

A CONFEDERATION OF DEFENCES

A Postcolonial Study of Intercultural Projection

by

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DECLARATION

I, Katayoun Tamara Medhat confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis.

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ABSTRACT

The ethnographic study of organisational dynamics and bureaucratic process in an Indian Health Service mental health clinic and a tribal alcohol rehabilitation programme is approached through a reframing of dichotomous notions of *function* and *dysfunction* and *order* and *disorder*.

Bureaucratic stricture in healthcare protocol contrasts with the rapacious ‘dysfunctionality’ that propels team relations, which are variously broached by staff through bureaucratic complaints procedures, strategic manipulation and witchcraft accusations. Bureaucracy and group (dys-) function represent modes of processing post-colonial discontent while also manifesting the carnivalization and hybridisation of cultural mores. The projective dynamics that are apparent in historical developments and that continue to feed current intercultural relations remain largely unacknowledged. They become evident however in the conceptualisation of hierarchy and its responsibilities, in attitudes towards bureaucracy, and in particular around the cultural construction of alcohol and ‘Indian Drinking’.

Alcohol is a mutable spirit, an ‘object of desire’ and a destructive foe: it offers cathartic release, empowerment and occasion for hedonistic enjoyment. By some of the survivors of colonialism it is also perceived in effect as a biological weapon: a colonially imported, intentionally employed inter-generationally active toxin that has invaded and corrupted Native genes. The notion of corruption, loss and change is explored in the context of how culture, ‘traditions’ and language are shaped, reduced, manipulated and mediated in ways that conveniently fit into the strictures and structures of contemporary official frameworks.

In its conclusion the study proposes a relational theory of ‘adversarial intimacy’, an idea inspired by Roger Caillois’ exploration of mimicry as symbiotic drive akin to sympathetic magic, where rivalrous organisms are propelled towards a compulsive emulation of each other in homage to the greater system they are part of.

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INTRODUCTION

PROLOGUE

“White Thunder, a man around forty, speaks less English than Menomini, and that is a strong indictment, for his Menomini is atrocious. His vocabulary is small; his inflections are often barbarous, he constructs sentences of a few threadbare models. He may be said to speak no language tolerably”¹

* * *

“All of tree logic is logic of tracing and of reproduction. In linguistics as in psychoanalysis its object is an unconscious that is itself representative, crystallized into codified complexes, laid out along a genetic axis and distributed within a syntagmatic structure. Its goal is to describe a de facto state, to maintain balance in intersubjective relations, or to explore an unconscious that is already there from the start, lurking in the dark recesses of memory and language ...

The rhizome is altogether different, a map and not a tracing. ... The map does not reproduce an unconscious closed in upon itself. It constructs the unconscious ... The map is open and connectable in all of its dimensions; it is detachable, index reversible, susceptible to constant modification.”

“The rhizome itself assumes very diverse forms, from rarefied surface extension in all directions to concretion into bulbs and tubers (...) any point of a rhizome can be connected to anything other, and must be. ...Multiplicities are rhizomatic ...

A multiplicity has neither subject nor object, only determination, magnitudes, and dimensions that cannot increase in number without the multiplicity changing in nature”²

¹ Hymes, 1974:72

² Deleuze & Guattari; 1988: 8 ff

‘ORIGINS’

“Now the strange thing about this silly if not desperate place between the real and the really made-up is that it appears to be where most of us spend most of our time as epistemically correct, socially created, and occasionally creative beings.

We dissimulate. We act and have to act as if mischief were not afoot in the kingdom of the real and that all around the ground lay firm. That is what the public secret, the facticity of the social fact, being a social being, is all about. No matter how sophisticated we may be as to the constructed and arbitrary character of our practices, including our practices of representation, our practice of practices is one of actively forgetting such mischief each time we open our mouths to ask for something or to make a statement.

Try to imagine what would happen if we didn’t in daily practice thus conspire to actively forget what Saussure called “the arbitrariness of the sign”? Or try the opposite experiment. Try to imagine living in a world where signs were indeed ‘natural’.³

The conceptual origins of this thesis lie in a long-evolved curiosity about how in everyday meaning-making arbitrariness is bolstered by the dogmatic conjecture of certainty.

Fault-lines between how things appear to be, how they are perceived to be and how they are wished to be are evident in most domains of individual, cultural and social organisation, yet overlooked in the pursuit of what appear to be collective fantasies of coherence.

Cultural meaning making is a wilful process that relies on the intricate censoring of discomfiting elements in the service of the phantasm of consistency.

What is here referred to as incongruence is not the absence of meaning- nor is it ‘meaninglessness’- but rather the reverse:

It is the pluralist surfeit of simultaneously co-existing conflicting dynamics, meanings and perspectives that taxes what I propose is a primitive⁴ need for coherence, perhaps reflecting early developmental experiences in the pursuit of a reliable “object.”

* * *

³ Taussig; 1993: xvii ff

⁴ “The term "primitive" (sometimes "primeval" or "primal") is close to "archaic," but should be distinguished from the latter in that "primitive" refers not to origins but rather to an anthropological or historical description of cultural phenomena (myths, religions, legends) or modes of thinking that remain unconscious in modern, civilized humans.” International Dictionary of Psychoanalysis Online; <http://www.enotes.com/psychoanalysis-encyclopedia/primitive>

The thesis started, soberly enough, as a proposal to explore ‘bi-cultural negotiation around mental health service provision in the Navajo Indian Health Service’.⁵

Contemporary health services on the Navajo Nation are held as a testimony to tenacious negotiation and successful cooperation between Anglos and Navajo.⁶

That these negotiations lead to results is particularly remarkable in the context of the historically problematic relations between the Navajo tribe and the federal government.

In common with many tribes the Navajo were subjected to military interventions, forcible relocation, harsh legislature that curbed traditional custom and organisation, and comprehensive attempts of enforced cultural assimilation.

In view of previous bruising experiences, the Navajo people were not inclined to trust the federal government’s intentions; also concepts of Western ‘curing’ in many ways stood in opposition to traditional Navajo healing beliefs. At the most basic level of intercultural conceptual controversy was the idea of ‘hospitals.’ To the Navajo hospitals were ‘death-houses’.

That the sick could be cured in locations where patients had died was anathema to a people adhering to strict prohibitions regarding contact with the dead.⁷

Hence an ethnographic study of an IHS health centre and hospital seemed a good starting point for a study exploring current intercultural dynamics in the context of historical legacies.

My interest in the Indian Health Service was not purely academic. As an inter-culturally trained, UKCP registered psychotherapist this was an opportunity to gather clinical experience of another setting and culture, and hopefully to ‘give something back’ to the milieu I wanted to study.

This is how I came to the Hózhóní Clinic at the Yádootl’izh Health Center, who had some use for the auxiliary clinical help I was offering in exchange for the opportunity to study clinical teamwork and ‘intercultural negotiation’.

⁵ Further called IHS in the text

⁶ Adair;1988

⁷ Trennert;1998

As is often the case my proposal did not find its match in reality and I gradually diverted from my initial plan for a clinical ethnography.

At the Clinic there was little evidence of the ‘bicultural conceptual treatment negotiation’ I had anticipated. More salient than matters of culture was the manifest supremacy of bureaucracy in clinical work; clinicians’ game acceptance of the bureaucratic doctrine and its consequences for patients; and the ‘orderly’ processes by which ‘disorderly’ dynamics were dealt with at the clinic. A conspicuous contrast to organisational strictures and structures emerged through narratives of individuals who presented at the clinic, and whose life-experiences were duly transformed into the ‘patient histories’, ‘diagnostic categories’, and ‘Mental Health Status’ evaluations that clinicians fed into data-bases.

Maybe I found it difficult to commit to a clinical ethnography because the bureaucratic doctrine had its intended effect of ‘congealing the spirit’ (with apologies to Max Weber), and subduing its agents into compliance.

The more I looked, the less I saw.

In terms of ethnographic methodology it seemed that I ‘acquired’ the most illuminating material without intentionality; it was found in the scribbling on the margins rather than in the text proper, so to speak.

The effects of being immersed in a rigidly ordered milieu may to some degree have fuelled my interest in the subject of (Indian) drinking.

Instead of the scourge that in this context drinking was commonly held to be, alcohol started to appear as a plausible Dionysian antidote to the Protestant disciplinarian ethos. I empathised with the anthropologist Nancy Lurie’s interpretation that Indian drinking is ‘the world’s oldest on-going protest demonstration’.⁸

⁸ Lurie; 1971;

This is not to say that clinicians drank to alleviate the oppression of bureaucracy (as far as I know a majority of staff were teetotal), but it is conceiving of bureaucracy and alcohol and complementary composites of the colonial project’s imports.

Drinking in any case seemed a justified course of action when held against the sanctioned alternative of stricture and 'doxic submission to arbitrary systems of order'.⁹

This impression led to the hypothesis of 'invertible dichotomies' of order and disorder, function and dys-function that run through this thesis.

* * *

FIELDWORK

My voluntary work in the pseudonymous Hózhóní Clinic at the Yádootl'izh Health Center on the Navajo Nation, and the tribal Department of Behavioral Health's¹⁰ outpatient alcohol rehabilitation services lasted approximately twelve months from December 2004 to November 2005.

In addition to 'shadowing' clinicians and counsellors, accompanying staff on home-visits, observing group-sessions, assessments, team-meetings, supervision and social outings, at the IHS I conducted diagnostic 'Intakes', occasionally saw patients for counselling sessions and co-facilitated the Anger Management Group.

At the Hózhóní Clinic assistance was most needed with 'Intakes' when new patients came to the Clinic and had to be assessed, diagnosed and 'data-processed'. The facilitators of the Anger Management Group were open to letting me attend groups and co-facilitate if needed.

Occasionally, depending on demand, I saw people for counselling.

About a month after I had started at the Hózhóní at a social occasion I was introduced to the clinical supervisor of the tribal alcohol rehabilitation programme (DBHS Day Treatment

⁹ To paraphrase Pierre Bourdieu

¹⁰ Further referred to as: DBHS

Services), who generously offered the opportunity to be a participant observer of the programme, provided the DBHS team agreed to my presence. This was one of the serendipitous coincidences that let me begin fieldwork on a 'high'. Equally generously a number of teachers at the local Community College agreed to let me 'audit' their classes.

At the DBHS I participated in groups and supervision, traditional diagnostic ceremonies and attended the fortnightly female sweat-lodge. I attended 'whatever was going' in terms of in-house and external training seminars, lectures and conferences, and regularly went to community- and political gatherings, regional human relation committees, and outreach- and community education initiatives. At the local Diné College and the regional Community College I attended Navajo language classes and Cultural Education courses.

Since 2005 I have gone back most years to spend time in the region. Contact and friendships with various people I met then are ongoing.

These longitudinal contacts helped to get some perspective into the clinical part of the ethnography.

With certain events it had been difficult to distinguish what was representative of the normative status quo and what were extra-ordinary occurrences brought about by crises. Some developments that at the time of fieldwork seemed cataclysmic or nascent, over the years manifested as part of a cyclical temporal and historical trajectory- as for instance in the case of the calamitous construction and de-construction of organisational power and alliance that I witnessed at the Hózhóní Clinic..

"Hindsight is always 20/20 vision" as an informant once told me.

* * *

A number of individuals and IHS and DBHS staff consented to taped interviews and were very generous in the information they shared. People who wanted to could choose their own pseudonyms, providing that it was not the name of a 'real person' known to us. Should names correspond to real-life individuals then this is unintentional.

Within this thesis all names- this includes individuals', organisations', locations' and pets' names- have been changed, with the exception of Larry King's by whose public lecture on the processing of intergenerational conflict among Navajo I was inspired to write Chapter Two of the thesis.

In cases where information is in the public domain, in media and on the internet, original names and locations have been retained.¹¹

I anonymised all personal information and sometimes used composite identities to prevent identification. Most interviewees were given CD copies of their interviews together with copies of their consent forms.¹²

I made it a rule to exclude patients from my inquiry and not to actively pursue any questions pertaining to my study with clients.

At the IHS contact with clients was through diagnostic assessment and occasional counselling sessions, and through the Anger Management Groups that ran over ten weeks working with court-mandated clients taking a cognitive-behavioural and group-approach.

In the DBHS rehabilitation services contact with clients was less formal and boundaried. The programme revolved around group-work and so there was a lot of occasion for client contact.

Sweat-lodges I found to be a particularly potent group-experience; one that dissolved organisational roles and where we all became part of a communal healing-process.

At the evening group, the facilitator would provide food and we all ate and socialized together.

Clients often took the initiative to explain things, instruct me on certain issues, share personal

¹¹ See Appendix: 'Trouble in Cyberspace'

¹² A number of sound-files unfortunately turned out to be corrupted, due to problems with the MP3 recording equipment.

concerns and- not to forget- tell jokes. Some of the issues raised were ‘generic’ in that they seemed to be widely shared, as for instance the impact of boarding-school experiences on individuals. Composites of these narratives appear in the study.

If the representation of clinical process in this thesis seems rather critical, this is not intended to reflect on staff. Clinicians did their best according to the system they worked in. Neither is this meant to be an indictment of the Indian Health Services or Navajo health services.

If at all then it is an indictment of the trend towards the quantification of therapeutic care. The bureaucratisation of public health services is by some said to be a globally observable phenomenon connected to recent tendencies to conceive of health services as ‘markets’ operating according to economic priorities.¹³

As a clinician I found group-therapy with Navajo clients particularly rewarding. It seemed that no matter how little knowledge or contact people had had with ‘their’ culture, that theirs’ was an ingrained appreciation and deep-rooted understanding of group-processes and a ‘sharing’ community. Therapeutic groups here differed markedly from the ‘individualised’ group-spirit I had experienced in various settings in the UK.¹⁴

It was this capacity to work together that to me conveyed evidence of the strength of a tribal ethos that had survived and lived on in the collective, regardless of all the vicissitudes the Diné had so far experienced.

When I began my fieldwork it was under the presidency of George W. Bush, who had declared Iran, my country of origin, part of the ‘Axis of Evil’.

¹³ Horwitz; 2007

¹⁴ This is not to say that the groups I experienced in the UK had no communal ethos, merely that it took longer and was a more arduous process to ‘cohere’ in a ‘working group’.

Being from the ‘Axis of Evil’ and sporting an accent that only by the undiscriminating would be classified as ‘British’¹⁵ gave me a somewhat ambiguous position as ‘non-Anglo-foreigner-of - non-colonial-background-with-European-credentials’ that situated me somewhere between ‘them’ and ‘us’.¹⁶

Out of organisations I was sometimes approached by Natives and asked if I was member of ‘some kind of a tribe’. At the DBHS clients frequently seemed to take me for a fellow-client in treatment.

On the whole I felt inconspicuous and was made to feel welcome. My experience of Navajo culture in operation was as profoundly integrative and communal. The shared laughter that so many people defined as central to Navajo interaction may have had something to do with that. Excepting certain clinical events and crises described in Chapters Three and Four fieldwork, particularly the voluntary clinical- and group-work, was a happy time for me.

* * *

When I started fieldwork I had planned on a clinical ethnography with my role being that of participating clinician and observing anthropologist, but in practice it was not always easy to combine a clinician’s ethos with the ethnographer’s quest for information.

In the case of conflicting interests it is, for ethical reasons, the clinician’s role that needs to ‘win’.

When I write ‘ethical reasons’ this is not just referring to stocks of the trade- patient confidentiality, maintaining boundaries and acting according to professional guidelines etc.- but to the uncompromised focus on the patient that I believe is essential in the therapeutic encounter. That is to say that I wanted to be able to listen to people with ‘reverie’.

¹⁵ People here often had little experience of ‘different’ accents other than ‘Rez’ or ‘Hispanic’

¹⁶ See Appendix: Notes on Identity

I was worried about being distracted by the research imperative to ferret for ‘useful’ information that could be garnered from patients’ narratives to feed my ethnography.

In a way the experience of being a therapist/ ethnographer quite precisely reflected the conflicted position of being a clinician/bureaucrat discussed in a later chapter.

As an anthropologist engaged in clinical practice my situation was similar to the ‘bureaucratized’ clinician who attempts to respond therapeutically while extracting diagnostic criteria from patients’ narratives. This is to say that at times I felt compromised as ethnographer and as therapist.

It is likely that my somewhat tortuous scruples about maintaining an ‘untainted’ approach towards the clinical work were themselves part of a counter-transferential processing of institutional dynamics and that the innate ambiguities of the wider context were appropriately and in parallel process reflected in my conflicted negotiation of dual roles.

One of the tenets of the psychoanalytic technique is ‘attention without intentionality’; variously referred to as ‘reverie’ (Bion); or ‘evenly-suspended’ or ‘free-floating attention’ (Freud).

Wilfred Bion suggested that analysts enter each session ‘without memory, without desire’; a ‘mantra’ that many psychotherapists remember from their training days.

In practice Bion’s dictum proved right. Attention without intentionality often seemed to yield more insight than categorical ‘scientific’ focus could have delivered.

The issues that are explored here are those that ‘stuck’; they stuck not because together they made any particular sense or furnished the fundamentals for grand theories, but because they kept recurring in different contexts and guises and therefore appeared to be reliable representations of peoples’ preoccupations. When this thesis began to take shape I found that - at least in my head- it mirrored the analytic encounter. The study may be read as an extended session with ‘the field’, a process during which the ethnographer is ‘absorbed’ by and absorbs with ‘reverie’ and ‘free-floating attention’ diverse themes that are brought to the encounter.

The themes that people talked about, the issues that engaged them and the experiences that they considered formative often revolved around deprivation, loss and trauma; around the burden of historical injuries and the scars that they had left.

That peoples' perspectives tendentially veered towards problematising the state of their communities is not altogether surprising as the history of American Indians is in a very real sense one of loss: "loss of concepts; loss of events; loss of mental states; threatened loss of identity".¹⁷ Often the targets for blame of this loss were not colonial intruders and their descendents, but fellow tribesmen; corrupt, self-serving officials in elevated positions and elders whose main failing was their inability to nurture their young and to protect them from the various vicissitudes befalling the tribe.¹⁸

Alcohol-problems were pointed out by many subjects as a particular scourge of American Indians. Alcoholism was often interpreted as the consequence of compounded loss: loss of stability; loss of family relations; economic, social and emotional deprivation. In patients' narratives this theory was even more defined: drinkers often seemed to experience using alcohol as acts of substituting the lost object through the 'spirit' in a bottle.

Envy was another prominent theme. Similar to alcohol, envy was chiefly glossed as a colonial import. It was said that individual property, in particular land-rights, had created an unequal and egotistic society ruled by covetousness and greed. Envy was by many seen as the by-product of a changing economy that had corrupted a hitherto egalitarian society by stratifying it.

Many informants highlighted the Diné's capacity for laughter, which was seen to constitute 'cultural capital' and an important sustaining resource: "Wherever you find a group of Navajo you will hear laughter", I was told. It seemed that laughter signified many things: the capacity for joy and enjoyment; bonding and community cohesion and importantly resilience. Beyond communal laughter, jokes also played an important role. Jokes made it possible to address- or

¹⁷ Lear; 2007

¹⁸ See Larry King in later chapters

perhaps more accurately: to circumscribe- contentious issues whilst diffusing the potential for confrontation and conflict.

* * *

When I began to think about these theories and hypothesis as a ‘ball of string’ and where it would lead me, it seemed as if the issues people raised and how they made sense of them cohered with analytic object-relations theories, where the quality of early relationship with ‘the object’ (or carer) has a formative impact on psychic development.

It is possible that the milieu I began my study in played some part in this and that people affiliated to mental health services, be it as staff or patients, are particularly aware of certain issues, and prone to contextualise experiences in terms of emotional impact. On the other hand it is conceivable that historical- and ongoing- experiences had honed peoples’ awareness of and sensitivity to the effects of structural power on individual and group stability and well-being.

One phenomenon that I think may be characteristic of mental health services was the tendency to dichotomize between the ‘ill’ and ‘healthy’ and the ‘dysfunctional’ and ‘functional’.

This may in part be due to a defensive ‘them’ and ‘us’ mentality; to what Freud called “the narcissism of small differences”, by which clinicians reassure themselves that they are really very different from the patients. Perhaps it is that the more unsettling environment or experiences, the more urgent the need for certainty and reassurance is.

On the other hand even people outside the psychiatric milieu subscribed to theories that were essentially psychological. The concept of Intergenerational Trauma for instance was widely known and taken as relevant to Native American communities.

An ethnographer and academic working on post-colonial (or in fact any) society runs the risk of perpetuating colonial expansionism or reinforcing operative hegemonies by imposing their particular models of theory and thought on the ‘field’.

Where I refer to psychoanalytic concepts I use them as I would with a patient employing ‘meta-discourse’ as generic tool. Certain tenets of psychoanalytic theory here seemed relevant in making sense of observed dynamics and phenomena. It is an eclectic rather than orthodox use of psychoanalytic concepts where practice furnished the concepts and sometimes found a corollary in theory. I used the concepts that I felt subjects also would find useful or interesting, in a way that I hoped would also speak to lay-persons.

This study is conceived as an intercultural dialogic discourse on experiences arising out of the colonial aftermath.

In terms of approach and methodology I have tried to pursue an interdisciplinary course whereby I supplemented anthropological theories with psychoanalytic concepts and fed psychoanalytic approaches into anthropological perspectives. I believe that most disciplines can benefit from a broadened outlook rather than the orthodox adherence to increasingly narrow foci.

* * *

Similar to psychotherapy that some patients go into with a great deal of certainty and conviction regarding their ‘truths’, to then discover step by step a world turned upside down, it seemed to me that every concept making an appearance here contains an inherent dichotomy. Like a kaleidoscope turned this way and that, envy, alcohol, jokes, witchcraft and bureaucracy reveal multi-faceted ambiguities.

Internalized schemes of certainty can be defences against the overwhelming chaos of reality.

Often it is good to know where one stands, even if it is not a good place one is standing in.

Purely on a speculative basis I wonder if people who have experienced historical upheaval are particularly drawn to the reassurance that the certainty of rigid systems offers. In that vein there may be a link between the appeal of bureaucracy- or rather the spectre of bureaucracy- and historical experiences of social upheaval.

Bureaucracy does perhaps become if not the good then at least a reliable and solid object in the midst of confusion. Conversely the oppressive rigidity of systemic certainty is given relief by the hedonistic excesses of alcohol-ism, a Dionysian counterpoint to restrictive structures.

The ‘theory of composites’ only ‘works’ if we conceive of society in systemic terms as cyclically reciprocal and complementary. According to Gregory Bateson the “paradoxes (and the pathologies) of systemic process arise precisely because the constancy and survival of some larger system is maintained by changes in the constituent subsystems.”¹⁹

If we conceive of all agents as being bound together as dynamic elements of the same system, then dichotomies are necessary to achieve homeostasis. Systems without tension become static.

Bureaucracy and alcohol so can be viewed as systemically interdependent elements.

In this study bureaucracy emerges both as an ‘Iron Cage’ and a ‘Stahlhartes Gehäuse’; envy may be destructive as much as it is inherently relational; alcohol enables Indians to be ‘real’ and jokes told ‘against’ elders harbour a grand arc of restitution.

Making the subject of this thesis ambiguity is homage to states of conflict and uncertainty that psychoanalytic thought teaches us to tolerate and appreciate as complex and significant, but that are shunned as unproductive and not conducive to efficacy by a ‘Zeitgeist’ beholden to economizing.

The thesis is infused by a latent conflict of perspectives that extends to the question whether the dynamics and phenomena discussed here are socially and relationally discordant or cohesive; divisive or symbiotic; centrifugal or centripetal; a conceptual conundrum fuelled, though not necessarily solved, by the interdisciplinary approach that guides this project.

