of the *Seculum* trilogy, of simple pleasures

focused on the mysteries
of dailiness
baking bread on Saturdays
smelling the freshness
of sun-dried laundry
while you fold the sheet
against yourself
from the garden line. (p. 94)

Later in the poem, after chronicling the December 1980 murder of American evangelicals working with peasants in El Salvador, Scott (1992) suggests that

in such a time it is still good
having danced until midnight
to Mika's and John's new band
after the family lasagna
all generations
our children and their friends
dancing together singly. (p. 106)

Terror and grace thus jostle each other within the infinitely textured particulars of the day:

From the Bay Bridge
on the way home from the opera
you could look down on the searchlights
of the Oakland Army Terminal
where they loaded the containers
of pellet-bombs and napalm. (Scott, 1988,
p. 103)

Like Forché's line about "aria in time of war," then, Scott shows us how even the drive home from the opera, that quintessential marker of high art, leads one past places of mass-produced violence. *If you look around*, Scott tells us, *you will find yourself implicated in things you have previously spent a great deal of time and energy pretending not to recognize.*

These epiphanic moments of realization need not be paralyzing, however, as Scott shows us again and again how to channel them into a renewed commitment to work not only politically for peace and justice but also personally for something approaching kindness. In fact, in *Minding the Darkness*, the third volume of the *Seculum* trilogy, Scott (2000) turns increasingly to Buddhism as a way of practicing what he calls mindfulness. Much like Snyder's ecological consciousness in *Turtle Island*, or Brady's spiritual sense of time in *Darwin's Reef*, Scott's Buddhism is woven throughout the book as a counterthread to his political criticism. Scott demonstrates its challenges and opportunities most explicitly in four poems chronicling Buddhist retreats (pp. 72–80, 140–148, 221–229, 244). In contrast to the scathing investigative poetry of *Coming to Jakarta* and the meditative work in *Listening to the Candle*, then, *Minding the Darkness* demonstrates a middle way of mindful politics, of both critique and contemplation. This turn to Buddhism clearly illustrates Scott's hankering less for the smoking gun that will rip away the lies of any given regime than for the *wisdom* that will help him to live amid so

much waste and cruelty. Indeed, by tracking down his footnotes; by rambling through his childhood traumas and parental pleasures; by forcing ourselves to confront both his and our complicity with the global carnage of low-intensity anticommunism, unabashed designer capitalism, and the pleasures of high culture; by making paratactical leaps from fragmentary images and quotations toward our own approximate understanding of the text; and by enthusiastically embodying a turn toward Buddhist values, Scott teaches attentive readers to treat the poem as a heuristic—even therapeutic—device. The mysterious “something much more urgent / left wholly unsaid” (Scott, 1988, p. 13) appears here to be the realization that poetry—as a trigger for research, as a source of grace, as a means of confronting terror, as a process of self-critique and reconstruction—amounts to a self-regenerating process in which, as Scott says in an interview, “one works through personal resistance and disempowerment to re-empowerment” (Scott, 1990, p. 303).

We are reminded here of Terrence Des Pres’s comment in a roundtable discussion on the possibilities of political poetry that

we turn where we can for sustenance, and some of us take poetry seriously in exactly this way. . . . When it comes to the Bomb, or just to the prospect of empires in endless conflict, it seems clear we cannot do very much very fast. So the immediate question isn’t what to do but *how to live*, and some of us, at least, turn for help to poetry. (Des Pres, 1986, p. 21)

The sustenance of *Coming to Jakarta*, *Listening to the Candle*, and *Minding the Darkness* derives from the pleasures of sharing one’s burden as an informed and engaged citizen in a rapidly unraveling democracy while not devolving into solipsism, cynicism, or madness. Hence Scott’s (1988) prudent advice about how to live in the closing section of *Coming to Jakarta*:

as for those of us
 who are lucky enough
 not to sit hypnotized

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our hands on the steering wheel
 which seems to have detached itself
 from the speeding vehicle
 it is our job to say
 relax trust
 spend more time with your children
 things can only go
 a little better
 if you do not hang on so hard. (p. 129)