* * *

¹⁹ Bateson;1972:339

BUREAUCRACY

“The adherence expressed in the doxic relation to the social world is the absolute form of recognition of legitimacy through misrecognition of arbitrariness, since it is unaware of the very question of legitimacy, which arises from competition for legitimacy, and hence from conflict between the groups claiming to possess it.”²⁰

The legitimacy of ‘the system’ at the Hózhóní Clinic was rarely challenged, even though the bureaucratized treatment protocol at times put patients’ interests at obvious odds with administrative priorities. Bureaucratic protocol was the alpha and omega of clinical practice.²¹ The “curtailing of the theoretical imagination” that Adorno and Horkheimer²² had found to be one of the problematic legacies of the Enlightenment’s imperative of pragmatism, was tangible reality in a clinical process that privileged diagnosis over treatment, assessment protocol over enquiry and short-term evidence over longitudinal and contextual considerations.

Certain processes evoked Max Weber’s siren call of a future belonging to bureaucracy: “a ‘living machine’ that is ‘congealed spirit’ ‘whose enduring structure ensnares future generations enthralled and beholden to it, dependent and powerless as serfs, ruled over by a bureaucratized administrative system as the ultimate and only value deciding over the mode of control over their affairs’”²³

²⁰ Bourdieu;1977:164

²¹ Here I would like to clarify that I do not hold the organisational processes described here in any way as ‘typical’ or unique to the Indian Health Service. I observed comparable dynamics when working in NHS services and Higher Education in the UK. While protocol may differ from organisation to organisation, there were similarities in terms of priorities and processes.

²² Horkheimer & Adorno; 2004:3

²³ Weber;1980: 825-837

Author paraphrasing Weber’s (**in bold**) : “**Geronener Geist** ist auch jene lebende Maschine, welche die bürokratische Organisation mit ihrer Spezialisierung der geschulten Facharbeit, ihrer Abgrenzung der Kompetenzen, ihren Reglements und hierarchisch abgestuften Gehorsamsverhältnissen darstellt. Im Verein mit der toten Maschine ist sie an der Arbeit, das Gehäuse jener Hörigkeit der Zukunft herzustellen, in welche vielleicht dereinst die Menschen sich, wie die Fellachen im altägyptischen Staat, ohnmächtig zu fügen gezwungen sein werden, **wenn ihnen eine rein technisch gute und das heißt: eine rationale Beamten-Verwaltung und -Versorgung der letzte und einzige Wert ist, der über die Art der Leitung ihrer Angelegenheiten entscheiden soll.** Denn das leistet die Bürokratie ganz unvergleichlich viel besser als jegliche andere Struktur der Herrschaft.“

Over time the impression of a congealed- or congealing- spirit at work did not change, but on the contrary solidify. After some months of fieldwork at the mental health clinic Weber's pronouncement on the inevitable rule of bureaucracy seemed like remarkable prophecy. Clinical protocol at the Hózhóní Clinic was testament to the accelerated importance of bureaucracy to clinical practice, with clinicians' attentions systematically diverted from patient-care to 'adherence procedures', and where most of staff energy was expended in the demonstrative staging of clinical compliance.

This was because administrative strictures above all prioritised the collating of medical information and the quantification of 'evidence-based practice'. Sometimes it seemed as if patients had been recruited as 'extras' to serve a mimetic rendition of healing that passed for clinical work.

* * *

CONFLICT

Bureaucracy was put to robust use in the machinations of team-conflict which at the time of fieldwork manifested in a flurry of staff 'write-ups'. 'Write up' was the term used for filing a complaint against a colleague with the clinical management. The volume of 'write-ups' increased exponentially as team-conflict spiralled. On occasion the bureaucratic protocol mandated for the processing of write-ups, complaints and grievances took up enough resources to merit, in quantitative terms, being considered as integral element of organisational process.

Regardless of its prominent position in organisational dynamics staff conflict was never part of the 'official discourse', which usually consisted of a curtailed task-list of clinical and administrative matters. Official discourse wilfully ignored those aspects of organisational life taking place behind closed doors and regarded as 'dysfunctional', even though there was ample evidence that staff conflict and 'write-up' procedure often competed with the primary task of the organisation for available time and resources. This is to say that the conceptual separation of function and dysfunction was ideological²⁴ rather than realistic. Much of what was appreciated as 'smooth process' and therefore as 'function' was also 'dysfunction' in that it was effectively detrimental to the central task of the organisation, that is: making patients better. The administrative doctrine that had created a work-ethic that ultimately prioritised bureaucratic protocol over patient welfare extended to the choreographing of staff-relations. Viewed systemically function and dysfunction were complementary and integral to dynamics. What was conceived of as 'function'- though function serving what?- would indeed have been de-spirited congealed mechanical process, had the cathartic agency inherent in 'dysfunction' not infused it with 'life'. Conflict amongst staff had, systemically viewed, a homeostatic function: It provided a conduit for issues possibly related to power-structures, historical discontent and operative hierarchies that could not be directly expressed. In a perpetuation of colonial 'divide and rule' strategies staff conflict helped to maintain organisational equilibrium by shielding the 'rulers'.

²⁴ Or delusional, as the case may be

‘GAMING’

The bureaucratized clinical process portrayed in this thesis is, according to my experience, not exceptional in contemporary clinical practice.

At a talk I gave at UCL on the subject of the ‘diagnostic imperative’ in IHS mental health services, a psychiatrist nonchalantly pointed to a widespread practice²⁵ in his field of fitting severe diagnostic categories to patients either for funding purposes or to set the path for favourable treatment outcomes: the ‘severer’ the diagnostic category, the more dramatic a patient’s ‘improvement’ with treatment, which in turn establishes clinical excellence and- hopefully- brings with it an increase of funding. This practice of ‘long-view diagnoses’ is widespread enough to have earned the term ‘gaming’ amongst clinicians, the psychiatrist informed us.

A variant of ‘gaming’ is explored in this thesis as the collaboration of clinicians in processes that are not necessarily to patients’ advantage, but that clinicians have nevertheless managed to derive professional pride from. The conversion of clinical concern and responsibility to a ‘gaming’ mentality where clinicians’ primary pride and satisfaction comes from ‘playing in’ or ‘playing the’ system is not an isolated trend.

But to reframe the bureaucratization of healthcare as ‘gaming’ is a step up from ‘playing the game’. The ‘gaming’ psychiatrist takes control- or imagines that s/he has taken control- of the ‘game’.

-But this is no game. These are patients; these are people’s lives we are talking about.

There are of course flip sides to staff opportunism. In the DBHS alcohol programme for example court-mandated clients also ‘played the game’. Clients’ objective was, similar to clinicians’ who

²⁵ Widespread according to him.

needed to process their data jumping through administrative hoops, to get their court-mandated ‘paperwork’ signed and complete, the one required proof that they had ‘rehabilitated’.

Attaining sobriety probably was less of a concern for most clients than being in possession of documents that established that they had been instructed, as mandated, on attaining sobriety.²⁶

Clinicians and their clients so in a sense presented inversions of modes to acquiesce to ‘the Man’.

The former ‘played along’ and the latter ‘played against’ - but both parties seemed equally conscious of and in thrall to the system.

Apart from being enmeshed in the *Zeitgeist* enveloping contemporary healthcare ideology, organisational dynamics at the Hózhóni Clinic and other observed phenomena reflected to some degree historically entrenched coercion into compliance with the colonial, established order.

But compliance itself is a complex issue. Compliance is not simply a matter of submission to established orders of power and hegemonic rule. It brings with it heterodoxy and elements of ‘carnivalization’²⁷ that subvert and ‘corrupt’ orthodoxies imposed by the dominant society²⁸ as they are assimilated into subaltern vernacular use: “context can refract, add to, or, in some cases, even subtract from the amount and kind of meaning...”²⁹

* * *

²⁶ The most striking example of ‘playing the system’ came from a narrative giving a detailed account of the calculated timing of an act of juvenile delinquency. See Chapter Three

²⁷ Bakhtin; 1981

²⁸ ‘Dominant society’ was frequently used by my informants when speaking of what also was referred as ‘Anglos’ or ‘White people’, without apparent political subtext, as if a merely descriptive term. I have taken this term over in the text.

²⁹ Holquist in Bakhtin;1981: xx

TRAUMA

It is a matter of interpretation if (what seemed like) the dogged adherence to bureaucratic doctrine constituted 'doxa' or a "Gehäuse der Hörigkeit" and whether it was indeed indicative of the unquestioning acceptance of the 'legitimacy of the arbitrary structures' that were the legacy of the colonial rule.

That historically entrenched hierarchies still persisted seemed evident in structural power-relations. Both on and off reservations and tribal lands higher positions tended to be held by Anglos. It seemed remarkable that this manifestation of constituent inequity was rarely mentioned. Was this a sign of accepting, ignoring- or denying the status quo?

What was mentioned without referring to its 'source' however was the legacy of colonial injury still affecting the collective.

Many Diné³⁰ did not seem to regard their society as healthy but attributed a multitude of perceived problems that they saw besetting the community to the cumulative trauma of colonialism.

All was not well in terms of community relations which were seen to be plagued by mistrust and envy; in intergenerational relations which were seen to suffer from 'elder-inadequacy' on one hand and lack of respect and callous exploitation by the young of the old on the other; the state of the Navajo Nation's health was compromised: levels of diabetes, cardiovascular disease and cancer (possibly due to environmental pollution through mines, power-stations and the uranium industry) were much higher than in the general population; alcohol- and substance misuse and related calamities were endemic; job prospects were low and discontent with reservation politics and politicians widespread.

When conversation turned to these subjects people had theories why this was so. There was an implied Shangri-La, the times 'B.C.'³¹ when traditions were being followed, the community

³⁰ Diné= The People =Navajo

honoured its mutual obligations and mindfulness of the Navajo philosophy of ‘balance’ kept society intact.

Nostalgia is characteristic of traumatised peoples³² for whom a destroyed past that cannot be regained may take on a quasi-mythical hue.

“When a large group's existence—psychologically speaking, when its identity's existence—is threatened and when its members wonder *"who are we now?"* they turn to various methods to strengthen their belief in the survival of their group and its identity. They are now ready to reactivate their chosen trauma, a trauma whose main function is to link the members of the group and give them a sense of security in order to secure the survival of their shared identity. There is a kind of paradox here: A chosen trauma refers to a traumatic event in the past when ancestors were humiliated and rendered helpless, but now it is called forth to enhance their descendants' large-group identity.”³³

The ‘chosen trauma’, if we choose to accept Volkan’s theory, here would be the loss of a culture and its traditions. The remedy for social ills is seen inherent in cultural identity or its traditions. In this context gaining cultural knowledge, learning about clans and cosmology, growing mindful of Navajo heritage was perceived as restorative- and in many cases indeed was restorative. It is not the paths chosen to restoration, or the tools that Navajo culture offers or is seen to offer, that concerns me here as much as the paradox that arises out of the fact that American Indian tribes are at once a historically oppressed people and the citizens of an imperialist power, and identify simultaneously as such.

“I was proud to be an American from the day I was born” a Navajo friend once declared, somewhat grandiosely.

It would be too easy, I think, to gloss this merely in terms of ‘identification with the aggressor’. Rather than being regarded as merely a mechanism of defence, this concurrent identification with

³¹ B.C.= Before Colonialism. This is my terminology, not one coined by informants.

³² Volkan;2004

³³ *ibid.*

two, in terms of power, diametrically opposed 'objects' may be understood as manifesting a healthy capacity for ambiguity.

* * *

RATIONALE OF STUDY

It was the heady mix of ample ambiguity and rigid dichotomies shared across the social and cultural spectrum that made me think of inter-cultural relations in terms of a longitudinal exchange of projections and mutual envious desire, framed by a shared delusion of 'separateness'. What would coloniser and colonised, Native and migrant, dominant and subjugated be without each other?

In terms of 'psychic states' 'the other' however ignored and unmentionable, were entrenched in each others' psyche.

We need to imagine we are separate from the other in order to project into it.

So it is culture as I encountered it, namely as the idea of culture as spectre and fantasy; the staging of cultural tradition as counter-ideology; culture as projection and object of envy; and collective experiences as cultural trauma; - rather than the specificity of Navajo culture, that inform this project.

This thesis is conceived as a tentative play on perspectives, which- hopefully- do not bow too much to the temptation to present the subject-matter as a tableau of 'congruity'.

While (colonial) tropes of submission, coercion, power structures and bureaucratic strictures all feature, here they are not seen as exclusive in propelling organisational dynamics: the foci of this project are those elements of 'carnivalization', 'corruption' and 'hybridisation' and the liminal and relational spaces that are found beyond officially sanctioned or privileged discourse.

Dell Hymes³⁴ argues in the matter of the 'creolization' of language that the privileging of established orthodoxy and coherent tradition may itself lead to erroneous assumptions based on misjudging the inevitable and unpredictable forces of change.

To return to the case of White-Thunder's command or lack of command of Menomini (here to be understood allegorically):

³⁴ Hymes; 1974

“...Bloomfield goes on to say that [White-Thunder’s] ”...case is not uncommon among younger men, even when they speak but little English.” In effect, then, White-Thunder’s case could become that of a generation, a generation that might go on to become the sole users of Menomini. What would it mean for a later investigator to report, “Menomini is a language no one speaks tolerably?” Or , since there might be left no general standard of comparison, simply that Menomini is a language of small vocabulary and of sentences constructed of a few threadbare models? (...)

White-Thunder forces us to face the fact that both for the individual and the community, a language in some sense is what those who have it can do with it.-

There is a fundamental difference (...) between what is not said because there is no occasion to say it, and what is not said because one has not and does not find a way to say it. For the language to be used to say such things, the language must change.”³⁵

And in the same way that we cannot predict if White-Thunder will adapt his linguistic needs to the reduced language available to him, or whether Menomini speakers will expand the language until it adequately serves their needs, or what things in the future will need to be said, or what occasion the future will bring to say them; we cannot determine much more than the temporary effects of organisational shifts, conceptual turns and social changes.

“Multiplicities are rhizomatic ...

A multiplicity has neither subject nor object, only determination, magnitudes, and dimensions that cannot increase in number without the multiplicity changing in nature”³⁶

* * *

³⁵ Hymes; ibid

³⁶ Deleuze & Guattari; 1988: 8 ff

We may imagine the unconscious as rhizome with no perceivable point of origin - though one may be arbitrarily appointed (!), each of its elements equal to all others in consequentiality- and with the possibility of infinitesimal extension and permutation.

Reflecting on the unconscious as “anti-structure” the material in this study roams domains- from micro to macro, the individual to the communal, from individual addiction to the economics of consumption, from cultural ‘conversion’ as introjected “envious attack” to adversarial cross-cultural relationship in cyberspace, the analysis of bureaucratic process in institutions to real and virtual borders and their crossings, from inter-generational trauma to intergenerational envy. Perhaps the place that Taussig calls “the place between the real and the really-made-up” is not located, as that phrasing seems to suggest, in between unambiguously situated and separated domains; but the relationship between the “real” and the “really-made-up” operates symbiotically and ‘mischievously’.³⁷

I propose this study as an ethnography of the margins, fashioned in the manner of an American quilt - a patchwork of assorted fragments and discards, each carrying their own history and provenance that, once combined, form an entity that is systemic as well as arbitrary, as the very same material in the hand of another may produce a very different pattern.

This is also paying homage to the apocryphal ‘Native in the pick-up truck’:

“the type of Native who’ll always tell you about tradition and how everything was better in the old days, and he’s lecturing you right there, sitting in his pick-up in the KFC parking-lot,”³⁸

- who in his lived ambivalence does not only symbolize present-day Native transitions, but also embodies, I would suggest, the age-old challenge of how to process the “world as will and idea.”³⁹

³⁷ Taussig; 1993: xvii ff

³⁸ ‘Robert’; personal communication; KFC: Kentucky Fried Chicken. KFC was the first fast-food concern to acknowledge Navajo as customers and to open outlets on the Reservation ,and it is therefore held in sentimental esteem by many.

³⁹ This is borrowing Arthur Schopenhauer’s title “Welt als Wille und Vorstellung” (1818). Whereas *Wille* is unambiguously “will”, *Vorstellung* is evocative of *idea*, (*re-*) *presentation* or more ephemerally

* * *

Max Weber, whose lament on the impact of bureaucratic process on future society infuses this paper, establishes an example of ‘Menomini in academe’ and of concepts that have been diminished in intercultural transit.

Weber is an illustrious victim of the Anglicization of academe and its reductive process which in a sense parallels indigenous language-loss and ‘creolization’ exemplified by Dell Hymes.

Weber lives on in Anglophone posterity as the creator of the ‘Iron Cage’ a term invariably linked to defining the dynamics of bureaucracy.⁴⁰ Talcott Parsons has much to answer for. The majority of Weber’s readers will not have the opportunity and pleasure to experience the original quasi-poetic, evocative and impassioned qualities of his treatise, rendered stick-dry and officious by his translator, who succeeded to convert passionate engagement into what reads as the very thing Weber railed against: congealed spirit.

In this spirit the study attempts to put post-colonialism ‘on the couch’.

In the analytic process, boundaries and a certain distance and detachment from the subject are seen as conducive to analytic ‘reverie’. Therefore this study draws primarily on European theories and perspectives. The North American colonial project historically is a predominantly Anglo-Saxon concern, whose conceptual flaws are therefore considered with greater clarity by outsiders who are unencumbered by national doctrine and loyalty to language and identity.

With Walter Benjamin:

“one asks with whom the adherents of historicism actually empathize. The answer is inevitable: with the victor. And all the rulers are the heirs of those who conquered before them. Hence, empathy with the victor invariably benefits the rulers.

(...)

imagination. I use the reference here to invoke the inherent conflict between the demands and rewards of the ‘real’ and the material, and the quest for the ideal.

⁴⁰ Baehr;2001. Ghosh; 2001

Whoever has emerged victorious participates to this day in the triumphal procession in which the present rulers step over those who are lying prostrate.”⁴¹

It so seems fair and pertinent to consider American Indian (sub-) alterity and its vicissitudes from the vantage-point of alterity.

As with the psychoanalytic process nothing should be lost, all is relevant; the grandiose and the trite equally agitate in the morass of individual and collective unconscious:

“Nothing that has ever happened should be regarded as lost for history”⁴²

* * *

Even though much of what is described in this thesis and the historical premise of colonialism seems divisive and centrifugal in effect, certain theories and perspectives help to illuminate a ‘reality’ whose inter-relational complexity goes beyond what is structurally apparent.

Deleuze and Guattari’s ‘rhizome’, an invisible and labyrinthine network of connections, gives body to the idea of unconscious processes.

The structure of this thesis, as an inventory of implicit connections and relations, emulates the rhizome.

Gregory Bateson’s borrowing of the concept of ‘entropy’ from thermodynamics has contributed much to systems theory.

Here it has been found useful because of its ‘amoral’ stance that does not give in to the temptation of privileging an idealized state of imagined order, but rather allows for an egalitarian and therefore more objective contemplation of order and disorder as states equally integral to systems.

⁴¹ Benjamin; 1968:391

⁴² *ibid*; 254

As a good proportion of this thesis is given over to the exploration of ‘dysfunction’ and ‘disorder’, these theories were helpful in inverting orthodox priorities.

Roger Caillois’ theory of mimicry ⁴³, taken up by Lacan ⁴⁴, offers an especially bold and inspiring perspective on the scope of the symbiotic drive, which he glosses as inherent in all organisms whose ultimate goal is to merge with the system they are part of by mimicking it. Caillois so transcends dichotomies between predator and prey, and offers an alternative perspective that is as provocative as it is far-reaching.

The Gramscian concept of hegemony is here seen reflected in colonialism’s entrenched rule of the New World, and the stealthy dissemination of ruling ideologies that support the continued dominant position of colonial descendents in North American society.

Bourdieu’s analysis of the construction and establishment of rules of order and how agents arrange themselves within and around them seem conceptually closely related to Gramsci, - although Bourdieu himself denied this.

And finally, in admiration and compassion, to the persona of Max Weber, child of a civil servant father and a devoutly religious mother, episodic sufferer of what now would be glossed as ‘mental health problems’, enchanted theoretician of disenchantment, and unwitting victim of his translators, a man who was able- at least in his theoretical work- to bear with and tolerate ambiguity.

⁴³ Caillois; 1935

⁴⁴ Lacan; 2006

CHAPTER ONE

NOTES ON THE HISTORY OF FEDERAL GOVERNMENT AND BIA AMERICAN INDIAN POLICIES AND STRATEGIES

ABSTRACT

“And to speak of “ideologies” is to locate in the realm of *representations* (...) what in fact belongs to the order of belief (...) submission to the established order is the product of the agreement between, on the one hand, the cognitive structure inscribed in bodies by both collective history (phylogenesis) and individual history (ontogenesis) and, on the other, the objective structures of the world to which these cognitive structures are applied. State injunctions owe their obviousness, and thus their potency, to the fact that the state has imposed the very cognitive structures through which it is perceived...”⁴⁵

The history of the New World having been chronicled by its colonisers retains the hue of their convictions.

The principle of enduring colonial rule may be reduced to the motto: “Conquer by Sword; Rule by Paper.” Strategic employment of documentation enabled European colonialists to methodically establish the conjecture of their claims to conquered territories. Literacy and bureaucracy were the means by which North America’s native inhabitants were subjugated by processes of elusion and exclusion.

The method of documentation created rather than recorded, truth. What once was written will henceforth be called upon as proof that it must be so. The essential solipsism of this conceit remains unchallengeable- unless there is documentary counterproof.

Bureaucracy remains the chief means by which hegemonic conditions are perpetuated through ‘unifying codes’ and ‘acts of classification’ which establish ‘permanent relations of order’.⁴⁶

Acts of classification are simultaneously acts of transformation: Once process is categorised and recorded as protocol, it becomes immutable, a permanent and non-negotiable status quo. What chance then did traditionally oral, non-literary societies have to assert themselves against the rule of the bureaucrat?

* * *

⁴⁵ Bourdieu; 1998:54-55

⁴⁶ Ibid.

PROLOGUE

Letter To Iraqis From the Bureau of Indian Affairs⁴⁷ BUREAU OF IRAQI AFFAIRS (Formed March 20, 2003)

Dear People of Iraq,

Now that you have been liberated from your oppressors, we at the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) look forward to our future relationship with you. As one of the oldest of American governmental agencies, we have a good deal of experience in assimilating people of other cultures to the American way of life. Further, in order to follow-up on our promise that, following the war, Iraq and Iraqi oil will belong to the Iraqi people, we will appoint an "interim government", in order to get the oil flowing - for your benefit of course. Meanwhile, below you will find a list of what to expect from the Office of the BIA, based on our vast experience managing the affairs of American Indians:

1. Henceforth, English will be the spoken language of all government and associated offices. If you do not speak English, a translator fluent in German will be provided.
2. All Iraqi people will apply to be entered on a citizen (tribal) roll. Citizenship will be open to those people who can prove that they are Iraqi back four generations with documents issued by the United States. Christian church records may also be given in support of proof of your origins.
3. All hospitals designated to serve you will be issued a standard "medical kit". The kit will contain gauze, band-aids, burn cream, iodine, tweezers, and duct tape.
4. Your oil is to be held in trust for you. We will appoint an American-approved government lawyer who has a background in the oil industry to represent your interests. Never mind that he may also work for an energy company that he will eventually cut a deal with. However, not to fear - this close relationship will guarantee you more money for your oil.
5. Each Iraqi citizen will be allotted one hundred acres of prime Iraqi desert. You will be issued a plow, a hoe, seed corn and the King James version of the Christian Bible. Following the distribution of land, any land left over will be open to settlement by Israelis.
6. Each Citizen is entitled to draw a ration of milk, sugar, flour and lard. If, for health or religious reasons, you feel cannot use the rations, you may file a complaint with your BIA appointed liaison, General Foods Corporation. Those Iraqis showing signs of diabetes, heart disease, or glaucoma will be issued double rations, as, (we are sure you will agree), our own medical system will be too alien for your use.
7. We will manage your trust monies, stipulating that any five year-old American citizen, demonstrating minimal computer skills, may hack into the system that controls your accounts, and set up their own account. Records of your accounts will be kept, but you must receive express written permission from the head of the BIA in order to examine them
8. In keeping with the separation of Church and State supported by the US constitution, Christian missionaries will be sponsored through government funding to provide your local educational and social services. Of course, only Iraqis who convert to Christianity will be allowed to hold jobs within the government.
9. For the purposes of future treaty making, any single Iraqi will be found competent to sign land-session treaties on behalf of all other Iraqis.
10. Welcome to the Free World and have a nice day!

* * *

⁴⁷ Wasson; 2003

“The Bureau of Indian Affairs’ mission is to enhance the quality of life, to promote economic opportunity, and to carry out the responsibility to protect and improve the trust assets of American Indians, Indian tribes and Alaska Natives.”⁴⁸

In his address to an as yet fictitious “Bureau of Iraqi Affairs” posted on the online blog ‘Dissident Voice’ in 2003 Wasson maps the history of federal Indian policies onto the US military intervention in Iraq. Wasson’s ‘BIA letter’ offers a sardonic and timeless indictment of an ambiguous American political ethos, where naïve ethnocentricity, idealism and strategic opportunism combine in a flawed yet systemically persuasive outlook.

The letter methodically interrogates North-American colonial history and recasts the colonial project’s rationale embodied by the Bureau of Indian Affairs’⁴⁹ strategies in the context of contemporary US foreign policies.

The BIA is the one colonial institution that endures in contemporary American Indian administration. Its history exemplifies the U.S. federal government’s uncertain and mercurial attitudes towards North-America’s Native population.

One of the oldest federal government agencies, the BIA has its origins in the Indian Commissions established by the early Continental Congress in 1786:

“Be it ordained by the United States in Congress assembled, That from and after the passing of this ordinance, the Indian department be divided into two districts, viz. The southern, which shall comprehend within its limits, all the nations in the territory of the United States, who reside southward of the river Ohio; and the northern, which shall comprehend all the other Indian nations within the said territory, and westward of Hudson river: Provided that all councils, treaties, communications and official transactions, between the superintendant hereafter mentioned for the northern district, and the Indian nations, be held, transacted and done, at the outpost occupied by the troops of the United States, in the said district. That a superintendant be appointed for each of the said districts, who shall continue in office for two years, unless sooner removed by Congress, and shall reside within or as near the district for which he shall be so appointed, as may be convenient for the management of its concerns. The said superintendants, shall attend to the execution of such regulations, as Congress shall from time to time establish respecting Indian affairs. The superintendant for the northern district, shall have authority to appoint two deputies, to reside in such places as shall best facilitate the regulations of the Indian trade, and to remove them for misbehaviour. There shall be a communications of all matters relative to the business of the Indian department, kept up between the said superintendants, who shall regularly correspond with the secretary at war, through whom all communications respecting the Indian department, shall be made to Congress; and the superintendants are hereby directed to obey all instructions, which they shall from time to time receive from the said secretary at war. And whenever they shall have reason to

⁴⁸ US Department of the Interior/Indian Affairs

⁴⁹ Further in the text: BIA

suspect, any tribe or tribes of Indians, of hostile intentions, they shall communicate cases, the same to the executive of the state or states, whose territories are subject to the effect of such hostilities. All stores, provisions or other property, which Congress may think necessary for presents to the Indians, shall be in the custody and under the care of the said superintendants, who shall render an annual account of the expenditures of the same, to the Board of Treasury.”⁵⁰

The Continental Congress’s creation of an ‘Indian department’ established an administrative system for the surveillance of Indian nations. The Indian department’s superintendents were invested with a primarily defensive mission: “And whenever they shall have reason to suspect, any tribe or tribes of Indians, of hostile intentions, they shall communicate cases... to the executive of state...”

The placing of Indian affairs superintendents under the ‘secretary at war’ signalled Congress’s attitudes towards Indian nations as much as it spelled a fundamental departure from earlier colonial relations with Native tribes.

In the competition amongst colonists to establish themselves in foremost positions of power in the ‘New World’, the French, British and Americans had raced to recruit tribes as their allies. Europeans at first seemed disinclined to interfere with tribes other than to pursue trade interests, whereas American settlers early on began to challenge tribes for territory.

Many tribes so preferred collaboration with the British and French, whose trading goods generally were of superior quality and who offered backing against American settlers and hostile tribes.

After the American Revolution having collaborated with Europeans proved detrimental to tribes, when Continental Congress summarily declared that Indian hostilities had voided obligations agreed to in previous treaties:

“The United States, then, have unequivocally acceded to that great and broad rule by which its civilized inhabitants now hold this country. They hold, and assert in themselves, the title by which it was acquired. They maintain, as all others have maintained, that discovery gave an exclusive right to

⁵⁰ By the UNITED STATES in CONGRESS assembled. *AUGUST 7, 1786. The Library of Congress*

extinguish the Indian title of occupancy, either by purchase or by conquest; and gave also a right to such a degree of sovereignty as the circumstances of the people would allow them to exercise.”⁵¹

Congress now regarded tribes as conquered peoples and treated them accordingly. Policies were drafted assuming the victor’s “right of soil”⁵² and the imperative of land acquisition was pursued by diplomatic negotiation or forceful expansion, depending on opportunity, degree of desirability of territory and extent of resistance offered by tribes.

The Continental Congress’s resolution in 1789 to make Indian Affairs the permanent responsibility of the War Department set the course for future federal Indian policy.

* * *

Early Indian policy had been guided by a commitment to the natural rights of man and aspirations to be a leading example to the world. Now federal policies contributed to the increasing polarisation between colonial settlers and tribes.

There was a gradual departure from an Indian policy that had been influenced by colonists’ euphoric perceptions of the possibilities offered by ‘their’ New World:

“We have it in our power to begin the world over again. A situation, similar to the present, hath not happened since the days of Noah until now. The birthday of a new world is at hand...”⁵³

In the Continental Congress’s Indian policies there is evidence of a conceptual shift from these colonial visions of a utopian and egalitarian New World.

⁵¹ Supreme Court Ruling; quoted in : Library of Congress U.S. Serial Set, Number 4015 INDIAN LAND CESSIONS IN THE UNITED STATES; p.531 http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/D?hlaw:2::/temp/~ammem_oS2w::@@@mdb=mharendt,rbpebib,bdsbib,coolbib,fsaall,mfdipbib,haybib,mtj,mff,wpa,scsmbib,mal,mjm,mcc,wpapos,lhbprbib,relpet,afc911bib,llstbib,hlaw,mnwp,rbcmlerbib,nfor

⁵² “It was emphasized that the “right of soil” as well as territorial sovereignty now belonged to the United States, and that the Indians could remain only on her sufferance.” Horsman; United States Indian Policies, 1776-1815, in: Handbook of North American Indians; 1988:29

⁵³ Paine; 1776

“After the American Revolution the Continental Congress in its Indian policy “chose to ignore colonial precedents” that had accepted Indian tribes’ ‘right to soil.’ “⁵⁴

“The primary aim of postwar Indian policy was to acquire land.”⁵⁵

As the goals of colonial expansion and territorial acquisition were being accomplished, the federal government’s Indian policy changed course periodically, oscillating between conciliatory, paternalistic, integrationist and hostile strategies.

Statements made by Henry Knox, post-revolutionary Secretary of War, in reports on Northern Indians (June 1789) and Southern Indian policy (July 1789) indicate notably conflicted priorities and serve as testament to the ingrained ambiguity that ruled federal Indian affairs.

There he speaks of honouring revolutionary ethos and obligations:

“It is presumable, that a nation solicitous of establishing its character on the broad basis of justice, would not only hesitate at, but reject every proposition to benefit itself, by the injury of any neighboring community, however contemptible and weak it might be..”⁵⁶

“But in future the obligations of policy, humanity and justice, together with that respect which every nation sacredly owes to its own reputation unite in requiring a noble, liberal and disinterested administration of Indian affairs;”⁵⁷

In his reports Knox further considers the quest for territorial expansion; weighs up the advantages of diplomatic conciliation versus militaristic strategy and outlines his pragmatic longitudinal perspective on the predictable obliteration of Indian tribes:

“As the settlements of the whites shall approach near to the Indian boundaries established by treaties, the game will be diminished, and the lands being valuable to the Indians only as hunting grounds, they will be willing to sell further tracts for small considerations. (...) it is most probable that the Indians will, by the invariable operation of the causes which have hitherto existed in their intercourse with the whites, be reduced to a very small number;”⁵⁸

In the report on Southern Indian policy, filed three weeks after the date of his sanguine observations on the likelihood of Indians being “reduced to very small numbers”, Knox engages with the moral ambiguities that the pursuit of settlers’ gains at the cost of Indians’ interests pose.

⁵⁴ Horsman; HNAI; 1988:29

⁵⁵ *ibid*:30

⁵⁶ Henry Knox, Secretary of War, Report on Northern Indians, June 15, 1789

⁵⁷ Henry Knox, Report on Southern Indian Policy, July 7, 1789

⁵⁸ Henry Knox, Secretary of War, Report on Northern Indians, June 15, 1789

Knox' tone is one of melancholic regret as he levies an indeterminate accusation against the political forces that resolved that Indians should be exterminated rather than 'civilized':

“ How different would be the sensations of a philosophic mind to reflect that instead of exterminating a part of the human race by our modes of population that we had persevered through all difficulties and at last had imparted our knowledge of cultivation, and the arts to the aboriginals of the country by which the source of future life and happiness had been preserved and extended. But it has been conceived to be impracticable to civilize the Indians of North America- This opinion is probably more convenient than just” ⁵⁹

There is an impression that Knox is distancing himself from the course Indian policies are taking. Knox does not specify who it is that “has conceived it to be impracticable to civilize the Indians”. It remains unclear who made the morally questionable, opportunistic decision to follow a “convenient” rather than “just” opinion.

At the very least Knox' conflicting and conflicted pronouncements on Indian policies attest to an ingrained confusion whether to conduct Indian affairs in terms of diplomatic, mercenary, militaristic or ethical priorities.

The above account seems to indicate that the Secretary of War may have regarded himself as a mere cog in the wheels of a machine working for incomprehensible- and unaccountable- powers that he felt powerless to confront or resist.

* * *

⁵⁹ Henry Knox, Report on Southern Indian Policy, July 7, 1789

In Thomas Jefferson "...Indian policy devised in the 1790s obtained its most lucid and eloquent defender".⁶⁰

Jefferson held exuberant hopes for the United States as a bulwark against the staid despotism of the old world. His hopes extended to Indians whose "proofs of genius (...) place them on a level with Whites in the same uncultivated state."⁶¹

Jefferson envisaged a rapid acculturation and eventual integration of Indians into the wider community, as he announced to a visiting delegation in 1808:

"You will unite yourselves with us, and join in our great councils and form one people with us and we shall all be Americans. You will mix with us by marriage. Your blood will run in our veins and will spread with us over this great island".⁶²

Jefferson hoped for cultural integration rather than pluralist co-existence. He did not doubt that Indians would embrace what he viewed as the advanced and advantageous European ways of life:

"humanity enjoins us to teach them agriculture and the domestic arts; to encourage them to that industry which alone can enable them to maintain their place in existence and to prepare them in time for that state of society which to bodily comforts adds the improvement of mind and morals.."⁶³

But Jefferson's assimilationist visions mainly flourished in the sheltered enclaves inhabited by the colonial elite. On the 'frontline' the chasm between the Continental Congress's aspirations for an inclusive society and colonial settlers' attitudes widened. There were increasing conflicts arising from divergences between federal administrative policies and frontier-men's combative expansionism.

While the federal government negotiated, American settlers- the colonial foot-soldiers- advanced by force. Seeing little evidence of the agricultural prowess they themselves expected to achieve, settlers took the Indian way of subsistence as proof of a general inadequacy of skill, application and mentality.

⁶⁰ Horsman;HNAI; 1988:32

⁶¹ ibid:35

⁶² ibid:36

⁶³ ibid:35

“Underlying United States policy was an overriding concern for the advance of White settlement, for it was an axiom that the expansion of White civilisation should not be obstructed or prevented by hunter or agricultural societies, thinly spread over the land and not fully using the resources according to White standards.”⁶⁴

Cultivated land was equated with civilization, and civilization with Godliness; man’s duty fuelled by the Protestant ethic was to extract the maximum yield from resources provided by the natural environment. Uncultivated land was not merely neglectful, but an active sin against God’s will by way of idleness.

Moralistic references were employed to justify a superior claim by Europeans and to support colonial expansionism that could not be legitimised within the orthodox laws defining land-ownership. ‘Because you are not worth it’ was in essence the motto guiding colonists to take over tribal territories by whatever means at their disposal:

“Sometimes the scripture declareth women and children must perish with their parents. Sometimes the case alters; but we will not dispute it now. We had sufficient light from the word of God for our proceedings.”⁶⁵

- pronounced the Reverend Solomon Stoddard invoking the very highest authority’s assumed consent to justify the 1637 massacre of Pequots by New England Puritans.

* * *

⁶⁴ Prucha; HNAI; 1988:40

⁶⁵ Pearce; 1953:23

A century after the establishment of the Office of Indian Affairs, Congress deliberated a new system of land distribution.

The 1887 Dawes Act⁶⁶ was to solve Indian ‘roaming’ land-use, which was seen as problematic and incompatible with European-American agricultural organisation and land-ownership. The Dawes Act allotted land-parcels to Indians according to a scheme derived from traditional European agricultural smallholding and land-distribution patterns:

“CHAP. 119.-- An act to provide for the allotment of lands in severalty to Indians on the various reservations, and to extend the protection of the laws of the United States and the Territories over the Indians, and for other purposes.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That in all cases where any tribe or band of Indians has been, or shall hereafter be, located upon any reservation created for their use, either by treaty stipulation or by virtue of an act of Congress or executive order setting apart the same for their use, the President of the United States be, and he hereby is, authorized, whenever in his opinion any reservation or any part thereof of such Indians is advantageous for agricultural and grazing purposes, to cause said reservation, or any part thereof, to be surveyed, or resurveyed if necessary, and to allot the lands in said reservation in severalty to any Indian located thereon in quantities as follows:

To each head of a family, one-quarter of a section;

To each single person over eighteen years of age, one-eighth of a section;

To each orphan child under eighteen years of age, one-eighth of a section; and

To each other single person under eighteen years now living, or who may be born prior to the date of the order of the President directing an allotment of the lands embraced in any reservation, one-sixteenth of a section: “⁶⁷

The Dawes Act did not concede to traditional land-use patterns or tribal social and kinship organisation. It presupposed a sedentary agricultural, acculturated life-style for Indians and referenced a model of European social organisation, which it proceeded to impose, in the manner of a doctrinal edict, through its system of land allotment.

The Act addressed indigeneity in terms of a system of proportionate and certified land-ownership.

⁶⁶ Also: General Allotment Act

⁶⁷ The Dawes Act or General Allotment Act of 1887

The Dawes Act did not appear to give consideration to cross-cultural conceptual differences: a ‘family’ was what the federal government defined it to be; the ‘head of family’ was one named as such by bureaucrats culturally adhering to patrilinear and patriarchal social organisation; there was no doubt that the quality and purpose of any given land could be correctly assessed and determined by representatives of the Government.

The officially sanctioned curtailing of Indian land-rights continued until in 1934 the Indian Reorganisation Act (IRA) attempted to remedy some of the inequities of previous laws and policies:

“(An Act) to conserve and develop Indian lands and resources; to extend to Indians the right to form business and other organizations; to establish a credit system for Indians; to grant certain rights of home rule to Indians; to provide for vocational education for Indians; and for other purposes.”⁶⁸

* * *

The colonial history of Indian and White encounters is one of differences in conceptual outlook, imposed social inequity and failure to address cultural disparities.

Tribes, confronted with cultural hegemony clad in bureaucratic-legalistic protocol, were coerced into accepting the compromising of traditional values and to adapt to alien modes of social organisation imposed by the colonial rule.

Conceptual conflicts became particularly apparent in land-negotiations. The European cartographic approach contrasted fundamentally with traditional, territorial- and season-embedded Indian land-use.⁶⁹ Colonial powers used bureaucracy to furnish the tools to reconceptualise what had been lived territory as vacant land.

⁶⁸ Indian Reorganization Act (Wheeler-Howard Act); 18th June 1934

⁶⁹ Samson; 2003

Lands that represented multi-dimensional phenomenological entities to tribes were redefined by Europeans as bounded units of property to be used under sole and constant ownership.

From an indigenous perspective the idea of static land-ownership may have seemed bizarre.

Land-ownership as defined by Europeans and land-use as lived by Indian tribes were based on fundamentally different, if not conflicting, concepts.

While Europeans were interested in documentable possession preserved for posterity, Indians conceived of territory principally in terms of varying seasonal uses and yields. The lands they inhabited had always accommodated a multiplicity of transient users with differing needs.

The European style of static commitment of nuclear user-groups to one piece of land at the exclusion of a majority of habitual users for tribes presented an alien –and alienating- proposition.

The process of conquest-by-treaty, whereby tribes could choose whether to fight colonial military forces for their land or whether to acquiesce to colonial demands by agreeing to treaties drawn up according to Anglo-European legal principles, disregarded the fundamental conceptual conflicts underlying these ‘negotiations’:

“U.S. representatives (operated) within an imported common law tradition that commodified land. While Indian tribes generally understood treaties to create sacred kinship ties entitling the U.S. to share and settle the lands in question, the U.S., disinterested in kinship but desirous of no less than fee simple title, manipulated Indian (mis-)appreciations of Western property rights in treaty texts incomprehensible to Indian negotiators not proficient in the English language.”⁷⁰

In the treaty process it was primarily language barriers that were acknowledged as obstacles to the negotiation process. Translators were expected to act as linguistic rather than conceptual

⁷⁰ “See Nell Jessup Newton, *Indian Claims in the Courts of the Conqueror*, 41 AM. U. L. REV. 753 (1992) (suggesting language barriers and variant conceptions of relationship of people to land caused misunderstanding of legal nature of grants to whites).” Bradford, William C. : *Beyond Reparations: An American Indian Theory of Justice*; 2004:12. <http://law.bepress.com/expresso/eps/170>

mediators. Evidence of Indian representatives' failure to understand or resistance to negotiation was commonly taken as confirming European assumptions of Native intellectual inferiority. The conceptual premises on which treaties were built were not up for analysis, reconsideration or negotiation. It was ownership of land and its resources that were submitted for communal consideration, all matters that to the European mind were empirically quantifiable and unambiguous and that could be used to secure colonists' claims into the future. For natives of the 'New World' written contracts presented a conceptual turn from oral agreements: Written contracts were implicitly addressed to an imagined third party, claims-arbitrator or heir. Their purpose was to make future renegotiation or contesting of claims unnecessary or ineffectual. Whereas to tribes land-rights meant longitudinally established user-rights, Europeans essentially demanded exclusive land-ownership without previous established precedence of use.

The custom of deciding conditions of lasting impact contractually, of determining land-ownership abstractly and without established, embodied claim, may have seemed imminently plausible only to colonists, who were used to bureaucratic processes privileging documentation and legalistic abstraction.

Colonial expansion and rule was established on what may be glossed as a conceptual faultline. It is probable that colonists and tribes invested the treaty process with very different meanings and that Indians underestimated the enduring impact of the treaty-dogma to their lasting disadvantage. The bureaucratic process and its conceptual reductionism remain the enduring legacy of the colonial rule:

“The political function of classification is never more likely to pass unnoticed than in the case of relatively undifferentiated social formations, in which the prevailing classificatory system encounters no rival or antagonistic principle.”⁷¹

⁷¹ Bourdieu; 1977:164

* * *

“We will now consider these ten men your principal men and we want them to select a chief the remaining to compose his Council for we cannot talk to all the Navajos. Barboncito was unanimously elected Chief -now from this time out you must do as Barboncito tells you, with him we will deal and do all for your good. When we leave here and go to your own country you must do as he tells you and when you get to your country you must obey him or he will punish you, if he has not the power to do so he will call on the soldiers and they will do it. You must all keep together on the march. Must not scatter for fear some of your young men might do wrong and get you all into trouble. All these things will be put down on paper and tomorrow these ten men will sign that paper and now we want to know about the country you want to go to...”⁷²

General Sherman’s instruction to the Navajo delegation “We will now consider these ten men your principal men and we want them to select a chief...” casually establishes a weighting of power-relations advantageous to colonists.

Barboncito is not so much chosen by his tribesmen, as he is established as an extension of the colonial rule:

“When we leave here and go to your own country you must do as he tells you and when you get to your country you must obey him or he will punish you, if he has not the power to do so he will call on the soldiers...”

The process leading to the 1868 Navajo treaty is representative of federal negotiations with tribes, if indeed Sherman’s dictate recorded here can justifiably be regarded as ‘negotiation’.⁷³

* * *

⁷² General Sherman to Navajo delegation in council proceedings leading to Navajo treaty; Fort Sumner, New Mexico, May 29th, 1868.

⁷³ The Navajo treaty meetings followed years of relentless military campaigns against the Navajo, that culminated in Kit Carson’s ‘scorched earth campaign’ where Navajo livelihood was systematically destroyed to force surrender and the ‘Long Walk to internment in Fort Sumner, where a large number of Navajo perished. The survivors of Fort Sumner were eventually allotted part of the original Diné territory as reservation to return to.

In the management of Indian affairs the federal government continued to employ similarly impervious strategies. Federal government agencies identified priorities, defined rules and determined standards for tribes. They promoted Indian representatives according to agency classifications to implement federal policies and services.

Agricultural-, educational, and health-standards were promoted according to the dominant society's practice. The Bureau of Indian Affairs was charged with the implementation of federal rule on tribal lands and to Indian people.

“The [BIA’s] responsibility is the administration and management of 55.7 million acres of land held in trust by the United States for American Indians, Indian tribes, and Alaska Natives. There are 562 federal recognized tribal governments in the United States. Developing forestlands, leasing assets on these lands, directing agricultural programs, protecting water and land rights, developing and maintaining infrastructure and economic development are all part of the agency’s responsibility. In addition, the Bureau of Indian Affairs provides education services to approximately 48,000 Indian students.”⁷⁴

The BIA with its historical precedent as colonial administrative tool and its contemporary stated commitment to supporting Native educational and economic advance and welfare represents the wider contradictions of Native present-day political and organisational life.

It occupies a peculiarly hybrid position between federal administrative tool and officially proclaimed sovereign advocate for North American tribes. One of its tasks has been to manage Native American lands and resources placed “in trust”.

“The BIA has become emblematic of the federal government’s commitment to tribal sovereignty and the individual well-being of Native Americans. This commitment, combined with the obligation to manage Indian lands and funds, is commonly referred to as the federal trust responsibility to Indians. Although rooted in the United States Constitution, the trust responsibility has been developed and defined through a series of opinions by the United States

⁷⁴ From the BIA’s website: <http://www.doi.gov/bureaus.html>.

Supreme Court, and exercised primarily by the BIA. Threats to the continued existence of the BIA naturally arouse concern that the United States may be backing away from this commitment”.⁷⁵

In 2006 a lawsuit was filed by the Native American Rights Fund, alleging mismanagement of Indian Trust Funds by the Department of the Interior,⁷⁶ in which the BIA is implicated of losing substantial amounts of trust money.

“The Department of Interior’s administration of the Individual Indian Money (‘IIM’) trust has served as the gold standard for mismanagement by the federal government for more than a century.”⁷⁷

The present-day BIA seems to have as many detractors as supporters. It is often perceived as playing handmaiden to a federal government that continues to deprive tribes and reservations of funding and natural resources and that presents obstacles to the advance of Native Americans and persists to deny responsibility for vicissitudes visited on American Indians over the centuries.

Tribal sovereignty by some is perceived as a government ruse to save on funding by passing its responsibilities on to reservations.