■ 5. CONCLUSION

We began our essay with the claim that despite the prevalence of buzzwords indicating the rise of *interdisciplinarity* and intellectual *border crossing*, the vast majority of scholarly production falls under the aegis of time-worn departmental and disciplinary norms. We offered ethnographic and investigative poetry as ways of moving past this hypocrisy. Likewise, we argued that despite the cultural cache of terms such as *radical*, *intervention*, and *transgression*, we know of only an embarrassingly small number of academics whose work engages in social justice concerns. The second section of this essay accordingly offered some guidelines for thinking about how to make social justice more central to what humanists do. The third and fourth sections then offered case studies examining how different poets have produced politically driven and interdisciplinary investigative poems. Taken together, the four sections of the essay offer concrete examples of how scholars, artists, and activists might begin tackling the seven methodological proposals with which we opened the essay. We therefore hope to have offered readers a series of working models, conceptual prompts, and historical examples of how to merge scholarship and poetry, social justice and self-reflection, hence producing texts that may serve the role of “aria in time of war.” Indeed, given the remarkable proliferation of cultural offerings swimming in an apparently ever more specialized world of niche consumerism—a

trend as problematic in poetry as in the general culture at large—the combination of detailed case studies and sweeping historical claims that marks the best investigative poetry offers a powerful model of engaged, artful, and cosmopolitan citizenship. At their best, these models of art in time of war might well provide us, to borrow a phrase from an interview with Sanders (1997), “pathways through the chaos.”

■ NOTES

1. Birkerts (1987) proceeds to make a formalist argument demonstrating his allegiance to a traditional version of poetry and an emaciated version of politics. For more empowering responses to this question, see the essays collected in Jones (1985). For more experimental responses, see the remarkable works in Bernstein (1990) and Monroe (1996). For more programmatic responses, see “The Art of the Manifesto” (1998).

2. For a case study of the difference between healthy mourning and paralyzing melancholia, see Kaplan (2001). See also Freud (1963, pp. 164–179) for his diagnosis of the problem.

3. The passages quoted here are offered in praise of Ezra Pound, whose use of such “data clusters” was poetically dubious at best and politically dangerous at worst (Hartnett, 1993). On the rhetorical complexities of synecdoche, see Hartnett (2002, pp. 155–172).

4. Although long a subject of scholarly analysis, the pleasures of lynch mobs came to popular attention via *Without Sanctuary: Lynching Photography in America*, a show that opened at the New York Historical Society on March 14, 2000, and that has subsequently toured the nation, searing into the minds of its many viewers images of lynch mobs laughing, drinking, barbecuing, and otherwise enjoying the spectacle of death. Some of the images from the exhibit may be seen online at the homepage of the New York Historical Society or in Allen (2000). See also the comments on the pleasures of racial violence in Hartman (1997).

5. To study the legislation alluded to here, see “An Act to Punish Acts of Interference . . .” (June 15, 1917) and “An Act to Amend . . .” (April 16, 1918)—the so-called Espionage Acts—from *Statutes at Large of the United States of America* (U.S. Congress, 1919, pp. 217–231, 531). See also “Chapter 75,” the May 16, 1918, amendment to the Espionage Act, in *Statutes of the United States of America* (U.S. Congress, 1918, pp.

553–554). For Eugene Victor Debs’s heroic response to these acts, see his June 16, 1918, “Canton Speech” in *The Debs White Book* (n.d., pp. 3–64). For the U.S. Supreme Court’s upholding these laws, see *Schenck v. U.S.*, *Frohwerk v. U.S.*, and *Debs v. U.S.* (all May 1919) in *The Supreme Court Reporter* (West Publishing, 1920, pp. 247–254). This case is cited by lawyers as 39 S. Ct. 247 (1919).

6. For analyses of Suharto’s domination of Indonesia, his brutal 1975 invasion of East Timor, and Jakarta’s place in the new global economy, see Anderson (1995), Curtis (1995–1996), and Fabrikant (1996). U.S. complicity with Suharto’s occupation of East Timor and his bloody repression of oppositional groups in Indonesia continues. In fact, since Suharto’s December 1975 invasion of East Timor, in which more than 200,000 people—more than 25% of the population—were slaughtered, the United States has sold Indonesia more than \$1.1 billion worth of advanced weaponry. The Clinton administration alone sold close to \$270 million worth of arms to Suharto (see Klare, 1994, and Washburn, 1997). Suharto was finally forced from power in the spring of 1998. For coverage of his departure, see Mydans (1998) and any major newspaper during the latter half of April and all of May 1998.

7. Orlando Letelier, the Chilean ambassador to the United States, was killed by a car bomb in Washington, D.C., in September 1976. Right-wing Cuban expatriates, trained by DINA (the Chilean Secret Service) and funded through illegal CIA connections, claimed responsibility for the blast. See Scott and Marshall (1991, pp. 30–34).

8. The impulse here is reminiscent of the lament that “There are times/ I wish my ignorance were/ more complete” in Hass (1973, p. 61). In fact, Scott (1990) later wrote of his “growing self-hatred for carrying around a head full of horrors which most people were less and less willing to hear about” (p. 300).

9. Khashoggi’s perpetual role as banker to terrorists and thugs has been reprised in his post-9/11 acting as well, in this case working with Richard Perle, the recently disgraced member of President George W. Bush’s Defense Policy Board. See Hersh (2004, pp. 189–201).

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