Advances towards sovereignty are frequently accompanied by cuts in federal funding, purportedly as an incentive for ‘fiscal responsibility’. The realisation of self-determination has a

⁷⁵ McCarthy, Robert: *The Bureau of Indian Affairs and the Federal Trust Obligation to American Indians*; *BYU Journal of Public Law*; Vol.19

⁷⁶ “BOULDER, CO – The Native American Rights Fund (NARF), a non-profit law firm in Boulder, Colorado announced today that it has filed a class action lawsuit in federal district court in Washington, D.C. on behalf of over two hundred and fifty (250) Indian Tribes. The suit seeks full and complete accountings from the federal government for hundreds of tribal accounts worth billions of dollars that are held in trust by the United States. The federal government long ago assumed the role of trustee for tribal trust funds, and created the accounts at issue. The funds come from revenues from tribal natural resources such as timber, minerals, oil and gas; court judgments entered against the United States for the unlawful appropriation of Indian land and property; and, income from the investments of money held in the accounts. The federal government gave Tribes no choice about the creation of these trust fund accounts, some of which date back to the 1800s. <http://www.narf.org/pubs/pr/06trust.htm>; Dec. 28th, 2006

⁷⁷ *Cobell v. Norton* in : McCarthy, Robert: *The Bureau of Indian Affairs and the Federal Trust Obligation to American Indians*; *BYU Journal of Public Law*, Vol.19:6

somewhat ambiguous effect on tribal welfare, as the degree of sovereignty achieved commonly parallels the amounts of federal funding lost.

Cuts in federal funding generally are borne by citizens rather than administrators. While public services diminish, the bureaucratic apparatus continues to feed itself.

The BIA acronym is said to in reality stand for ‘Bossing Indians Around’. In contemporary colloquial Native reference the BIA appears as a by-word for corruption, incompetence, inflated bureaucracy and self-serving officialdom, emblematic of what is wrong with both federal and tribal administrative ventures.

Federal and BIA management of Indian Affairs remains contentious in many ways: Federal edicts compete with tribal sovereignty⁷⁸; domains of responsibility and competence are regularly disputed between federal, state and tribal entities; while statistically tribal populations continue to be amongst the most problem-afflicted communities in the nation.⁷⁹

If political dissidents are to be believed, rampant profiteering from natural resources on tribal lands by federal and private enterprise is aided by the complicity of tribal politicians.

On the Navajo Nation negotiations about the sale of water-rights, a lengthy intertribal dispute about the use of waste-water for a ski-run located on sacred tribal lands, and the pressing ahead with the building of casinos fuel ongoing, highly emotive disputes:

“Navajo Nation President Joe Shirley, Jr., has signed the Northeastern Arizona Water Rights Settlement, as expected. By doing so, he now makes complete the coup, or outside takeover, of the

⁷⁸ The position of tribal sovereignty as emerges in Chief Justice Marshall’s summary of the historic Johnson & Graham vs. McIntosh lawsuit, was and remains deeply ambiguous: “In the establishment of these relations, the rights of the original inhabitants were, in no instance, entirely disregarded; but were necessarily, to a considerable extent, impaired. They were admitted to be the rightful occupants of the soil, with a legal as well as just claim to retain possession of it, and to use it according to their own discretion; but their rights to complete sovereignty, as independent nations, were necessarily diminished, and their power to dispose of the soil at their own will, to whomsoever they pleased, was denied by the original fundamental principle that discovery gave exclusive title to those who made it.” The Founders’ Constitution; Volume 2, Article 1, Section 8, Clause 3 (Indians), Document 9; http://press-pubs.uchicago.edu/founders/documents/a1_8_3_indians9.html
The University of Chicago Press

⁷⁹ <http://www.census.gov/prod/2005pubs/p60-229.pdf>

three branches of our government. That settlement minimizes our rights, constrains us like a straightjacket, and puts us farther on the road to complete suppression.”⁸⁰

Tribal populations express consternation at losing out on lucrative deals brokered with and by outside entities without public consultation and due democratic process. Reservations often lack fertile soil and adequate water-supply, as tribes lost their historical claim to competing settlers who had secured their claims with legal documentation. Yet there is renewed interest by external businesses and global corporations to ‘invest’ in extracting natural resources available on reservations. Whether these concerns in fact benefit the tribal population at large, as they claim, is a matter of dispute.

On the Navajo Nation tribal members are concerned about the community’s prolific health-problems. High cancer-rates in some areas are alleged to be the result of decades of negligently operating mining companies and inadequate disposal of uranium-waste.

So far official instances have determined that regional cancer-rates and health-problems are coincidental to environmental pollution. In the matter of sick miners whose illnesses have been confirmed as having been caused by exposure to radiation, the federal government is accused of not adequately following recommendations to compensate.⁸¹

Meanwhile communities continue to inhabit land they believe to be contaminated and continue to report incremental cancer-rates, that the National Institute of Health informs them appropriately reflect known health-statistics on the reservation.

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⁸⁰ Indigenous Peoples & Issues; http://indigenouspeoplesissues.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=7616:arizona-navajo-water-rights-groups-respond-to-presidents-water-settlement-signoff&catid=52:north-america-indigenous-peoples&Itemid=74; 19. November 2010

⁸¹ Compensation of Navajo Uranium Miners ; <http://www.wise-uranium.org/ureca.html>; 22.07.2010

Another legacy of colonial administration is ‘Indian blood-quantum’ by which today tribal affiliation and enrolment are determined. The concept of blood-quantum was initially employed by the colonial rule to deliberate entitlement in treaty negotiations. Later blood-quantum was used to determine tribal affiliation and to effect exclusion or inclusion as deemed necessary.

The ambiguities of applying blood-quantum policies early on gave occasion for inconclusive legalistic discourse:

“Half-breeds are neither white men nor Indians, as expressed in their name; and the proper treatment of them is neither defined in the regulations, nor, perhaps, established by usage. If it is said they are not Indians, and must therefore be treated as white men, it may more plausibly be said that they are not white men, and ought therefore to be treated as Indians, as they unquestionably have been in almost all treaties containing stipulations in their favor It is against all knowledge (although there may be exceptions) to suppose the half-breeds are acquainted with the power of attorney or bills of exchange; and to discuss a question concerning them, upon a presumption of their moral responsibility to our laws and usages, is, to my mind, an absurdity.”⁸²

Now the point of contention of whether mixed race individuals are to be considered White has shifted to whether they should be accepted as Indian.

In most contemporary tribal statutes (of federally recognized tribes), blood-quantum, once employed by the federal government to exclude Indians from American citizenry, is now established tribal requisite for membership enrolment. Tribal members are entitled to benefits, medical services and for some tribes pro rata payments from trust monies and gaming revenue.

Whilst the ethos of blood-quantum policy is not widely challenged, there have been some prominent controversies: the ongoing Freedmen vs. Cherokee Nation case reignited a debate about the implications of blood-quantum policies.

³⁸ 93. H.R. EXEC. DOC. NO. 25-229; Spruhan, Paul: A Legal History of Blood Quantum in Federal Indian Law To 1835; 13; South Dakota Law Review, Vol. 51. No 1. 2006 http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=955032

Positions taken on blood quantum range from views that it strengthens tribal bonds and supports Native identity, to the critique that it represents a variation on ethnic profiling and undermines traditional inclusivity, a perceived guiding principle of pan-Indian tradition.⁸³

What is seen as progress and development by some to others is successfully implemented indoctrination. In contemporary discourse tribal organisation is variously lauded as progressing towards sovereignty or conversely dismissed as the transposition of colonial structures onto a Native context, cloaked by aesthetic accoutrements signifying indigenism.

Perhaps it is the fact that North American Indian tribes managed to survive at all- that they were able to avoid total extermination, that vestiges of indigenous culture still persist despite centuries of colonial offensive- that is worthy of appreciation and celebration.

It may be inevitable, considering the history of the colonial onslaught on and treatment of Native Americans that the survival of Indian identity should be dependent on the structures of the dominant society:

“ We have taken their lands without giving them any recompense, and have kept on shoving them onward with the setting sun, and have silenced their protests with the crack of the rifle and the boom of the cannon. We have killed their buffaloes for mere sport, leaving their carcasses to rot on the plains; have destroyed their forests, slaughtered their game, desecrated the resting places of their ancestors, ruined their hunting grounds, broken up their homes, and have penned them within the fixed limits of a reservation, of which perhaps the greater part is such where, as Mr. Charles F. Lummis says, “a horned toad may scratch out a living when single, but would inevitably starve if led into matrimony.”

What are the Indians today? What have we done for them? Thousands and millions of emigrants from all lands and nations have come to our shores. They have been welcomed, have not only become our friends, but our very brethren. And the Indians – the Native Americans par excellence – are still set aside, are strangers and foreigners in the land owned and lorded over by their ancestors long before the hyphenated Anglo-Saxon was ever dreamed of. They are shunned and spurned by “ the superior race,” are cut off from all intercourse with those whose civilisation they are expected to accept; are cried out as lazy because they do not become civilised fast enough; as indolent, because they do not turn into experienced farmers or expert mechanics without being properly taught and shown; as stupid because they cannot learn to read, write and cipher overnight; as half-witted because they cannot acquire the heaven-born English tongue – the only worthy channel of instruction and education – in a half-dozen hours.”⁸⁴

⁸³ Freedmen vs. Cherokee Nation: Cherokee Nation voted to deny continued tribal enrolment to African-American Freedmen on grounds of blood-quantum is particularly controversial, with respective charges of racism and attacks on tribal sovereignty being levied against each-other by involved parties.

⁸⁴ Extract from: Father Leopold Ostermann; OFM; What Are We Doing for the Indians? (1902); in: Howard M. Bahr, ed.; 2004: 128

* * *

In the historic vignettes explored in this chapter, Indians manifest indirectly, through colonial chronicles, pronouncements and policies. They do not have a voice in Thomas Jefferson's exuberant hopes for assimilation; their needs do not feature Henry Knox's considerations regarding convenient strategies of colonial land acquisition and expansion; and they are firmly shown their place by General Sherman.

Father Leopold Ostermann, Franciscan missionary, pities the Indians' fate: 'What are the Indians today?' he asks rhetorically, as if there were no Indians around to answer his questions.

But there were plenty of Indians around the missions, who provided much material that was of interest to the diligent Franciscan chroniclers. It is just that the theme of Indian destiny versus Manifest destiny is not commonly raised between Whites and Indians. Yet these are subjects that are prominent in their respective cultural enclaves.

Contemporary American identity is built upon colonial processes that have impacted on all involved parties. It may therefore not be accurate to perceive American society primarily in terms of polarized population-groups. Perhaps it would be more constructive to explore inter-cultural attitudes and discontent in terms of mutual fantasies and projections, and in terms of the narratives that are created by each group- about themselves and each other.

In present-day perceptions of American Indians we still find echoes of colonial fantasies and anxieties about the 'New World':

"Early European images of Indians were ambiguous and remained so through colonial history."⁸⁵

Native Americans were taken as the embodiment of a vast, unknown land that harboured as much promise as it did danger.

⁸⁵ Berkhofer: HNAI;1988:523

White conceptions of American Indians remain mired in extremity and are possibly more revealing of the concerns, dilemmas and dysfunctions of Western civilization than they are reflective of the realities of North American Indian identity.

Contemporary preoccupations with ecology, social justice, the feasibility of pluralism, cultural ideologies, the function of the state, the philosophy of 'management of 'appetites', the risks and rewards of conservation or change are projected onto Native Americans who continue to symbolize variations on erstwhile colonial imaginings.

To some Indians personify the promise once carried by 'virgin territory' and represented by fantasies of the "Noble Savage", Mother Earth's circumspect custodian, frugal traditionalist and contemporary eco-warrior; while to others Indians exemplify the embodied perils of uncontrollable, unknown and volatile natural forces and voracious primitive appetites that must be wrangled into order by the civilizing influence.

The Indian of the European imagination so is made into an image of 'the Other' that is simultaneously envied and reviled, idealised and pathologized.

In the canon of available literature on the ambiguity of Native-'White' relations, Pearce's study of 'savagism' and 'the American mind' published in 1953 presents a pioneering work that focuses on the image of the Indian as a projection and deliberate fantasy necessary to maintain the colonial momentum. Pearce ventures beyond the political and legalistic discourse of injured rights, broken treaties and cultural assaults, into the colonial internal world and the machinations of its projections:

"Finally, in 1924, Indians were made American citizens. They had at last paid enough for protection and had fully earned philanthropy and humanitarianism. Yet even philanthropy and humanitarianism would not work. He on whom it was to work was in fact no Indian but an image which the civilized conscience had created just for the protecting, which the civilised imagination

had earlier created just for the destroying. Civilisation had created a savage, so to kill him. Idea had begotten image so to kill it.”⁸⁶

It is the idea of the other, the self reflected in the alien, the fears and desires amplified by alterity that are at the core of the colonial impulse. The linking theme of this thesis is the study of mutual perceptions, intercultural fantasies and relations; the study of relationship, whether adversarial, oppressive, envious or projective.

It is not just the virgin territory that offers opportunity for a new beginning; it is the ‘self’ itself that can be located, deconstructed and re-built in ‘the other’.

The savage is a disposable tabula rasa in whom motivation, impulse and impetus are located. The Indian is made other, embodies the image of the other, is “created for the destroying”, and “created for the protecting”.

So seen the colonial imposition of strictures on Indian tribes may be interpreted as an operative defence, an attempt to tame the collective projection that was ‘the Indian’ and to bridle the dangerous fantasy of unencumbered, wanton freedom that was perceived to be the ‘essence of the savage’.

The strategies of colonial oppression may so be interpreted as a type of self-attack, a self-injurious acting out, a dogmatic and punitive suppression of the colonial Id.

But the colonists’ internalised and sublimated conflicts were not made apparent to their colonial subjects, who were expected to accept authoritarian interventions and doctrinal edicts in a spirit of grateful submission.

Wasson’s BIA letter to the ‘Iraqi Bureau’ strips the colonial conceit of its presumption and thereby renders it absurd.

⁸⁶ Pearce; 1953: 242

Could it be that the colonial project was successful because its premises were so bizarre, its assumptions so irrelevant, its demands so absurd that its intended subjects failed to appreciate how something so far removed from their concerns could come to have any impact on them? Did the colonial project advance precisely because it made no concessions to cultural differences and made scant attempts to be accessible? Had it made itself accessible and the audacity of its intentions understood, would there have been more resistance against its rule?

These questions are not entirely hypothetical in that they arose out of observations further explored in the thesis of the peculiar phenomenon of ‘systemically ignored Anglos’ in Indian environments, that is: even when Anglos are in an organisational position of power; even when Anglos behave immoderately, irrationally or reprehensibly; they seem to be largely excluded from the thicket of relational dynamics. Their privileges are not discussed, their behaviour is not commented on, their aberrations remain ignored.

Anglos in Indian environs seem to be, as the African American writer Alice Walker remarked on the prevalent attitude towards the Whites of her youth, regarded ‘like the weather,’ as an inevitable force, a remote entity that cannot be interacted with or influenced but that one must adapt to as best as one can.

There is a peculiar justice to this dynamic inversion of Anglos who project their unconscious fantasies onto Indians and combat these by imposing restrictive rules on them, and Indian subjects who exclude Whites from their fantasies altogether, while unresistingly acquiescing to their outlandish impositions.

CHAPTER TWO

LEGACIES

ABSTRACT

This chapter was inspired in particular by the narratives of clients at the IHS and DBHS mental health- and rehabilitation services many of whom attributed problems in later life to residential schools and being separated from their families at an early age.

The experiences clients reported are corroborated by Larry King's reflections on his own residential school memories that are extensively drawn on in this chapter.⁸⁷

The residential school experience for North American Indians has been called a "successful failure"⁸⁸ with an indeterminate legacy.

Schools were not "monolithically destructive or successful in their assimilative goals, but the harsh reality is- for some people they were"⁸⁹.

Education gave with one hand, what conditions in residential schools took with the other.

Children acquired knowledge and skills that were useful in helping to face the changing conditions of social and economic organisation. But often they were deprived of family-life, language and, most importantly, of the confidence in their identity.

The enforced trajectory from Indian to Savage and from Savage to Civilised that the process of 'educating the Indian' entailed was deeply damaging to some, and it is argued here that it may have been developmentally formative to many.

The legacy of cumulative challenging experiences- erosion of cultural certainties, separation, and experience of self as subaltern, as well as assimilation and opportunities of advancement in the dominant society's milieu- is revisited in organisational dynamics, in personal relationships and in attitudes to hierarchy, alterity, aspiration, obedience and resistance.

The transmission of trauma from one generation to the next, conceptualised in the theory of 'intergenerational trauma', is a prominent theme in Native American communities.

⁸⁷ Much of this chapter is based on a taped interview and on a public lecture by Larry King. Larry's narrative very eloquently reflects the experiences of many others. As I heard a lot of accounts in the context of clinical work- assessments, individual counselling and group-therapy- at DBHS and IHS, it is not possible to refer to any of these narratives other than in generic terms. All quotes here are therefore from individuals outside clinical frameworks (excepting information that is general and anecdotal and does not pertain to individual treatment)

⁸⁸ Trafzer, 2006: 1

⁸⁹ Ibid: xi

A less discussed problem is the apparent erosion of intergenerational respect and trust that is said to be a consequence of historical vicissitudes suffered.

Elders' powerlessness to protect their young and their inability to prevent them from witnessing their collective humiliation is believed to have led to discontent and tension between generations.

In contemporary tribal life incidents of 'elder abuse' are said to be high.

In a later part of this chapter I explore a theory posited by Larry King that the younger generation's disappointment with their elders is expressed in derogatory jokes about them.

Laughing was regarded as 'cultural capital' by many Navajo I met.

Jokes, teasing and laughing help to 'vent' ambiguous or unsanctioned sentiments as much as they help to ignite group-cohesion.

A closer examination of an 'elder' joke reveals jokes as complex dialogic constructs of opaque and broadly structured content that accommodate a variety of interpretations and so manifest as an incentive to inhabit others' viewpoints.

Rather than being told 'against' elders these jokes can be understood as dissolving dichotomies between generations.

This chapter attempts an 'archaeology' of psychic states generated by certain conditions and experiences, which agitate through unconscious relational and defensive mechanisms and so continue to contribute to social dynamics by way of systemic integration.

* * *

PART I

RESIDENTIAL SCHOOLS

“The only thing that I would remember when I was driven back to boarding school, I would just sleep, I was limp. They would probably think: oh, he’s still asleep. We can’t wake him up. That’s probably what I was wishing they’d do. But they just picked me up. Probably... well we didn’t have night-gowns- we’d just fall asleep in our clothing. And they’d just pick me up, put me in the truck and take me to school (...) probably just carried me in. And then – I don’t know what I did”.⁹⁰

The Navajo treaty of 1868 included a pledge to establish an adequate number of classrooms for the education of Navajo children:

“In order to insure the civilization of the Indians entering into this treaty, the necessity of education is admitted, especially of such of them as may be settled on said agricultural parts of this reservation, and they therefore pledge themselves to compel their children, male and female, between the ages of six and sixteen years, to attend school; and it is hereby made the duty of the agent for said Indians to see that this stipulation is strictly complied with; and the United States agrees that, for every thirty children between said ages who can be induced or compelled to attend school, a house shall be provided, and a teacher competent to teach the elementary branches of an English education shall be furnished, who will reside among said Indians, and faithfully discharge his or her duties as a teacher.”⁹¹

The tribe however showed little interest in sending their children to school: “The first teachers in Diné Bikéyah faced challenges that bordered on the overwhelming.”⁹² Teachers struggled with low levels of enrolment and high levels of absenteeism amongst their students. Generally families preferred to keep their children at home. Reservation schools did not attract the highest calibre of educators: “they were more likely to draw the worst and the worn out. Inadequate pay, poor housing, isolation, and lack of support discouraged most potential teachers.”⁹³ Families soon gathered that at school their children would not be treated as kind and as gently as they would at home.

⁹⁰ Interview Transcript: Larry King; 10/ 2005; Transcript by author.

⁹¹ Article IV; U.S.-Navajo Treaty of 1868

⁹² Iverson; 2002:81

⁹³ *ibid.*

In 1874 the commissioner of Indian Affairs decided that the education- and cultural assimilation- of Indian children should be a policy priority and called the “establishment of boarding schools among them an imperative necessity.”⁹⁴

If the Navajo had not particularly taken to day-schools, residential schools presented an even more daunting prospect. Few parents voluntarily agreed to be separated from their children, and so a system of forcible removal and mandatory education was established that endured for a century.

Early on residential schools gained notoriety: in 1892 a group of Navajo took the Indian agent Shipley hostage to prevent the enforced schooling of children. In a subsequent meeting enraged parents presented a catalogue of abuse committed by educators against their children to the commanding officer at Fort Wingate. These included accounts of children being physically maimed, detained in isolation as prisoners, over-crowded dormitories and general cruelty and neglect.⁹⁵

Parental resistance to residential schools and the political lobbying for the establishment of local schools eventually led to an increase of day-schools and to a decline in the number of children sent to residential schools.

The strategy of forcible removal of children from their families and the residential school regime lasted into the 1960s, until the federal government mitigated its policy of coerced assimilation of Indian children.

Older generations often did not have the opportunity to attend day-schools. Many individuals raised in remoter parts of the Reservation have memories of being taken away from home- often without explicit parental consent- and arriving in a school environment they experienced as intimidating and bewildering.

⁹⁴ *ibid.*

⁹⁵ *ibid.*

According to individuals contributing to this study, BIA boarding schools fared particularly poorly in terms of their treatment of children and the living-standards they offered. There were memories of abusive staff, traumatic separations and rank food.

One informant remembers finding a pile of rotting matter behind the school-kitchen: “It wasn’t their trash” she claimed “It was their larder. They made us eat that stuff.”

A story by Larry King quoted later in this chapter, about an apparently sadistic dormitory aide, was independently corroborated by others who had been pupils at the same school. One reported that the children had felt so terrified of this man that they surmised that he must be a ‘Skinwalker’ - a malignant ‘witch’.⁹⁶

Amongst those who had been sent to residential schools many said that they never fully got over the experience. What hurt most was the separation from their families, the realisation that their parents could not or would not prevent them from being taken, the disorientation felt at being prevented from speaking Navajo under threat of punishment, the loneliness during weekends spent at the school with no family visits, the gradual feeling of being emotionally distanced from the family and eventually fitting in with neither family- nor school-environment.

It seemed that the experiences of people who had remained with their families and had been educated locally in public day- or mission-schools differed significantly from those who had been sent to residential schools.

Within the context of my fieldwork in the Indian Health Service and the tribal Department of Behavioral Health, there was evidence of a divide regarding educational background. Whereas many of those with professional careers had been educated in mission- and day-schools, a notable number of patients in mental health- and alcohol rehabilitation services reported that they had gone to BIA residential schools.

IHS clinicians, who in the majority had attended mission schools or public day schools generally recalled their schooling as unproblematic, even helpful. Mission schools in particular were

⁹⁶ See Appendix: Notes on Witchcraft

praised for high education standards that enabled their students to build successful professional careers.

In contrast to the positive education experiences of clinical staff many service-users, clients and patients of the IHS mental health clinic and DBHS rehabilitation programme spoke of their time at BIA boarding-schools as inherently difficult if not traumatic.

Their early experiences were thought by these clients to have set them on a trajectory of emotional and relational failure, lack of confidence and general dysfunction.

Many individuals implicitly subscribed to the theory of Historical Trauma discussed later in this chapter. They had parents who had been sent to residential schools themselves, and so believed that their troubled upbringing was caused by cumulative difficulties and deprivation suffered through generations. Some clients regarded the emotional damage they had experienced like a contagious legacy that they carried along with them through life and that they continued to impart to their families and environment.⁹⁷ Individuals believed that because they had not been looked after well they had themselves not learnt how to be good parents.

In group therapy residential school experiences were spoken of by many clients as a collective trauma. Damage done to earlier generations ‘trickled through’ and created a faultline that affected the entire community into the future.

All types of problems that were perceived as ‘typical’ of contemporary Navajo society- family dysfunction, alcoholism, suicide-rates, gangs- were attributed in some proportion to the disruption that the separation of children from their families and their upbringing in an alien environment brought upon the tribal community.

⁹⁷ Some clinicians tended to dismiss such patient accounts as a convenient explanation trying to divest themselves of their responsibility for their problems: ”People just looking for an excuse for not trying hard enough.”

Many of the residential school accounts I heard tallied with each other. They included the trauma of forcible separation, the detrimental consequences to family cohesion and for older generations the uncompromising ‘immersive’ experience that Indian children were subjected to.⁹⁸

According to Larry King, a residential school ‘survivor’, children continue to live with the scars of their ancestors. Larry’s theory is that contemporary problems on the reservation have their roots in the fact that the elders were, in one way or another, disabled in their capacity to care, nurture and protect their young.

This was because they either had themselves been separated from home as children, or had grown up without tenderness or protection; or they had been powerless to resist officials taking away their children and so their spirit had been broken. This is to say that all generations suffered: those who were not protected and those who could not protect them. However contested the concept of ‘Historical Trauma’ may be⁹⁹, this seems a pretty good definition of it.

* * *

“At a time when states and cities everywhere and the national government likewise have found it necessary to adjust expenditures to a new price scale, the Indian school service has been kept as near as possible to the old level, with very unfortunate effects. Cheapness in education is expensive. Boarding schools that are operated on a per capita cost for all purposes of something over two hundred dollars a year and feed their children from eleven to eighteen cents worth of food a day may fairly be said to be operated below any reasonable standard of health and decency. From the point of view of education, the Indian Service is almost literally a "starved service.”¹⁰⁰

Until the implementation of the Indian Education Act of 1972¹⁰¹ educational strategies and institutions for Native Americans followed a rigorous assimilationist agenda.

⁹⁸ This changed in the 1970s after the implementation of the Indian Education Act which brought with it initiatives to integrate Native culture and language into the curriculum

⁹⁹ See later discussion in this thesis of perspectives on Historical Trauma

¹⁰⁰ ‘The Problem of Indian Administration’ aka ‘The Meriam Report’ 1928;

¹⁰¹ THE INDIAN EDUCATION ACT OF 1972 (Title IV of Public Law 92-318, Educational Amendments of 1972): “...provides federal assistance in education over and above the limited funds appropriated

Federal government policy stipulated that Indian children be educated by immersion in educational environments promoting Anglo-American culture. Following the Carlisle Indian Industrial School's example and its founder Captain Richard Pratt's counsel "Kill the Indian to save the man", these schools forcefully discouraged Native traditions and use of Native languages:

"In Indian education I am a Baptist. We like to hold these children under until they are thoroughly soaked, and when they come out, they will be civilized." ¹⁰²

- declared Pratt in a speech promoting his philosophy regarding the education of Indians. Pratt did not mention what happened to children who ran out of breath before they had been 'thoroughly soaked'. Pratt's metaphor is apt. The lives of Indian children were dispensable. Many children subjected to the ferocity of these early regimes did not survive the ordeal but died of malnutrition and infectious diseases that spread fast in conditions of over-crowding, compromised immunity and lack of support and comfort.

Residential schools focused equally on stripping students of their original culture, as they did on educating them. When they arrived students were set on the stony path to 'civilization' by being subjected to "the undignified removal of everything familiar". ¹⁰³

Of the schools dedicated to Indian education BIA schools were notoriously under-funded and remained so, even as approaches gradually became less rigid and more mindful of the needs of children. ¹⁰⁴

annually for Indian education programs in the Office of Education, Department of Health, Education and Welfare, and the Bureau of Indian Affairs, Department of the Interior, to help close the gap which now exists between Indian education and the general educational level of the United States.

The Act further creates a new Office of Indian Education within the Office of Education, headed by a Deputy Commissioner for Indian Education who will report directly to the Commissioner.

The new Act created the National Advisory Council for Indian Education to provide policy direction and guidance to the Congress and those responsible for implementing the Act. The Council is comprised of 15 Indian or Alaskan Natives appointed by the President from a select list recommended by Indian tribes and organizations throughout the Country." *Journal of American Indian Education*; Volume 14, No 2; January 1975; <http://jaie.asu.edu/v14/V14S3ind.html>

¹⁰² Trafzer; 2006: 125

¹⁰³ Ibid.

The level of education and the quality of care students received at BIA institutions continued to reflect the scarcity of resources in the system. John Merriam's caution that 'Cheapness in education is expensive' foresaw serious consequences for generations of Native American children.

A further disturbing aspect of federal education initiatives was the forcible removal of children from their families. In theory the consent of parents was required; in practice BIA agents often used coercive strategies to remove children from their homes. Few parents agreed to have their children raised at schools by strangers: "Indian parents nearly everywhere asked to have their children during their early years."¹⁰⁵ The removal of children also had strategic reasons: "White authorities (...) perceived that removing Indian children rendered the children's parents more docile."¹⁰⁶

The Indian Education Act of 1972 established comprehensive reforms to the education system. It decentralised the educational administration and handed over responsibility and funds to individual communities and tribes. Off-reservation Indian education programmes were given supplementary funding to educate Native Americans living outside tribal lands.

¹⁰⁴ Churches and missions were called upon to help to provide support and educational services in Indian Country. These schools seem to be held in higher esteem than BIA educational establishments – and many succeeded in their primary aspiration to make converts and to save souls. Christian churches and missionaries were amongst the first to venture into Indian territories and some, like the Franciscans, were notably erudite and diligent in engaging with Native traditions and languages. Their perseverance and interest in Native cultures may have predisposed Native communities favourably towards them, as much as their supplying desirable commodities and the medical assistance they offered the sick, did. Missionaries often settled and lived amongst Native communities for decades. Their soul-saving messages and the useful assistance they provided may have helped to forge an association between the conversion to Christianity and increased opportunity and status. Christian churches and communities represented the accessible ambassadors of the (colonial) establishment, and joining a church may have been regarded as a step away from marginalisation and towards society's stakeholders.

Navajo traditional belief did not share the 'ecumenical prohibitions' characteristic of the doctrinal exclusivity promoted by Christian missionaries converting American Indians. Many converts took on Christianity voluntarily, without much coercion, as a 'safety net' in order to reap its potential beneficent properties in addition to pursuing traditional beliefs

¹⁰⁵ Thompson; 1975:47

¹⁰⁶ Trafzer; 2006: 212

The Indian Education Act led to a comprehensive u-turn in federal Indian education policy: Its policies now attempted to preserve the cultures and languages that they had previously aimed to eradicate.

That change in political strategy is said by some to have come too late. A near century of federal BIA 'anti-Indian' education had succeeded in restricting much of Native language use.

Family dynamics had been disturbed, between generations cultural chasms had become apparent. Many elders and parents voluntarily ceased to communicate with their children in their own languages. So draconian had been the repercussions they had experienced, so inevitable and imminent seemed the decline of Native cultures that they did not want to compromise their young's survival by teaching them native culture. It was obvious that unassimilated Indians stood little chance vis-à-vis the dominant culture. Many began to perceive possible advantages in cultural assimilation. The comprehensive denial or 'transcending' of one's 'Indianness' was hoped to increase the chances of surviving in the market economy that rapidly displaced Native subsistence modes. Acculturation had become a matter of necessity.

BIA schools persist to this day. Their reputation regarding the standard of education they provide has not improved significantly. The BIA schooling system, rightly or wrongly, is believed to be an avariciously funded, under-resourced system that is fundamentally indifferent to the future of its students. It is unlikely though that the harsh regimes of yore have persisted as much of the system that blighted the lives of residential students now has been reformed.

Many of the survivors of the old BIA school regimes, now middle-aged and beyond, however, remember their schooling as traumatic and believe that their experiences then are continuing to impact on their lives now.

* * *

BIA schools mainly admitted children who came from isolated locations away from population-hubs. They lived where there were no day-schools, little access to cash-economy and limited exposure to strangers. These children often were least equipped to deal with being taken away from their homes.

Their families could offer them scant support, and usually had no conception of the treatment their children suffered at school. For many children the experience of being forcibly removed from home was intensified by witnessing their parents' and elders distress and helplessness at their departure.

I was told by ex-residential school students that when they eventually returned home they met their parents as little strangers, with 'Christian' names they had been given at school, hair that had been cut short, Anglo clothing and language gone rusty through lack of practice.

These reunions were not always as happy as families had hoped: parents and children often found it hard to relate to each other after those long, enforced separations.

Many 'traditional' communities had little previous experience of being separated from their children. Harmony and family bonds customarily were maintained and reasserted through the minutiae of shared daily routine. The obligatory terms of endearment by which a mother addresses her children 'shíyazzie' - "my little one" a son is called by his mother "never by name – as long as you have a mother you are always 'shíyazzie' "-, is an incantation of maternal love and belonging.¹⁰⁷

For many children the transition from home-environment to residential schools so presented a comprehensive loss of identity: At school they were nobody's 'little one', had lost the certainty of position that the reiteration of kinship terms at home offered, and were systematically divested of all that had provided identity-security.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁷ 'HB' Diné Cultural Education lecture; 02.2005

¹⁰⁸ A Community College teacher lecturing on Navajo cultural traditions went as far as linking the gradual elimination of kinship-address from everyday family interaction to the ultimate and inevitable decline of

Siblings could find that even their bond did not endure in this environment:

“ I had brothers and sisters there too, but somehow we didn’t want to acknowledge we had brothers and sisters, we were ashamed, or some strange thing like that (...) because you talked a particular (...) Navajo language at home, which was basically just baby talk and you didn’t want to talk like that, or someone will tease you or bully you, or laugh at you – you become a laughing stock. This is how that little culture was with the boarding-school environment.”¹⁰⁹

Often what had been lost could not be restored or regained. Children returned from residential schools altered by their experiences. They now viewed their home and family with different eyes. They found little that could make up for the emotional deprivation suffered in residential schools. While to some returning home and to the identity of ‘shíyazzie’ still was a comfort, others reported that the old terms of endearment now felt like cruel mockery:

“Where were my relatives when I needed them? When I finally got home from that place I was nobody’s ‘yazzie’ no more.”¹¹⁰

Children concluded that their parents had either not been able to, or had been unwilling to protect them from the hardship they had suffered. According to Larry King this feeling of being abandoned brought with it a loss of trust of children in their elders which in turn lastingly damaged the cohesion of the community at large.

The realisation for many children of their parents’ helplessness was, according to Larry King’s hypothesis, particularly problematic. To see parents so disempowered precipitated for some a final breach with the respect towards elders commonly held as a core traditional value. With that respect went the cohesion of the community, the reliance on relational bonds, and the trust in the containing potency of the traditional ways.

That view reflects a certain nostalgic perspective on traditional organisation B.C. (Before Colonialism), as an ideal state of near-perfect harmony. Some individuals were in fact quite cynical about family bonds and parental attitudes. They suspected that their removal had allowed

Navajo culture: “When I hear that a mother does not call her son shíyazzie anymore, I want to suicide” he pronounced, somewhat catastrophically.

¹⁰⁹ Interview Transcript: Larry King; 10/ 2005; Transcript by author.

¹¹⁰ Personal Communication

their parents to forget them altogether. They speculated that their parents had understood their children's removal to school as permission to permanently abdicate parental responsibilities: "Maybe they were glad they did not have to bother to feed us anymore" as one person contemplated.

The feeling of being 'out of sight and out of mind' was one shared by quite a number of individuals I spoke to. Many remembered spending much of their school-years waiting in vain to be visited- or being taken away- by families who "never came."¹¹¹

* * *

"... And then there were people that took care of you – we called them 'matrons' (...) They were Native Americans, they probably went through an earlier , harsher boarding-school process and THEY were the ones who were mean to us and they were the ones who called us "you savages" "you red-skins" and so on. (...) They were Navajo (...) And later on I was in a particular boarding school and there were other Native Americans. In Fourth Grade I remember we were in this one dormitory and this guy- he was Comanche, I think, or some Native plains tribe (...) And he had a 2by4, one he had edged with one of those burning tools (...) the EXECUTION STICK, so if you misbehaved or whatever – there were little spies running around and they would report back to him. So if you'd whispered to someone or you didn't take a nap, he'd line us up on a certain night when he was working, and he would call your name – your number- we only had numbers, that's what I remember: I was Number 35. Thursday night it was movie-night and we had role-call, and he would say to the ones who were called: "You stay in line" And to the ones who weren't called: "Go to the living-room" And to the ones who stayed: "Take off all your clothes and roll it up." So we'd do that, bundle 'em up. And he'd say: "Who wants to watch the movie, come up and feel the Execution Stick!" And some would stay and some would go over there and they would bend over and he'd whack 'em (...) just bare, naked – and we were about Fourth Grade. And then he'd say: "Okay, go back to your rooms now" (...)

And one night I remember that rumours started going through the hallways to the rooms and someone was saying (he) said to run around the building. Children were so scared, and I was too – I didn't want to run round the building. You think you are an adult, but you are just a child. I hid under the bed (...) Probably word got out and he went through the process – not officially, not formally, but I remember all of a sudden he wasn't working with us anymore, but they moved him down to Dormitory Number One, which is where all the kindergarten, First Grade and Second Graders were and next thing you know, I remember this going on when we were in this dormitory – he probably went through military school – he probably went through the military process and he would say: "I have to cut your hair" During the week he'd say: "Oh, I write your number and on

¹¹¹ Another experience that I heard told several times from different individuals is how they never got family visits and, not knowing the location of their boarding-school, would imagine that it must be very far away from their home- too far to travel. Later they would find out that the school was 'about five miles or so' away from home, 'but nobody ever came'.

Sunday you'll be here." And he'd ... you'd get a stylish- the hairstyle that everyone wears nowadays, you know (...) and he called it "horseshoe". He would say "Horseshoe time, horseshoe time" We had an intercom system through the boarding school and he would be laughing and say: "Remember, Number 35 horseshoe time this Sunday. Ha! Ha! Ha!" And you'd hear stuff like that and on Sunday he'd give you a haircut. And for some odd reason, I avoided it, I don't know how I managed it – but I never got a horseshoe cut. But when he got moved to the other dorm, next thing I know these little kids are marching out to breakfast with horseshoe haircuts..."¹¹²

This is a description of a BIA residential school in the early 1960s. It is unclear whether the treatment Larry King remembers was linked to strategies to assimilate Indian children, or if it was due to scarcity of resources which may have exposed children to under-paid and inadequately supervised staff.

In Larry's recollection the residential school seems not to have changed much since the days of Captain Pratt: systematic de-personalisation, methodical humiliation, abusive treatment and transgressive behaviour abound. The abusive staff in this Navajo boarding-school is possibly 'Comanche'- in any case the man is from another tribe.

Larry's memories of ruthless and abusive carers are corroborated by other survivors of the boarding school system who report that they found Native staff particularly harsh:

"We used to see a Native (at school), and be glad. We thought they would be kind to us. But there were so many that were really mean. They took out something on us. You soon learnt not to trust them."¹¹³

Whether harsh Indian school staff was a considered 'divide and rule' strategy by the BIA, whether Native staff were simply replicating the type of treatment that they themselves had endured as students, or whether the comportment of Native staff appeared especially unkind, because children's expectations were to the contrary, is difficult to determine retrospectively. According to Larry King's account historic strategies of subjugation by depersonalisation are in operation: Haircuts that rob children of dignity and brand them with institutional identity, numbers instead of names, corporal chastisement, all in the course of the educative process.

¹¹² Interview Transcript: Larry King; (who wears his hair long and in the traditional style bun) 10/ 2005

¹¹³ Personal Communication

Larry King's memories indicate that 'the Comanche' indulged in what would nowadays be considered transgressive behaviour:

He orders his charges to strip naked before administering corporal punishment; he forces them to run around the school-building in the night, he subjects them to bizarre haircuts, but most worryingly, despite the fact that, as Larry surmises "probably word got out" and the establishment became aware of problems, 'the Comanche' is transferred to take charge of an even more vulnerable group – 'Kindergarten, First Grade and Second Graders'.

Larry implies that 'the Comanche' was transferred because of concerns or complaints. But what authority transfers a man with this track record to look after an even younger, more vulnerable group of children? Does the transfer of the deviant dorm-manager to another dorm not guarantee that yet one more group of children will be ill-treated and traumatised? Is this a case of a callous, unthinking or disinterested administration? Or is 'the Comanche's' transfer an example perhaps of the emblematic idiocy of bureaucracy where, once wheels begin to turn, something must be done, but scant regard is paid to what it would be most prudent to do?

And what to make of Larry's telling this without further critique or comment?

'The Comanche', Larry says, continued behaving as he would, and leaves us this image:

"But when he got moved to the other dorm, next thing I know these little kids are marching out to breakfast with horseshoe haircuts..."

In his narrative Larry ignores the responsibilities and failures of the Anglo-dominated authorities in charge. Although this was to me puzzling, not to say disquieting, it is not an aberration. It reflects a state of exemption that is often accorded to systems managed by and associated with the dominant society. Larry does here neither refer to nor blame the higher instances and wider system that frame his experiences. In part this is because the narrative inhabits the child's perspective that Larry then was: But throughout the interview Larry omits perspectives on the dominant society and its institutional administration. The dominant society appears if at all, implicitly and obliquely through its effects.

* * *

Sheep is a 24 hour lifestyle, because in the wintertime, when lambs are being born, you have to make sure that they don't freeze and for a few days you keep them with the lambs and so you keep some hay on the side, and you feed them, and you herd the other one out there to graze. And then, at the same time some mothers would not want their off-spring and so you have to tie those moms and then feed the baby.

And eventually nurture them like that. And sometimes they readopt them. Other times they just never want to do anything with their lamb, with their offspring.

And basically I think that's what human beings were doing also.¹¹⁴

The way it is described here, shepherding is a practice-centred way to learn about all manners of things; an alternative, holistic educational curriculum.

It lets us imagine how much children would have missed in terms of their traditional education when they were removed from home, and how difficult it may have been for parents to manage livestock and daily workload without their children's help.

In Larry's narrative sheep are conduits for other associations. Navajo parents- specifically mothers- are implicitly compared to ewes that can't bond with their lambs. They have to be encouraged, helped, sometimes forced to stay with their offspring. Sometimes nothing works. Sometimes there is nothing that can be done.

Possessing sheep also defines status and obligations in the community: the larger the flock the higher the expectations of relatives, the more the demands by poorer members of the community.

"...if you have sheep, people will come round and ask you: Can I have this? I'll trade. So there is a lot of trading going on, and then within the social context of traditional Navajo life (...) people will be arriving, coming round, just visiting. And there is a place to eat. You can feed yourself. And (...) people would literally ask you wóósh káá, again the word comes in- begging- (...) "I'm asking you since you have a lot of sheep and we are having a ceremony, and you are my great-great-granddaughter, or great-great-grandson and so we came over here." And they say that, and you naturally oblige. (...) once in a while you see some stinginess, some people don't really want to give. Or either they manipulate you. They use that flowering (sic) endearing introduction, and they beg you like that. And they put you on the spot. And you don't want to say, no I don't, you know. Word will get around you are a stingy character and you get a name from that. So you really have to abide by those mannerisms...¹¹⁵

¹¹⁴ Interview Larry King

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

These demands by relatives or the community should be heeded: being envied is potentially dangerous. Envy might give rise to witchcraft, which compromises the family's health, safety, prosperity and harmony.

But in a sense everything is bound together and connected: human mothers and sheep-mothers have similar reactions to adversity, and these reactions will have repercussions for their young and the herd- or wider community. In the community having too much is just as compromising as having too little. It may be in the power of the wealthy to give, but it is in the power of the poor to destroy.

In the interview Larry King speaks of how Diné collective identity has changed. He has certain theories why this is so: Historical Trauma, the intergenerational chain of adversarial experiences trickling down and impacting on individual development is one of the theories Larry supported on the basis of his and his family's experiences.

Through experiences of separation, through having been brought up in harsh and alien environments, many women did not have the confidence, had not learnt how to look after a child, how to nurture it, how to bond with it. And often there was no wise shepherd in the community to teach mothers- whether sheep or human- how to bond with their young.

Contemporary Diné society, according to Larry's perspective, is a disparate collection of 'lambs' forced to look after their own survival.

* * *

But once again the root-cause of these changes, the source of trauma is not mentioned directly. Where are the educators, administrators, bureaucrats, where are the originators and engineers of this system that has brought such change to Native peoples, that has been the cause of so much hurt?

They are missing from Larry King's as well as from the majority of narratives encountered in the course of this study. In my experience it was rare to hear anything but the most oblique reference to Whites. In organisational contexts where the upper managerial strata were in the majority Anglo, this fact was rarely mentioned, even in situations where managerial comportment justifiably invited criticism.

One of the questions that most occupied me personally during research remained 'where does all the anger go?', anger for which I could see much cause, but of which I could find little evidence. Rather than speaking of 'ignoring' Whites it may be more accurate to conceive of this phenomenon as a blind spot enveloping the dominant society. This is not for Navajo lack of awareness or critical engagement: Tribal institutions and governments tend to be cauldrons of covetousness and discontent where officials are vigilantly monitored by the citizenry for signs of misconduct, corruption or misuse of position. Navajo public life is full of officials who have been promoted and demoted- to be eventually promoted again elsewhere- due to inquiries initiated and charges brought against them by incensed tribal members. It is rare on the Navajo Nation for individuals to inhabit positions of prominence, without their status, integrity or qualifications being subjected to serious inquiry and challenge. It is so particularly striking that this endemic lust for vigilance is rarely applied to Anglo-led services or to Anglos in positions of power. The phenomenon of invisible, unmentioned (unmentionable?) dominant agency appears in various guises throughout this study.

A potential explanation for the phenomenon of 'ignored dominant agency' is that discontent is only mobilized where identification is possible, and that alien systems in positions of power tend to endure longer, because they are positioned beyond socio-metric boundaries, 'hors de concurrence', beyond the possibilities of identification and the desire- and ire- they generate. Here it is pertinent to recall Alice Walker's comment, mentioned in the previous chapter, on her community's attitude towards Whites when she was growing up:

“We did not study on them. They were like the weather.”¹¹⁶

It is that attitude of ignoring or not commenting on Anglos and of apparently excluding them from one’s procedural and structural worldview that is evident here.

* * *

¹¹⁶ Alice Walker; (19. May 2013) Desert Island Discs; BBC Radio 4.

PART II
ON THE THEORY AND PRACTICE OF TRAUMA

“...integration of the oppressor by the personality does not occur overnight: it has been systematically interwoven into the fabric of the Native American family for generations.”¹¹⁷

* * *

“I feel very strongly that I am under the influence of things or questions which were left incomplete and unanswered by my parents and grandparents and more distant ancestors. It often seems as if there were an impersonal karma within a family which is passed on from parents to children. It has always seemed to me that I had to answer questions which fate had posed to my forefathers, and which had not yet been answered, or as if I had to complete, or perhaps continue, things which previous ages had left unfinished.”¹¹⁸

The removal of children to residential schools under a harsh assimilationist regime was not the only trauma experienced by Native American tribes. For the Navajo there was the tribe’s forcible displacement in the 1860s, now remembered as the ‘Long Walk’; the compulsory livestock-reduction of the 1930s and later the health-toll that the operations of the uranium industry on the reservation took on the population.

Some of these experiences arguably were more pernicious than others: they damaged the fabric of society; ruptured tribal cohesion and sowed dissent within the community and between generations.

For Larry King it is the residential schools that caused lasting damage and that created havoc in intergenerational relations. As Larry remembers it, one of the most difficult aspects of the residential school experience was feeling abandoned by the family, and realising the extent to which parents and carers were powerless to protect their children.

¹¹⁷ Duran; 1995: 30

¹¹⁸ Jung; 1967:233

Larry's experience evokes what the psychoanalyst Michael Balint called the 'basic fault', an early developmental injury that accompanies the individual into adulthood and gnaws at the emotional foundations:

"...the basic fault may be traced back to a considerable discrepancy in the early formative phases of the individual between his bio-psychological needs and the material and psychological care, affection and attention available.(...), the lack of 'fit' between the child and *the people* who represent his environment...."¹¹⁹

In this context the 'basic fault' does not just affect an individual but is a fault-line running through the whole community.

"Intergenerational transmission of victimisation related pathology"¹²⁰ was first observed with children of Holocaust survivors and subsequently adopted within a wider framework: In psychotherapy the concept of "Intergenerational Trauma" or "Historical Trauma" has been widely applied to work with refugees, survivors of torture, genocide, natural catastrophes and victims of social and racial discrimination.

The descendants of survivors of massive psychic trauma are often observed to compulsively act out on the wounds of their forebears. 'Acting out' defines a spectrum of 'pathological behaviour' that is perceived to be a mimetic rendition of the original trauma with compensatory or sadistic tendencies.¹²¹

In principle any enduring dysfunction, any fault-line traducing generations may be seen as intergenerational trauma: Persistent low self-esteem, multi-generational family dysfunction,

¹¹⁹ Balint;1989:22

¹²⁰ Danieli; 1998:3

¹²¹ Descendents of survivors of famine so may display a compensatory range of 'eating-disorders; for instance denying themselves food altogether due to survivors' guilt; or engage in food-related behaviour that appears destructive, perverse and viewed intergenerationally constitutes an attack on ancestral deprivation. Descendants of Holocaust survivors dressing up in SS-uniforms is another example that springs to mind; observed masochistic tendencies in children of torture survivors and so on. These are the more spectacular manifestations of intergenerational trauma, however.

addiction problems, depression, self-injurious behavior, suicidal ideation, anxiety, lack of confidence all have been linked to ‘intergenerational’ or ‘historic trauma’.

Khan ¹²² speaks of ‘cumulative trauma’ that hinges on a disruption of the ‘mother’s function as a protective shield’. The concept of intergenerational- cumulative or historical- trauma adds a historic dimension to the understanding of psychic development and emphasises the relational aspects in emotional development.

Duran and Duran are the foremost proponents of the “Intergenerational Trauma” and “Intergenerational Post Traumatic Stress Disorder” theories in Native American communities. Their work on post-colonial psychology has been received with interest and is applied to substance abuse treatment in the Native population.¹²³

In Native American services ‘Intergenerational Trauma’ is a term that is frequently focused on. It is widely understood to be the key to problems with which Native communities are particularly afflicted.¹²⁴ Intergenerational or Historical Trauma has been appropriated by lay-people. I have heard reference made to it and it being used as an explanation of ‘individual pathologies’ by clients and service-users. The popularity of the concept indicates that it ‘makes sense’ to many ‘survivors’.

Gone et al. ¹²⁵ reconsider ‘Historical Trauma’ as a mutable ‘emerging idiom’:

The concept of Historical Trauma extends Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, albeit in a ‘cumulative, collective and intergenerational’ rather than in an individual context.

¹²² Khan; 1963: 286-306.

¹²³ Duran & Duran; 1995

¹²⁴ During my fieldwork at the IHS clinic and DBHS services the workshops and seminars that were offered usually fitted in one of two categories, one related to traditional cultural education, and the other focusing on trauma and dysfunction, constituting the ‘yin and yang’ so to speak of contemporary Native mental health.

¹²⁵ American Anthropological Association Annual Conference : American Indian ‘Historical Trauma’ Panel, San Francisco 2012

Historical Trauma reflects Memmi's assertion that 'colonial society is a diseased society.'¹²⁶ It is a 'trans-historical construct'¹²⁷ in that it implicitly references the pathologizing effects of the colonial experience.

The discourse on Historical Trauma draws on an implicit dichotomy between 'the trauma inflicted on Aboriginal and Native communities by State and Church, and the idea that aboriginal culture is inherently therapeutic'.¹²⁸

The 'Healing Journeys' invoked in aboriginal treatment and behavioural health programmes tie the plight of the individual into the experiences of the collective and into historical processes. In Aboriginal/ Native treatment discourse 'curing' is rarely the objective, but rather 'healing' and 'restoration'. But as colonial powers are here to stay and their impact endures, it may be more accurate to consider aboriginal Historical Trauma interventions as 'transformative' rather than 'healing' or 'restorative'.¹²⁹

Lear, a psychoanalyst, argues that the conventional concept of trauma risks being somewhat reductive. Regarding the Crow tribe's experience of loss of their civilization after they were settled on a reservations, Lear writes:

"As psychoanalysts we need to think more about the psychological effects of such losses. For example, what is it to mourn the loss of concepts? What would it be to fail to mourn? What would it be to work through such a loss? It is, I think, a mistake to try to reduce the wide variety of psychological phenomena that might arise around such a loss to the concept of trauma. If it makes sense to speak of trauma here at all, it is primarily a trauma to the culture, and there is no one-to-one mapping from the trauma onto the psychological states of its inhabitants."¹³⁰

¹²⁶ Memmi; 1965

¹²⁷ Gone; American Anthropological Association Annual Conference 2012; *ibid*

¹²⁸ *ibid*

¹²⁹ Waldram; *ibid*.

¹³⁰ Lear; 2007:297

Even though the concept of ‘Historical Trauma’ may not be adequate in reflecting the individual responses and permutations to suffering a loss of culture, concepts, language, certainty or rootedness- or as whatever ‘identity’ had been experienced- I would argue that the use of the concept of ‘Historical Trauma’ has dialogic value by empowering Native peoples to address historical atrocities wreaked by the dominant culture in ‘the enemy’s language’.

Contemporary Aboriginal healing itself is a reflection of historical processes, embedded in structures established by the dominant society, drawing on conceptually hybrid constructs. Rather than being ‘traditional’, Native healing is a reconsideration of ‘traditions’ performed in a framework significantly defined by historical vicissitudes.

The historical censorship of the ‘Native Voice’ through the systematic and comprehensive enforcement of structural subalternity has left an enduring legacy in the guise of self-censoring expressions of discontent. What is referenced by the interlocutors here as the ‘dominant society’ is just that: dominant.

Even though the idea of the ‘American Dream’ and equal opportunity for all may be aspirationally subscribed to, it is belied by the parallel syndrome of discursive caution that is evident in ‘minority’ groups, who are prone to stifle expression of ambiguous and critical sentiments vis-à-vis the dominant society.¹³¹

¹³¹ This is another way of explaining the absence of Whites/Anglos in Native discourse: an innate fear of repercussion and internalised self-censorship acquired through historical oppression. The right to complain, and even more drastically, to determine the dominant society as perpetrator of injury in the history of North American White-Indian relations manifests a significant change. Until quite recently the prevalent attitude in Indian communities regarding confronting the dominant society was to exercise caution, lest offence should be taken and conditions become even worse as retaliatory measure. Caution may indeed still prevail, particularly as concerns an older generation, but the adoption of ‘Intergenerational Trauma’ in the Native discourse on the past and the emic use of ‘Intergenerational Trauma’ should here be understood as declaration of distress, political statement of discontent and not least as signifying a considerable shift in Native American situatedness vis-à-vis mainstream society.

Intergenerational Trauma provides the opportunity for an implicit addressing of current discontent projected onto historical experiences and cloaked in the hegemonically sanctioned idiom of pathology.¹³²

The transition that the concept of Intergenerational Trauma has undergone from specialist to lay-use now means that many people outside the clinical domain are familiar with the term and apply it to themselves. The idea that trauma is passed on and that ancestral suffering may adversely affect their descendants' equilibrium has become embedded in the contemporary model of explaining distress in Native communities. It is an approach that implicitly inverts an earlier postcolonial theory that sought the source of problems in Native communities in their inherent inability to adapt to modern life, by pointing to the problem source of colonialism as malignant agency. Intergenerational Trauma so offers an alternative to 'Anglo theories' of cultural or genetic causality.

Concepts mediated by popular psychology have effected a cultural turn and have enabled the critique of the dominant society's treatment of American Indians, by turning the dominant system's own references and theories against it.

'Intergenerational Post Traumatic Stress Disorder' adopts the language of psychiatry to lend hitherto uncategorised suffering authority, albeit by way of pathologisation.

'Intergenerational trauma' so establishes a process of cultural translation, following the hegemonic imperative of presenting experience in the adversary's language.¹³³

Reference to these concepts by Native communities so simultaneously indicates cultural assimilation and a critique of the culture assimilated to. This is characteristic of a phenomenon I would call 'systemic resistance' where resistance cannot be distinguished from the system itself because it has made itself an integral part of it.

¹³² Other than politically or socially manifested anger and critiques, pathology can't be helped. Having been made ill by a system also bestows stigma and so robs the subject of potency and thereby makes him/her less of a threat to the status quo.

¹³³ In a process that recalls colonial strategies of drawing up of treaties

PART III

THE ANATOMY OF ENVY

“ENVY ‘Grudging contemplation of more fortunate persons’- C.O.D. According to McDougall (1931), ‘it is a binary compound of negative self-feeling and of anger’. According to Freud penis envy occupies a central position in the psychology of women (...), while according to Melanie Klein innate envy of the breast of the mother and its creativity is a primary cause of all mental illness...”¹³⁴

In the interview with Larry King there is a moment when he speaks about his memories of being a young child in residential school, not being visited by his parents and having to stay at school during the weekends. Larry describes seeing his peers returning from weekend-leave carrying candy they have been given by their parents, when he raises the issue of envy and jealousy:

“But for a certain reason I had no jealousy, I just envied them. There was no jealousy. There was just envy.”

(Interviewer Question:” What is the difference between envy and jealousy?”)

“Envy is longing to have what they have. Jealousy probably is: how dare... sort of like an anger: How dare they have something I don’t have... the other was: I wish...”¹³⁵

Larry emphasises that he felt envy rather than jealousy. When asked to clarify he says that he means that he just wished he could have the same, but that there was no anger in him against the kids that had more than him. He did not begrudge others what they had; he just wished he could have those things too.

The remark intrigued me, and indeed continues to puzzle me. It was one of those moments occurring in field research, when a seemingly innocuous remark briefly asserts a whole realm of conceptual differences. What is the problem with envy or jealousy? Why not be angry at life’s injustice, be angry at others who probably let you feel that they have more than you, and whose privileges damage your self-esteem? Children rarely seem to have a problem with being angry- and showing it- when they think that another has more than them. This anger might be called envy, jealousy or it may be seen as a healthy sense of social justice: everyone should have the same, otherwise it is not fair!

¹³⁴ Rycroft; 1995:50

¹³⁵ Interview Larry King; 10/ 2005; Transcript by author.

There was no time unfortunately during the interview to clarify this point further, though it seemed such an interesting comment to volunteer. Envy of course is a concept much explored in psychoanalytic theory, so it seemed to me that Larry with his definition is somewhat curtailing the potency of envy and is presenting it as a version of wistful yearning, entirely devoid of threat to the other.

In a cultural context where envy or jealousy is perceived to often find a release in the practice of witchcraft, it is perhaps prudent to ascertain the harmlessness of one's feelings, lest they give rise to speculation regarding untoward activities. Saying 'I did not feel angry at all at those who have more than I', is also stating: 'I would not do anything bad or destructive to try to harm those people'.

But to me it seemed as if Larry himself was astonished at not finding what he defined as attacking jealousy within him. He says that there is no "How dare they have something I don't have...", just: "I wish..."

In the interview it seemed as if this is a question to himself as much as an account to me, and perhaps a justification: "Why did I feel no jealousy?"

There are many ways to interpret this query. Perhaps it constitutes an assurance of personal ethos buoyed by unconscious defences. It is plausible that where there is established inequity, there will be a social prohibition or stigmatisation of attitudes that are implicitly and explicitly questioning of that inequity.

But part of the protestant ethic is to establish inequity by prowess, otherwise called 'meritocracy'.

The European-American educational curriculum thrives on encouraging competition. The prominence given to competition and self-assertion manifests another conceptual difference between the European-American approach and the 'shepherding way' of traditional education that prizes communal endeavour and 'team-work' above individual achievement.

It is conceivable that residential schools encouraged 'losers' to venerate 'winners' and to attempt to emulate- and eventually outdo- them.

On the other hand the Judeo-Christian doctrine casts a different light on inequity and categorically prohibits envy: “thou shallst not covet...”

So perhaps Larry’s assertion that he felt no envy constitutes a retrospectively issued denial. It is a declaration issued as if in fact he is still a student at the residential school, who has to assure ‘matron’ that he is feeling no untoward, unsanctioned emotions. His conscience is clear. He is not angry.

Larry’s unsolicited assertion regarding the absence of anger in him can also be understood as a denial of the unbearable all-consuming potency of envy, and the shame that a negative feeling of such irrepressible strength brings with it.

But to me it seems conceivable that Larry is asking himself the same question that came up for me in the field, time and time again: “Where does all the anger go?”

Indeed: Where does all the righteous anger go?

* * *

Beginning in the late 19th Century with the building of the railways the availability of waged work in ‘Indian Country’ grew steadily and brought with it increasing socio-economic stratification of Native communities.

There was growing trade-activity between wage-earning Native Americans and Anglo tradesmen in border-towns who began to realise the economic advantages of catering to Indian customers.

The productivity of Navajo pastoralism so became a concern of Anglo traders: “More wool, more mutton, and more blankets meant more money for these frontier entrepreneurs.”¹³⁶

Employment opportunities grew further with the expansion of the uranium- , oil- gas – and mining industries, which drew workers from across the Nation and led to a population-boom in

¹³⁶ Iverson; 2002:76

the Southwest. By 1940 approximately a third of Navajo income was through the wage economy.¹³⁷ Native communities no longer were isolated. Many had access to modern conveniences, although not all could afford them. Most families had someone bringing in a wage, and could so supplement their livelihood with bought goods. Economic differences within Native communities became more obvious. Particularly high-risk employment in gas- and oil-fields and the mining- and uranium-industry paid good salaries. Those in permanent employment began to enjoy considerable consumer-power with their disposable income.

“The largest average paychecks, \$10 000 a year and up, went to employees in mining, pipeline work, public utilities and private construction firms...”¹³⁸

Economic differences were keenly noted by children at school, who became aware that not everyone lived in the same way, and that quite obviously some had more than others.

Robert, now in his early forties, grew up in the ‘traditional way’ and remembers noticing that the ‘oil-field kids’ he went to school with had a different life-style: “They always seemed to have new stuff that their folks had bought them...” The ‘oilfield kids’ also seemed less committed to following customs and cultural prohibition than the ‘traditionals’. They did not ask to be exempt from dissecting animals in biology-class, they did not spend their summers in sheep-camp in the mountains, and as they grew up they did not worry whether the person they wanted to date was a clan-relative. Robert was not sent away to residential school, but went to a local public school on the Reservation, where students’ parents represented the whole spectrum of contemporary Navajo economy. There were traditional subsistence livestock holders, oilfield-workers, miners, factory-workers and menial and service industry workers.

In the traditional way being cash-poor did not mean being poor. As Josephine, who is of an older generation than Robert and whose family was supported by her mother’s sheep herd, weaving and trading, says of the frugal but adequate subsistence economy in which she grew up: “Apparently

¹³⁷ Kluckhohn & Leighton; 1974

¹³⁸ Aberle; 1983:655

we were poor, but we did not know it.” As a child Josephine cannot remember wanting for anything. It was later, at school and when encountering mainstream society that she realised that the way she and her family lived was regarded as poverty by the majority.

Robert’s secure traditional upbringing in a close-knit ‘traditional’ family made him curious rather than envious of his fellow pupils’ privileges. He conceded that dating presented a conundrum. His non-traditional peers had definitely found it easier to find a girlfriend, because they did not have to obey clan-taboos. ‘Traditionals’ had to go farther and farther afield in order to meet someone ‘fanciable’ they were not clan-related to. Robert did not mention if his wealthier peers’ possessions had any impact on him and his confidence and aspirations. From Robert’s accounts it seems as if in his community groups of ‘wage-earners’ and ‘traditionals’ were equally weighted, which perhaps helped to keep things in perspective and limited feelings of disadvantage and envy taking over.

Salaried employment and increasing participation of wage-earning Navajo in mainstream consumer-activity created a pronounced chasm in Navajo society between paid workers and those engaged in the traditional subsistence economy. It was not so much the case that those following the subsistence model were destitute, but that they were excluded from the consumer-society. While wage-workers had money to spend, subsistence workers did not.

* * *

In the 1960s when the region's mining industry had become one of the main employers of Navajo and was a booming concern, Larry King recalls observing the economic privilege of miners' children in his residential school:

“So a lot of fathers, they went out to distant areas, particularly Rico, Colorado, which is right before Telluride and in boarding-school I remember other children. They say: yeah, we live in Rico, and they all talk in Navajo. And when they come... their parents would come by and take them out on weekends. Me they never did. And when they came back on Sunday, they would be hauling all kinds of candy... and stuff that felt so good.. I envied them I guess, because I didn't get anything like that. And I felt bad, awful. And so that's where low self-esteem starts building within you.”¹³⁹

This was quite a common experience. The 'candy' that others had; not being visited by family; not being taken home for weekends and holidays, still affected many of those I spoke to. This subject came up particularly frequently in diagnostic interviews when patients spoke about their experiences of deprivation, of not feeling they had anything; of how in residential school others had always had more: more candy, more family visits, more love and protection, and with and through these advantages- crucially- more self-esteem. Many patients attributed at least part of their presenting difficulties to experiences of emotional deprivation and material inequity in their youth.

In Larry King's account the difficult experience of being in residential school is rendered through the prism of the envious gaze: "... their parents would come by and take them out on weekends. Me they never did."

The feeling of abandonment comes alive when he witnesses evidence of the affection that his peers enjoy. He watches these kids returning from weekends that they have spent at home with their families, 'hauling candy.'

The use of 'hauling' here is noteworthy. 'Hauling' implies excess. 'Hauling' is more than having enough, it is having too much. The use of 'hauling' in this context is congruent with the sensibilities of a traditionally frugal nomadic people, for whom 'having enough' was manageable,

¹³⁹ Interview Larry King; 10/ 2005; Transcript by author.

and having too much was a burden. Wanton indulgence and excess contravene the mindful and circumspect way of interacting with the environment's resources in the traditional way. And excess is quite literally dangerous when considering consequences like the health-problems and addiction disorders it is linked to, and that great numbers amongst Native populations are said to be suffering from. In contrast to Josephine whose frugal, but loving and secure upbringing shielded her from feeling deprived or disadvantaged Larry's narrative is of an abandoned child's compounded loss; a child whose family do not take him home for the weekend, and who therefore also gets no candy, while his peers are indulged with both: family comfort and sweets. Returning to school from home they have candy to remember their family by. Candy is symbol and proof of parental affection.

At residential school sweets become analogous with love. The absence of candy does not just evoke feelings of abandonment, it is abandonment. Material deprivation becomes a lasting sorrow, because there is no-one for Larry and children like him, who will take away the hurt and make them feel cherished.

I once witnessed Norah and her youngest sister Emmy, both in their sixties, reminiscing about their respective relationship with their parents:

Emmy: "One day I wrote to my father¹⁴⁰ to send me \$ 5 I needed for school."

Norah: "Did he?"

Emmy: "Yeah, he did eventually send me \$5. It's the only time he ever gave me something."

Norah: "He never gave me anything."

Emmy: "In all the years I looked after my mother, she once bought me a bottle of Coke. Once!"

Norah: "She never even bought me that."¹⁴¹

¹⁴⁰ Emmy's and Norah's father was estranged from the family and lived elsewhere with his 'new' family

¹⁴¹ See Appendix: Accounts of Material Inequity

The occasion for this exchange must have lain fifty years or so in the past, yet Norah's shock at Emmy's unexpected 'disclosure' was obvious. After all this time it seemed that her father's favouritism could still distress his eldest daughter. Sibling rivalry, evidently, is a potent agent. Even within the family inequity thrives. Norah's reaction seemed quite similar to what Larry King described feeling when he looked at his peers 'hauling candy'.

* * *

Envy featured large, implicitly and explicitly, in narratives. It was thought to be a primary cause of tension in the work place, relationships gone awry and conflict in the community. This is not so astonishing: the most enduring and fundamental change the colonial project introduced is the acquisitive drive and its elevation to moral imperative.

Robert¹⁴², who works as cultural archivist at the local community college had a theory that mistrust and envy were material imports of a colonial rule that had introduced the concept of land ownership and its documentation to Indian tribes. Robert argued that the notion of something that historically had been shared and accessible to all now was transformed to denominated boundaries to which only named owners had a right of use, altered dynamics within the community. According to Robert people were not so much motivated by greed than a rising awareness that there were others better off than themselves and a fear of falling behind, a fear that is arguably much more complex than the simple desire for material goods. The feeling of being disadvantaged is essentially about feeling less favoured than others by the powers that be, whether it in terms of patronage, fate or resources.

¹⁴² Robert's contribution is discussed in more detail in the Appendix; Part III; Accounts of Material Inequity

Robert's theory evokes the phenomenon of the 'crab barrel' or 'Jhon's syndrome' discussed in a following chapter. It is a plausible explanation of the roots and dynamics of intra-group envy and is quite precisely reflected in Lacan's consideration of 'amare conspectus' discussed later in this chapter. As Robert explains it here, envy is not really about wanting to have the same or as much as others have. It is not materiality that is the focus of envy. It is the state of imagined fulfilment that is being bestowed by whatever it is that the other has that you do not. Destroying whatever it is, so is quite as satisfactory as possessing the thing itself.

Navajo traditional prescription for organising social and ritual life revolves principally around maintaining equilibrium in all matters. Ceremonial activity redresses and restores balance. It is conceivable that Navajo society was particularly ill-equipped in making sense of inequality, an imbalance that not only could not be repaired but that was on the contrary lauded by the dominant society. Socially and economically speaking the success of one often is to the disadvantage of another. Material success, so the implication of Robert's hypothesis, in Navajo society presents a moral aberration. According to traditional ethos all surplus was to be duly redistributed. The reliable fulfilment of community obligation was lastingly undermined by land-ownership and waged work. Now there was a steadily widening gap between haves and have-nots.

Material success was deeply ambiguous, because it was certain that people who fulfilled their obligations towards their community could never accumulate enough to be rich.

"...it is believed that such wealth is often obtained through stinginess rather than generosity, or by those who transform themselves into werewolves and rob graves. (...) To the Navajo, such accumulation indicates someone who has not been generous or cooperative but who has acted in terms of his own desires rather than those of his kinsmen."¹⁴³

Those members of the community who have achieved individual wealth must have done so by disregarding their obligations or by taking from others.

¹⁴³ Lamphere;1977: 54 ff

The wealthy remain tainted with the suspicion that they lack social responsibility and even worse, engage in corrupt and antisocial practices. The envy that the rich arouse and the disruption and sabotage that envy brings along with it is in a sense just punishment for undermining the tribal spirit. Envy provides the necessary impetus for exercising social control and reigning in rampant self-servers.

It may well be that ‘in the old days’ when there was less material cause for it, envy was held to be an untoward emotion; a taboo sentiment. Just as disproportionate wealth could not be achieved without untoward means, so envy and similar disharmonious sentiments were associated with witchcraft. Individuals would not admit to envy for fearing that they would be accused of witchcraft or sorcery.

Kluckhohn, in his exploration of Navajo witchcraft understood both the practice of witchcraft and witchcraft accusations in terms of a remedy for anxiety and hostility haunting an ‘insecure society’, and as allowing “the verbalization of anxiety...”¹⁴⁴

Nowadays mention of sorcery or sympathetic magic popularly called ‘witchcraft’ is made almost casually and is often portrayed as retributive justice towards those who have behaved badly and ‘had it coming to them’.¹⁴⁵

It helps that ‘witchcraft’ has achieved a quasi-folkloristic status as quaint albeit potent cultural practice: it is cheaply done- some say even a bad thought will do the trick, no further action necessary- and often more satisfactory than direct confrontation.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴⁴ Kluckhohn; 1967: 107

¹⁴⁵ It must be emphasized however that it is by no means a majority that either sanctions or indulges in witchcraft. An older ‘traditional’ generation abhors the casual mention of such practices which in itself is seen as evil. The large contingent of Navajo that are Christians would have nothing to do with these practices either. We are therefore speaking of a younger generation who are generally far enough removed from traditional principles to regard- and practice- witchcraft in a spirit of a kind of cultural revival. It is difficult to say whether mention of witchcraft as a *possible practice* includes actively practicing witchcraft. It was my impression that witchcraft accusations were much more common than the de facto practice of witchcraft; but that the consideration of witchcraft as hypothetically helpful practice in situations of adversity has become more acceptable, or in any case something that contemporary cultural pluralism has now made possible to mention more openly.

¹⁴⁶ See Appendix: Notes on Witchcraft

Navajo society measures itself increasingly- in similarity as much as in contrast- against 'mainstream' society. Vis-à-vis the dominant Anglo-society, 'witchcraft' is gradually achieving the status of a cultural resource that remains inaccessible- and hopefully intimidating- to the mainstream. Particularly to the younger generation witchcraft now presents as a quasi- folkloristic practice, providing them with a powerful and empowering counterpoint to 'mainstream' youth-culture's 'Satanist' references.

The apparent 'populist' turn of 'witchcraft' may also be linked to the 'rehabilitation' of envy in a society whose increasing economic inequity and inequality of opportunity provides plenty of cause for it. The advancing stratification of Navajo society has loosened the kin-based ties of reciprocity and obligation that historically held society together.

Envious attacks, be they through sorcery, sabotage, malicious social slandering or other means, so no longer constitute the aberration inflicted on a balanced and harmonious community that they were once held to be. The self-aggrandisement, immoderation and self-indulgence practiced by those deviating from the traditional ethos and compromising tribal society, according to some, deserve to be punished.

Like untrammelled wealth accumulation envy and witchcraft now have become de-stigmatised.

Capitalism and envy are, so to speak, the yin and yang of contemporary reservation life.

Envy, born out of greed, according to informants had become a prominent and disturbing feature of community life. Envy as it features here is usually materially inspired or linked to social status taxa. Envy operates through the desire for objects possessed by another with whom the subject must have some contact.

Envy in popular conception is seen as the prerogative of the weak rather than the strong. What is 'challenge to aspire' to the confident who do not doubt their ability to attain the desirable object that another already possesses, is envy to the wretched who cannot imagine that it is in their power to reach what they want. Feeling envious carries with it a feeling of defeat and shame. It

might be that shame and the feeling of powerlessness in which it resides is harder to bear than the envy that gave rise to it.

Envy, by the contributors of this study, was rendered a somewhat ambiguous concept. On the one hand people seemed to agree that the old traditional way of balance and justice had been irredeemably damaged, so that there was ample cause for envy. On the other hand the majority spoke of envy as a wholly negative sentiment. Not only did it sour a person's character and made them socially unreliable; it also had a contagious and corrupting effect on the whole community. Envy is such a potent feeling that it makes it quite likely that its bearer will stop at nothing, not even witchcraft, to assuage it. Like addiction, envy was seen by many as insatiable and implied to be an imported colonial legacy. In the old times- 'B.C.', when things were in balance, when there was no inequity, when wealth distribution and caring for one's kin were the communal code of honour- there was no envy, because there was no cause for envy.

According to this perspective envy signifies the malaise and deterioration of the community. It should be noted however that there is a fundamental difference in terms of attitude whether one is speaking of others' envy- which is negative and destructive; and one's own envy, which usually is justifiable and casts the bearer in the light of victim rather than perpetrator. Subjective envy usually- if admitted to- is portrayed as a plausible reaction to unfairness.

In the interview Larry King hints at the construction of envy and the extent of its reach. He denies being jealous, because being jealous according to his definition means actively and maliciously coveting what another possesses. Envy here is jealousy 'without teeth' – it is a wistful yearning. In Larry's narrative envy comes out of deprivation and powerlessness. It is not acquisitive in that its object is unattainable. It is akin to nostalgia in that it evokes visions of another way of being-in-life, of being cosseted and nurtured and contained. Envy here harbours the enduring resonance of absence and loss.

Larry within the context of this study was unique in that he ‘owned’ feeling envy, rather than projecting his feelings into others and accusing them of being envious (which was much more usual). Perhaps it was because he had admitted to feeling envious that he needed to divest envy of its potency.

Progress, as even those flourishing in terms of the dominant society conceded, has come at the cost of a divided community tainted by frustration and covetousness. Progress has caused envy, in itself a justifiable sentiment, to take over the community and ‘go viral’. Envy now is constitutive of the tribal mindset: everyone envies everyone, whether they have reason to or not. Envy has become independent of objects or causes, it is a self-perpetuating state for some, akin to an evil possession, and has now in itself become a blight on the community as a whole.

But is envy really all bad, all destructive and as the majority of my contributors (who seemed to be tendentially ‘Kleinian’ in their outlook) believe, next to annihilation?

* * *

“*Invidia* comes from *videre*.” writes Lacan:

“The most exemplary *invidia*, for us analysts, is the one I found long ago in Augustine, in which he sums up his entire fate, namely, that of the little child seeing his brother at his mother’s breasts, looking at him *amare conspectus*, with a bitter look, which seems to tear him to pieces and has on himself the effect of poison.

In order to understand what *invidia* is in its function as gaze it must not be confused with jealousy. What the small child, or whoever, envies is not at all necessarily what he might want – *avoir envie*, as one improperly puts it.

Who can say that the child who looks at his younger brother still needs to be at the breast? Everyone knows that envy is usually aroused by the possession of goods which would be of no use to the person who is envious of them, and about the true nature of which he does not have the least idea.

Such is true envy – the envy that makes the subject pale before the image of a completeness closed upon itself, before the idea that the *petit a*, the separated a from which he is hanging, may be for another the possession that gives satisfaction, *Befriedigung*.”¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁷ Lacan; (1966) 2006: 115-16

The observation of *an other* in possession of *some* thing, a thing, that the self has not, does not relate to the object as much as it does to the state of possession it is in. It is the fact that the object of envy is in a state of possession, a dyadic relationship with something from which the subject is excluded that is *diminishing* to the subject.

The impetus of ‘*amare conspectus*’ is not to achieve that possession for oneself, but rather to turn it away from, to make it bitter, to taint its’ taste for *the other*. For it is only in turning the gaze upon the relationship of possession that the *envied* engages in, that the object blossoms into its full desirability. Lacan’s conceptualisation of envy thus is momentary and relational; although libidinal impulses are neither denied or confirmed in this ‘gaze’, they are suspended in the absoluteness of the gaze and its potency:

“It is striking, when one thinks of the universality of the function of the evil eye, that there is no trace anywhere of a good eye, of an eye that blesses. What can this mean, except that the eye carries with it the fatal function of being in itself endowed – if you will allow me to play on several registers at once – with a power to separate.

But this power to separate goes much further than distinct vision.

The powers that are attributed to it, of drying up the milk of an animal on which it falls – a belief as widespread in our time as in any other, and in the most civilized countries – of bringing with it disease or misfortune – where can we better picture this power than in *invidia*?”¹⁴⁸

Envy, according to this view, does not seek attainment at all, but springs from the desire to be included in the relational dyad between the subject observed and its object.

Envy is both irrational and fundamentally relational.

Melanie Klein contested Freud’s theory of envy as drive-derivative. For Klein envy is constitutional. It is felt from the very beginning of the infant’s life. As all drives and impulses in the infant’s early development envy focuses on the primary object, who is envied for its inherent power, that is for being more powerful than the infant, and for its power over the infant.

Klein viewed envy as a destructive drive that has annihilation as its objective and that is therefore related to the death-drive.

¹⁴⁸ *ibid*

Klein's theory of constitutional envy provoked much criticism, in part because of the speculative conjecture on the infant's internal life. Feldman and De Paola (1994) reviewing the canon of psychoanalytic literature on envy, too are sceptical of Klein's drive-theory of envy. They agree with Tustin (1992) that envy is rooted in the loss of a symbiotic, primary relationship and then casts its shadow on future relationship:

“This loss of the 'fusion' with the idealised omnipotent object is dealt with through a precarious process, due to the incompetence of the psychic apparatus. This process that we call precocious mourning leads to the establishment of some kind of (melancholic) depression. This ineffective mourning for the lost (idealised) self foreshadows the situation of the envious adult: a bitter loser, robbed of his omnipotent safety, revengeful and turned to destroy the 'thief' that is deemed responsible for the acute pain of not being the idealised object himself.”¹⁴⁹

The authors abandon drive theory for a contextual and dynamic aetiology that proposes that envy: “...is a complex and multidetermined psychic phenomenon, an outcome of the interaction of many processes: constitutional trends (for example, impulses and their strength, particular dispositional arrangements, and so on), interaction with the environment (giver–receiver relation), cultural factors, defence mechanisms, etc.”¹⁵⁰

Joffe¹⁵¹ whose hypotheses on envy are focused extensively on and supported by Feldman and De Paola's later analysis, draws on Jones' (1913) envy as an essentially relational construct linked to power, esteem and arising from expectations towards an other:

“We never hate a person who is not in some way or other, often not at all obviously, superior or stronger than ourselves, or who at all events has some power over us. Thus we may be angry with an inferior, a stranger, or someone who is quite indifferent to us, but in order to hate properly we

¹⁴⁹ Feldman & De Paola;1994: 217-234

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

¹⁵¹ Joffe;1969:533-545.

must be concerned with a person who is in some way superior to ourselves, with whom we have or have had much to do, and whom we had hoped to love.”¹⁵²

According to Joffe’s extension of Jones’ theory, anger is closely related to envy. The envied appears as an aspirational object. Whether Jones would have in fact have gone as far as Joffe does in this tendentially socio-centric perspective is doubtful. Joffe’s perspective on envy establishes his distance from constitutional envy theories. He conceives of envy as a social, quasi cathartic response: “To think of the motive of possession as a simple irreducible instinct is thus to miss its most significant aspect, viz. its intimate relation with the motives of power, of rivalry, of guilt and of love. It is essentially a social response, not a simple direct reaction to physical objects which may serve individual purposes.”¹⁵³

Envy, like hate, writes Joffe: “...can only be expressed when there is a durable affective bond with an object”.

“...it is my clinical experience that envy is always a manifestation of one side of an essentially ambivalent relationship. When hostility and dislike is expressed in the form of envy, it is usually the case that the positive side of the ambivalence is expressed in the form of admiration”.¹⁵⁴

But envy transcends social response and can also be located, as Joffe writes below in the discrepancy between the “state of the actual representation of the self” and the “ideal state of the self representation”:

“...envy can be considered as one of the responses to mental pain that occurs as a consequence of a discrepancy between the state of the actual representation of the self (as consciously or unconsciously perceived by the individual) and the ideal state of the self representation.

¹⁵² *ibid*:536

¹⁵³ *Ibid*:542

¹⁵⁴ Joffe; 1969:542

The ideal self representation can be defined as the shape of the self that is most desired at any particular time. It is 'the self I want to be'¹⁵⁵.

It is 'the self I want to be' that is most pertinent to the discussion here.

How is the idea of 'the self I want to be' generated? What is it derived from? And what happens if that 'ideal self' is being both promoted and occupied by an other, who perpetually reinforces that this ideal is unattainable?

Herein lies the psychic toll of the colonial legacy.

Residential school situations may be imagined in very concrete terms as a synchronic assault on both the child's actual self representation and its ideal state of self representation. For the child the 'ideal' – that is the best s/he can be- is already diminished by the dominant society's judgement of its 'base-line' inadequacy. 'Ideal' remains firmly mired in enforced humility, a strictly relative conjecture of bare adequacy if measured in terms of the wider society's perceived potential. It is conceivable that these structurally and dynamically reinforced limitations will not only impact on the subject's self-definition and confidence vis-à-vis the dominant society, but that it will also impact on the formation of attitudes towards the own group- or community. It is conceivable that oppressed drive, denied gratification and stifled development will lead to a particular vigilance regarding the achievements, prowess and attainments of the subject's (peer-) group, whose advancement is the more affecting because it originates from the same adversarial milieu.

But this type of envy- similar to the feelings described by Larry King- is essentially dyadic: In order to envy- whether murderously or wistfully- there must be empathy with the envied; there must be proximity in respective states of being. This theory will be further discussed in a context of organisational dynamics, where the prolific acting-out of tension and intra-group envy reflect historical processes and social inequities.

¹⁵⁵ *ibid*:543

Joffe's conclusion seems to 'rehabilitate' envy. In it we find a comprehensive inversion of the common conceptualisation of envy, as well as a challenge of Klein's theory of envy as constitutional and related to the death-instinct: Envy is a life-force. It presents a refusal to resign and establishes continuing engagement with the other. Envy is evidence of sustained- albeit ambivalent- attachment:

"In many instances the existence and persistence of envy is diametrically opposed to the response of depression. In envy hope is not lost. The individual does not become resigned to the painful discrepancy between the way in which he sees himself and the state he wants to reach".¹⁵⁶

In other words: As long there is envy there is hope.

How Feldman and De Paola's 'precocious mourning' and 'melancholic depression' fit in with Joffe's theory of envy as essentially constructive and relational, must remain open. Perhaps a case can be made for all these dynamics being constitutive elements in the 'envy-system', so that precocious mourning, melancholy depression and hope-in-envy need not be regarded as mutually exclusive.

This variant of envy as a kind of dysfunctional empathy is a systemic, group-born phenomenon. Its constituents are communal disadvantage and adversity that resist the development of- and acting on- solidarity and that are deflected into the fractious intimacy of covetousness.

Envy, the begrudging of another's resources or prowess, bestows potency on an otherwise powerless or cowed subject. The dynamics of envy are, like those of the 'crab-barrel'¹⁵⁷, stratified and only extend to those who are perceived to be in the same league as oneself. Anglo holders of power are so often exempt from the cauldron of peer-generated envy. At least this seemed to be the case in the organisations featuring in this study.

¹⁵⁶ Joffe; 1969:542

¹⁵⁷ See Chapter Four

* * *

Common opinion holds that the main scourges of contemporary Diné life are the deterioration of the tribal culture of cooperation, solidarity and mutual obligation evident now in economic inequity and the source of endemic mistrust and envy; and alcohol (-ism) and its consequences.¹⁵⁸

There is a widespread belief amongst Navajo that the number of people suffering from alcohol abuse on the Reservation is extremely high when compared to the mainstream and that Indians are prone to alcoholism. Indian drinking is a shared concern among the Native population.¹⁵⁹

These blights, the demise of communitarian ethos and addiction, are perceived as the legacy of the colonial rule. The individualist acquisitive drive that is encouraged by the American mainstream stealthily undermines the tribe's socio-economic equilibrium and, as individualistic pursuits inevitably lead to social inequity, fundamentally conflicts with the Navajo outlook.

Greed and alcoholism are implicitly connected. They are both banes imported into Navajo society¹⁶⁰, they both reflect undisciplined appetites and insatiability. But whereas capitalist 'greed' is encouraged by a dominant society that rewards economic success, alcoholic greed- the quest for inebriation- is perceived as pathology leading to moral failure. Acquisitive voracity and alcoholic excess originate from the same source, but occupy opposing ends of the functional/dysfunctional 'acquisition-spectrum'.

In an inversion of mainstream society's ideological mores Diné drunkards generally draw upon themselves less ire than do Diné capitalists. While envy, witchcraft and related phenomena are often justified as necessary tools of social sanction against the greedy (and successful), drunkards, who by definition indulge in excess, do not arouse similar indignation and seldom are subjected to retaliation.

¹⁵⁸ For many there is no distinction between (Indian) drinking and alcoholism. Drinking automatically points to immoderation, deviant behaviour and disordered conduct.

¹⁵⁹ The historical and conceptual complexities of alcohol and alcoholism are discussed in later chapters.

¹⁶⁰ These are not the only critiques that people had of their community: Other concerns were endemic corruption; lack of respect for elders and elderly-abuse; loss of cultural knowledge etc.

Many people I spoke to, including individuals with self-professed drinking-problems, believed that early difficult experiences, particularly the loss or absence of family stability were the major causes of their alcohol- and substance dependency. To an extent I agree with those patients in treatment who ‘blamed their past’. It seems plausible that a people undergoing all manner of disruption and trauma as a consequence suffer from compromised or damaged object-relations. The treatment that many children, brought up by parents who themselves were vulnerable, endured at residential school may have felt to them like a ram battering against crumbling foundations:

“And my grandmother was so mean to her. She told me that she literally used to shout at her and tell her all kinds of awful ... epithets.. you know.. “that’s all you’re worth, that’s your livelihood so get out there...”

(...)

And earlier we had heard too that her mother had been really mean to her to- vicious and she was literally pretty much verbally abused like that and she had to live with that... and so my mom became very passive and she became pretty much a mother hen.

Later on I read about psychological studies of how an improper raising of children can affect their lives. And I was going through a lot. I would be depressed. I didn’t like myself. I was ashamed of myself and I was worthless. You know, that’s what you think- what I was going through. But there is no-one to go to and to say: Why am I feeling like this? You’re just scared. And then at the same time when you go back home, your family will be... my family was probably going through that same process.”¹⁶¹

Here Larry King makes it clear that his family-stability already was compromised. He attributes his vulnerability to his own mother’s difficult upbringing, whose timidity and painful lack of confidence made her an inadequate protector of her family, and transferred to her children who suffered similarly from low self-esteem and unhappiness.

But inter-generational discontent is not only felt by the young against the elder, it also runs the other way.¹⁶² Enforced experiences of separation endured over generations and an uncertainty

¹⁶¹ Interview Larry King

¹⁶² It should be stated again, that as with all subjects and themes committed to scrutiny in this study, intergenerational strife is not particular or exclusive to Navajo or indeed Native American generational relations. Psychodynamically viewed, generational conflict may be conceived as part of the human developmental cycle, in which attachment, dependency and separation are played out through the needs and wants of each new generation ad infinitum, (In this never-ending, inescapable cycle may indeed be found the inspiration for the concept of *Original Sin*?) Sociologically speaking, intergenerational relations may be viewed as engendered by a combination of historical, economic, educational and environmental circumstances. That there is a point, in any community where the old give way to the young, whether this results in the young repeating the old ways, or the young dispensing with the old and choosing the new, or

how to inhabit parental authority may have given elders the fear of being ‘out of control’ of their young.

The old looked upon the younger generations’ interests and preoccupations as frivolous, impenetrable, and even sinister. The young were seen as having no self-discipline and few skills. Their future prospects were meagre. They were likely to bring shame on their families.

Elder-to-young discontent was often expressed as worry and quasi-apocalyptic fantasies with a tendency to accentuate the ‘otherness’ of the young. Often they would be described like an alien species, decidedly more the product of bilagáana wantonness than of Diné tradition.

During fieldwork I experienced waves of anxiety sweeping the reservation that concerned the community’s young. There was, of course, alcohol. Gang-membership was said to increase, enticing adolescents into delinquency of the worst kind. Then there was ‘Satanism’. Black-clad youngsters were said to engage in unspeakable rites, animal sacrifices, self-mutilation, possibly leading to suicide or homicide. The satanic rituals were described like an eclectic and cross-cultural melange of paganism, Christian-referenced ‘Satanism’, a proclivity for ‘death metal’ and references to Navajo witchcraft and Skin-walker¹⁶³ lore.

Whether these rumours could be substantiated or were the result of conjecture is difficult to say.

The particular brand of youth-culture and ‘Reservation Satanism’ was perceived as quasi-invincible due to its pluralist references. What might otherwise have been dismissed as confused adolescent eclecticism here was held up as evidence of moral corruption and demonic potency.

Widespread panic focused on the proliferation of drugs, at that time methamphetamine, on the reservation. All these fears seemed to have one thing in common: Dangerous, delinquent and

the young in thrall to the illusion that they are inventing new ways...it is the harmonious or respectively contentious negotiations around the cusp of old giving over to young, that here – somewhat reductively- is glossed as inter-generational dynamics.

¹⁶³ Skin-walkers, so called because they clad themselves in animal skins, are said to pursue malign sorcery using corpse-power from ground-down human bones to destroy whoever is the object of their evil intentions. This is a contemporary view of skin-walkers. Another, more traditional definition I was given,, was that in the ‘old days’ medicine men transformed into animals to transport themselves speedily to sacred territories, where they needed to travel to gather the minerals and plant-substances used for ceremonial healing. I also met people who believed that some medicine men had a double identity as healers and sorcerers.

deviant pursuits had made the young unrecognisable to their elders. They had moved beyond the reach of family-authority into the unknown and hazardous realm of a community of juvenile delinquents.

The fear of one's own young seems significant and symptomatic of the state elders find themselves in: Many do not feel that they have the confidence or the capacity to guide, educate or effectively admonish their young. What is more relevant here is that many parents seem to find it hard to identify with their children. Having been robbed of positive markers themselves, many parents understand the vastness of loss, hopelessness and alienation that their children may be experiencing, but feel utterly powerless to do anything about it. An abdication of parental responsibility and authority is a very serious failure indeed, and so it may be easier for helpless parents to divest themselves of this responsibility by projecting the alienation they once felt into their young. And now their children become the aliens. They are 'the other' and therefore cannot be controlled. And thus can be justifiably abandoned.

And so widens the fault-line between the generations.

* * *

It is conceivable that the- alleged- proliferation of alcohol and substance misuse in Native communities (which is by no means a problem exclusive to the young), is accelerated by difficult formative experiences that make people feel abandoned and that lead them to search for substitutive 'objects'.

The pursuit of the mood-altering properties of alcohol and drugs, and even more significantly the substances' immediate impact, the instant gratification they bring to the user, emulate the containing effects of the object and the sustaining quality of the mother's 'good' breast.

The yearning for the (spirit-) bottle indeed is quite similar to the need for milk from the breast. Both breast and bottle offer a- albeit temporary- state of complete fulfilment; both are nurturing, ‘omnipotent’ objects perpetually beyond the bounds of (the individual’s capacity of-) control. Writing about ‘the needle as a transitional object in heroin addiction’, Miller¹⁶⁴ glosses ‘object-relations’ broadly as the “internalization of interpersonal relationships”¹⁶⁵ that during early developmental stages usually is represented through the primary relationship. The primary relationship may be experienced by the infant as either (or alternately) sustaining or depriving. According to Melanie Klein¹⁶⁶ deprivation and containment are mediated through one and the same object and manifest to the infant alternately through the object’s- or more precisely ‘the breast’s’- absence and availability respectively. That the infant’s insatiable desire for the object must meet on occasion with frustration is inevitable.

Winnicott¹⁶⁷ somewhat softens Klein’s infant’s uncompromising need and greed by advancing the concept of the ‘good-enough object’ that, though not perfect, nevertheless is nurturing enough to equip the infant to experience deprivation without incurring lasting trauma.

Winnicott’s infant is capable of symbolic transference: the infant invests particular objects with emotional significance that become place-holders and symbols for the object’s love and care and which temporarily substitute for it.¹⁶⁸

Miller’s heroin-addict with her history of emotional deprivation by her narcissistic mother relates to the needle with which she shoots herself up as her transitional object.

The syringe is an object that perfectly manifests the intrinsically ambivalent qualities of the subject’s experience of her primary object, fulfilling and destroying in one.

¹⁶⁴ Miller; 2002

¹⁶⁵ Miller; 2002:298

¹⁶⁶ Klein; 1975.

¹⁶⁷ Winnicott; 1957

¹⁶⁸ The transitional object for an infant that has been contained by a *good enough object*, is commonly a concrete thing - a blanket, a teddy-bear, a dummy, something that embodies *and* symbolises the qualities of the object and comforts the infant during a separation from the object and its transition into autonomy.

When people hypothesized that alcoholism and substance addictions must be linked to the devastating historical experiences of their community, they were acknowledging the comfort-giving, substitutive effects of substances that could- like magic elixirs- alleviate existential pain and transport users, albeit temporarily, into a more contained and content state of being.¹⁶⁹

The unfathomable, containing qualities of the longed-for primary object that are so evocative and that provoke such a depth of yearning, are closely simulated or mimicked by- or with- the effects of alcohol and certain drugs.

These then present an accessible, rapidly effective, fundamentally transformative substitute for the 'object' or breast. And to the addicted the alcohol-bottle like the heroin-filled needle brings first nurture and comfort and then, eventually, annihilation.

(American Indian) alcoholism according to the explanations I heard follows a complex trajectory: it is argued that it starts in deprivation, low self-esteem and lack of opportunity. Deprivation gives way to envy (towards those who are happier, luckier or who have- or get given- all they need); envy gives way to greed. Greed leads to self-indulgence and self-indulgence leads to addiction, addiction ends in shame and destitution.¹⁷⁰

The theory of alcoholism as reactive, egodystonic pathology brought about by experiences of complex deprivation was frequently promoted by alcoholics and substance-users themselves. This interpretation implicitly draws on an object-relations approach to the understanding of addiction as rooted in damage or loss of early relations.

Addiction (or alcoholism) may be defined as the epitome of antisocial self-indulgence and therefore one would imagine that it would be severely socially sanctioned.

But addiction does not only carry within it greed, voracious consumption and ecstatic effect- it also is harbinger of the ultimate justice: self-destruction.

¹⁶⁹ For a more detailed discussion of alcohol and alcohol-use see Chapters Five and Six.

¹⁷⁰ At least that was the trajectory many people assumed was at the roots of the alcoholism and addiction problems they saw plaguing their communities

Within the community alcoholism are amongst the few pursuits of untrammelled self-gratification where Dionysian rapture and self-indulgence are not sanctioned by retaliatory envious attacks¹⁷¹.

The addict may 'enjoy' himself, because his punishment in form of shame, incapacitation, destitution, ruined health, is inbuilt in his condition.

When people spoke of alcoholics they mostly did so in sorrow and with compassion.

It was rare to witness the sort of vituperative criticism of drinkers that was otherwise liberally bestowed on the scions of economic and social success, those who thought themselves better than others, but who neglected to look after their people.

Perhaps in Diné society success is prone to drawing anger from the community because it conjures the impression of a healthy society. In contrast to economic success, alcoholism makes the historical damage perpetuated on Native tribes visible. The alcoholic is the embodiment of an entire community's hurt, the righteous symbol of the colonial wound and so offers a more appropriate representation of the state of contemporary Indian communities under the continuing rule of the dominant mainstream. Alcohol/ism¹⁷² is an emblem of the injury inflicted on Native Americans.

Drinking offers a counterpoint to all that is stoically borne, suppressed or sublimated. It cathartically releases egotism, greed, self-indulgence, anger, aggression and destruction.

Perhaps the drunkard in his wanton behaviour acts out on behalf of- and is a conduit for- the state of the whole community: his alcoholism an act of altruism in service of the collective.

* * *

¹⁷¹ This does not mean that they are not shameful conditions that are seen to reflect badly on the community. This is just to say that the alcoholic's or addict's self-indulgence inspires pity or concern rather than envious attacks.

¹⁷² There is an extensive discussion on the subject in Chapter Five: Alcohol

PART IV

JOKES ON ELDERS

STRATEGIES OF DISGRUNTLEMENT?

Following on from the rehabilitation of envy as the tool of righteous justice, the subsequent section of this chapter focuses on another phenomenon that invites interpretation: Jokes and how they reflect on intergenerational relations.

The abundance of ‘elderly jokes’ in Navajo folklore is attributed by Larry King to an endemic discontent with the older generation. Elderly jokes are apparently being told by the young ‘against’ the old as a form of settling scores.

The jokes given as examples by Larry and discussed here may be vehicles for expressing intergenerational irritation, but their most striking characteristic is their promiscuous ambiguity. As a genre these jokes are so mutable and yielding to subjective interpretation that they appear rather ineffective tools of communicating severe discontent transgenerationally.

The demonstrative investment of so many contributors in ‘states of certainty’ is belied by a robust capacity for ambiguity and ‘negative capability’ as evidenced in these jokes.

“...as children we were told that we were abandoned (...) and so at night-time, when nobody was around to punish us we would all be telling each other stories, and these stories reflect a lot of things that we were coping with and we were laughing at our Elders because we thought they abandoned us and so we were laughing at them and humor was a way to deal with this traumatic experiences, and they all dealt with how new technology came into the Navajo world, new values like money (...) ...in a lot of ways also, we were always putting the elders as the butt of our joke and I realized that we are doing this and then I realized why. As I was saying earlier we were using the elders as ways of dealing with the traumatic experience of being abandoned as children. And people were asking me: Why do you always laugh at your older (...) parents and so on, and I realized that was why. “¹⁷³

Amongst some young Navajo, elders have a rather fearsome reputation. Navajo elders are renowned for their critical ferocity and for being hard to please. Elders in turn view younger generations as feral and wanton: untutored in the language and ignorant of traditions they are in

¹⁷³ Larry King; Presentation at San Juan College, Farmington, NM, 2005, Audio-recording transcribed by author

thrall to the bílagáana¹⁷⁴ culture, in particular those aspects that explicitly contravene traditional ethos.

Intergenerational relations on the Reservation and in the community were perceived as particularly problematic. The lack of control that elders had over the young, and the lack of reverence the young had for the old were viewed as contributing causes to delinquency, substance misuse and addiction problems that some people said were not just rife, but had come to be characteristic of the community.

At some point the elders had lost their kudos. Unable to resist external influences, unable to protect their descendants they had lost the ability and the right to act as examples.

Larry King's account of his emotionally abused mother, who in turn was unable to equip her children with the resilience to withstand residential school experiences without being damaged by them, was typical of a certain type of narrative. Elders and carers were often experienced by children as either traumatized themselves, or as uncaring or oblivious to their children's needs, possibly because in childhood their own needs had not been met. Trenchant criticism of the emotional inadequacy of their elders was particularly notable in those aged fifty and above.

Now there is evidence that the young neglect their obligations to their elders.

Elder-abuse is said to have reached endemic proportions on the Reservation. In 1996 the Navajo Nation Council approved the "Diné Elder Protection Act"¹⁷⁵ to deal with the abuse, exploitation, coercion and abandonment of elders. The Act invokes the

"...traditional respect the members of the Navajo Nation have for Diné elders. Elders are valuable resources to the Nation because they are repositories and custodians of Navajo history, culture, language and traditions; vested in Diné elders is the hope of the Navajo Nation to retain its tribal history, culture, language and tradition."¹⁷⁶

¹⁷⁴ Bílagáana: Navajo term commonly used for 'White people' or 'Anglos'. I got to different explanations as to its provenance: 'His White Hand', or 'With Whose Hand We Fight'. Most informants stated that they were unclear what 'bílagáana' derives from.

¹⁷⁵ Diné Elder Protection Act; A Navajo Nation statute to prevent and prosecute the abuse of elders. <http://www.navajocourts.org/Resolutions/CO-70-96Elder.pdf>

¹⁷⁶ *ibid*

The perception of elders' formidable and forbidding authority undermines rather than affirms their positions of custodians and mediators of Navajo knowledge. Many young Diné, for example, when asked whether they speak Navajo, say that though they can understand they do not really speak it. This for many young is not because of lack of occasion, but because they fear - as they claim- the criticism or ridicule by their Navajo-speaking elders. The 'old folk' don't tolerate mistakes at all they say: they scold, criticise, nag and belittle. They apparently consider negative criticism as motivational and character-building. Their grandchildren in turn lose confidence, become tongue-tied and henceforth avoid speaking Navajo. In short: Blame it on the grandparents.¹⁷⁷

"I listen to my grandma when she talks (in Navajo), but I answer in English. I'm kind of shy with her I guess, because she always chews me out about my mistakes (...) yeah, I guess she could be more positive. That would help, sure..."¹⁷⁸

Many contemporary elders are now regarded by their grandchildren much as one imagines that grandparents themselves once regarded the residential school personnel, whose instructions were felt to be undermining rather than constructive.

There is an implication that it is the old now who turn away the young from their tradition and language. Complaints regarding elders' emotional inadequacy have been transformed by a younger generation into a critique of- inadequate- role-modelling. What remains is intergenerational discontent of generations not meeting each others' expectations and needs.

Elder women in particular have a reputation as 'hashenké'- quickly angered, scolding, critical and fault-seeking.

Complaints regarding the offensive harshness of the older generation are endemic and the explanation as to its causation varies considerably. The intergenerational chain of emotional

¹⁷⁷ This is not to claim that all grandparents undermine their grandchildren, or that none of the young generation are able to overcome their fear of critique and learn the language. In my experience 'blaming the elder' was however quite frequent. In fact it almost seemed as if the harsh elder was something of a stereotype here.

¹⁷⁸ Personal communication; student in Navajo 101 language class ; 03/2005

deprivation and residential school trauma that hardened personalities and stripped them of empathy was certainly one such explanation.

Another was ‘cultural idiosyncrasy’ whereby old peoples’ cantankerousness was understood as a type of adolescent acting-out in reverse for the elderly, who can in their dotage, after a lifetime of prudence and duty “let it all hang out” and vent their long pent-up frustrations cathartically by victimising a younger generation.

“Can’t wait ‘till I’m old enough to act real mean” a youthful proponent of this theory told me cheerfully.

Paradoxically- and tragically- this means, however, that elders as the few remaining harbingers of Navajo traditions are experienced as obstacles rather than mediators of cultural knowledge to younger generations, because of what contemporary sensibilities may gloss as their ‘attitude problem’.

As so much has changed in terms of life-style and social organisation it is difficult to determine whether fraught relations between generations are in fact a contemporary phenomenon and a result of historical vicissitudes, or whether inter-generational and extended family relations are indeed fraught by nature¹⁷⁹, but now are simply easier to flee.

The enforced proximity in which generations once lived and that was characteristic of the traditional lifestyle may have made it more difficult or socially unacceptable to openly admit to tensions (but one may tell mother-in-law jokes).

In present-day social organisation ornery elders can be avoided rather than having to be endured as in days of yore. A ‘ride’ (vehicle), cell-phones, access to the internet, enables family members to negotiate encounters flexibly and to share and evaluate their lives outside of settlement camps and the kinship arena, thereby shifting the dynamics of interdependence and decreasing elders’ erstwhile authoritative potency.

¹⁷⁹ A Yiddish proverb advises: ‘*Mischpoche muss mer haben, aber brojges soll mer sain*’ – One must have relatives, but one should be estranged from them.

The younger generations' discontent with their elders' dispositions may be a recent phenomenon and indicative of seismic social changes, or conversely it may be that the possibilities offered by contemporary lifestyle have simply made it easier to admit to being disgruntled with one's elders. Some saw a more ominous tendency in contemporary intergenerational relations. They said that elders' usefulness now lies in their financial resources rather than in their cultural knowledge. Particularly those elders who are in receipt of compensation were said to often support an entire extended family on this money.¹⁸⁰

In the health services staff opinion that this amounted to a callous exploitation of the old "they just cannot say no to demands and their families know it", was fairly unanimous: layabout descendents sponging off hapless elderlies and shirking work and responsibility.

But one may argue that the old merely adhere to the old ethos whereby wealth should be distributed; where a relative's plea- 'wóósh káá'- must be responded to. Another hypothesis is that younger generations regard being supported by their elders as due compensation for the parental inadequacies they suffered under. Their expressing critique of elders so may be a justification or prelude for 'exploiting' - or accepting reparative offerings from- them.

What remains, regardless of the accuracy of interpretations, is that there are perceived problems between generations, and that these problems are avidly addressed across generations.

Generations in fact are united by the discontent with each other. According to some views it is the old who are the victims, according to others the young.

In my experience it is quite usual for individuals to hold both views simultaneously: People often believed themselves victims of their parents and exploited by their children.

¹⁸⁰ An IHS Navajo social-worker impressed upon me the wide-spread problem of 'elderly abuse'. He felt that the neglect and exploitation of elders was a worrying sign of the deterioration of cultural ethos. What was particularly problematic was the manipulations of mercenary relatives of older people who had received financial compensation through the Navajo uranium miners' settlement. Elders would feel compelled to help their family out to their own financial detriment. Often elders would be left with no money, while their families improved their own material conditions considerably. In 1996 the Navajo Nation Council approved the Diné Elder Protection Act of the Navajo Nation, stating that "Elder abuse is occurring on the Navajo Nation in epidemic proportions." <http://www.navajocourts.org/Resolutions/CO-70-96Elder.pdf>

* * *

To approach intergenerational relations through the medium of jokes seems particularly appropriate, because laughing, joking and teasing was another thing that many Navajo who commented on the particularities of the Diné would emphasize: “Wherever you find a group of Navajo you will hear laughing.”

And this, in my experience, is quite true. In most gatherings people managed to find something to be mirthful about. And once mirth got hold of an assembly it had a notable bonding effect. Often the occasion for laughter would be accounts of misunderstandings, personal faux-pas or slightly bawdy stories of misfortunes that lingered in the imagination.

Jokes and teasing were important tools in ‘connecting’ people with each other, but jokes also had more complex uses.

Travelling on the Reservation I would often be told a joke by someone I had just met. It seemed to me that these jokes could be categorised into a particular genre that made fun or teased (the inadequacies of) officials and/or Anglos. While I never saw any sign of malice or felt uncomfortable when being told these jokes, I could not ignore the fact that I was a non-Navajo (possibly regarded as an Anglo), being told jokes or anecdotes about- or critical of- Anglos or officials.¹⁸¹

An elderly woman I recently met on the Reservation while queuing at the bank, told me apropos a hospital visit that she had been late to that morning, that once the community nurse who had come on a home-visit dropped her ‘cell’¹⁸² in the toilet:

”I don’t know where she was keeping it. Maybe her bra or somewhere. Then she went to the bathroom, and oops, it dropped into the pool. She came out and started to try to take it apart. Well I guess if you don’t have pockets...”¹⁸³

¹⁸¹ When asked I would tell people that I volunteered (or had volunteered), and was doing a study (or had done a study) at the IHS Clinic and the DBHS. People generally seemed to assume that I was a doctor or nurse. Hence perhaps the community nurse joke that follows.

¹⁸² Cell-phone= mobile phone

¹⁸³ Personal communication; anon.;

So this is an example of ‘an elderly’ telling an anecdote about an ‘official’ that short though it is nevertheless provides plenty of ‘interpretation-mileage’. For instance: is a person who cannot look after their own cell-phone best equipped to care for sick people?

A joke that lingers in my memory was told to me by a man while we were waiting for the Navajo Transit bus in Window Rock and went as follows:

“There’s this Navajo. He has a horse. This bílagáana comes by and he likes the horse. He says: “Chief¹⁸⁴, how much for this horse? I’ll give you two hundred bucks, okay?” The Navajo says: “This horse don’t look good”
“Well, it looks plenty good to me”
“No, it don’t look good.
“Okay, I’ll give you three hundred bucks.”
“I tell you, this horse don’t look good”
“Five hundred for the horse. Here. I want it.”
So the bílagáana gets the horse. A couple of weeks later the bílagáana comes looking for the Navajo: “Hey, that horse you sold me. It is blind!”
“I done told you”, the Navajo says, “the horse don’t look good”.”¹⁸⁵

Let us not spoil a great joke by interpretation. But what better indictment of White greed that reaps its own punishment than this ‘horse-that don’t-look-good’?

In contrast to Basso’s study on Western Apache satirical role-play of Whites¹⁸⁶, where Anglos’ baffling ethnocentric mannerisms are reproduced to hysterical effect, I never witnessed any incidences where Navajo persiflaged bílagáana behaviour, despite the fact that Navajo humour draws considerably on keenly observed idiosyncrasies and imitation.

The jokes I came across were remarkable in how much they left to the beholder: Some could, on first hearing be so innocuous as to be almost baffling. Often there was no climactic punchline, no dramatic conclusion, not even a clear indication of a ‘proper’ ending, in the Western-European narrative sense.

¹⁸⁴ In these jokes bílagáana often patronize Indians by calling them ‘Chief’ which marks them out as of a particular generation and possessed of a particular (parochial if not prejudiced) attitude towards Natives. So one word sets the scene quite effectively.

¹⁸⁵ Personal communication; anon.;

¹⁸⁶ Basso; 1979

There was a joke that was told time and time again in the context of linguistic instruction to mainly Navajo listeners, of the little boy who is sent by his grandma to the ceremonial hogan to count the pairs of shoes outside it, to let her calculate how many people she must prepare stew and frybread for. The child's answer, when he returns, is a play on phonetic similarities. He means to say: "there are ten" and instead says: "they are dead."

As the joke was told so often, by different people, in different contexts one assumption to be made is that it must be of some significance. Another explanation- more prosaic- is that the source of this joke may have been Mr Tsosie, the Navajo teacher at the local Community College¹⁸⁷, who had taught generations of residents and who may have just told the joke to make clear to his students the importance of enouncing carefully. The point however is that on the other occasions I heard this joke (by people who may have once been taught by Mr Tsosie), it took on an entirely different 'hue'. (To me) the joke at times seemed to acquire something sinister, particularly when people chose to elaborate on the poor grandma's reaction who has just been told that everyone she was going to cook for 'is dead'; a rendition perhaps of the more traumatic chapters of Navajo history.

Jokes may be seen as a relatively low-risk way of addressing difficult experiences and discontent. Listeners either 'get them' or not. And if they 'get' the joke there is a good chance that they will feel part of a community of the initiated. For those who do not 'get' it, it may be difficult to articulate a complaint. So much is generally known: It is the one that has not got the joke that the joke is usually about.

But rather than strategies of inclusion and exclusion and of community-cohesion, it is possible that jokes are narratives constructed around ambiguity, not to solve ambiguity, but to address it, to bring it out in the open and to present it- informally and experimentally- to forums of listeners.

¹⁸⁷ That's where I heard it the first time

Laughing at Elders as rationalised by Larry King gives an impression of humour as retaliatory device: “You abandoned us, we’ll make fun of you” These anti-Elder jokes then serve the purpose of catharsis or discharge of the tellers’ frustrations.

“And so the butt of the joke, the pun, is always on – usually a physically challenged elder, either orally or he doesn’t see too well. And this reflects on recent phenomena in the Navajo world, because we are always integrating whatever is going on in the culture...”

Infirmities, an inability to understand modern life and technology are prominent themes in these jokes, reflecting, according to Larry’s theory, children’s disappointment in their elders arising out of the historical ‘failure’ of elders to withstand and protect their young from the vicissitudes they suffered at the hands of the dominant society..

But if these jokes really are a way of processing historical trauma, they address the existential failures that lie at their foundations lightly. These are jokes that seem to make gentle mockery of the tragedy of weak elders.

Elders’ inadequacies here seem no more than mildly irritating or droll social faux-pas, without-interestingly – any intimation of the depth of historical calamity and intergenerational discontent. The ‘elderly jokes’ that follow so may present a cultural strategy of processing intergenerational relations. The attitudes they convey are somewhat ambiguous. Interpretations are dialogic in that they often depend on the positioning and attitude of the beholder. Are these jokes then pro- or contra-elders? Let the reader decide....

* * *

“Two little girls are in the border-town, and they have to go to their home on weekends and they say: “No, I want to go shopping this weekend, I don’t want to go home. I want to go to this new shoe-store”. And when they got home they saw grandmother coming home from the corral and she was wearing this scruffy, worn shoe.

They go: “You know what? Look at grandma’s shoe! It’s all worn and scruffy, tell her we’ll take her into town tomorrow and we’ll buy her a new pair, okay?” “No, you tell her, you tell her!” “No, you tell her we’ll buy her new shoes.” “Okay, I’ll tell her.” And she goes over there and goes: “Your shoe is all scruffy and worn. We’ll take you to town tomorrow and buy you a new pair, okay grandma?” And grandma says: “okay” she goes. And they get all excited, and they go to bed early and get up

early and put on their best clothes, and they go to town. And they say: “You know what? It’s the shoe-store over there. No, there’s another one over there.”

And they went to this other one and they say to grandmother: “Grandmother, remember we’ll tell you what to say, okay?” And grandmother goes: “Okay”! And she kept saying: “Okay!” And they stopped by the shoe-store and as they get out they say: “Remember grandmother, we’ll just tell you what to do, okay?”

And grandmother doesn’t have good eye-sight, and as they go in they go: “There are some chairs right over there Grandmother! (...) go sit on them and move your feet up a little bit, (..) take off the misery off your feet a little bit, okay Grandma?” “Okay”! She goes. And as she sits down, the store-proprietor runs up. And he happened to be a follicularly challenged bílagáana, he happened to be a bald-headed bílagáana, running out right there and grandma doesn’t have good eyesight and as she moves her feet up, this guy kneels down to measure her feet and grandma goes: “Oh! I didn’t realize my knee was showing!” And she lifts her dress and puts it over the guy’s head.”¹⁸⁸

But does this joke in fact bear out the theory that jokes are told against Elders? Who here is in fact the ‘butt’ of the joke? Is it the hapless, visually impaired grandmother, or the “follicularly challenged” bílagáana?

It is clear that the little girls are worried about grandmother committing a public faux-pas. “Do as we tell you, Grandma”, they insist, repeatedly. And, ironically, it is precisely Grandma’s concern about acting inappropriately- she thinks she has exposed her knee-, that leads her to commit what amounts to an- albeit involuntary- indecent outrage.

But what of the bald bílagáana, who rushes over and kneels before grandmother to measure her feet? Baldness is very rare amongst Navajo men, and historically may have indeed been unknown. What Natives made on first encounter of these light-skinned aliens with blistering scalps can only be guessed at, but these strangers may have presented an outlandish and bemusing sight to people unaccustomed to hair-loss and bald pates.

As for the bald bílagáana’s behaviour, there seems no discernable note of prejudiced or ill-mannered behaviour hinted at here. He treats the old lady as he would any customer – courteously and eager to encourage business. And yet, he is punished for his baldness, if you will: the old woman pulls her skirt over his head.

¹⁸⁸ Larry King; Presentation at San Juan College, Farmington, NM, 2005, Audio-recording transcribed by author

The image of the bald Anglo kneeling before the old Navajo woman and having his pate covered with her skirt is quite powerful (and somewhat disturbing). The salubrious innuendo is representative of this type of joke which often thrives on inappropriateness.

Maybe there is a hint here that baldness is indecent and should be covered up? This too would be in the style of circumspect instruction so dear to Navajo custom, where rather than as outright criticism, points of contention are often presented in a roundabout way, leaving the intended recipient to arrive at the lesson at their own pace or disregard it altogether (which as awareness of cultural subtleties diminishes, may occur with more frequency).¹⁸⁹

“a favourite definition of joking has long been the ability to find similarity between dissimilar things—that is, hidden similarities. Jean Paul has expressed this thought itself in a joking form: ‘Joking is the disguised priest who weds every couple’.”¹⁹⁰

In this case a bílagáana shop-assistant and an old Navajo woman, her skirt and his head are brought together in an intimate proximity that is not often achieved across cultural, gender, and age divides.

And there are in fact several inversions taking place: not only is the normative historical bílagáana-Navajo dynamic inverted; so too is gender-behaviour. There is an aura of sexual violation to the skirt being pulled over the kneeling man’s head- at least one could assume that the uncomprehending bílagáana who may not be so much outside himself to be aware that his head might be confused with a bare knee, experiences a moment of sheer terror when the old

¹⁸⁹In group-situations witnessed – be they clinical, treatment-, staff, political or instructional teams, groups and gatherings-, outright critique is rarely expressed and shaming in public situation tends to be avoided. Impressive feats of diplomacy were for instance negotiated by clinical staff attempting to mediate their discontent with certain aspects of the organisation. The subjects of critique were presented in the style of a meandering contemplation of occurrences, observations and folk-wisdom that were apparently unrelated to anything or anyone in the unit. Had I not been present at pre- and post-meeting briefings and de-briefings where the address to management was decoded by ‘conspiring’ staff, I would not have picked up on any of the intended content. One may assume, neither did the Anglos in management. But maybe the act of obliquely venting within a sympathetic group was cathartic in itself. In this context the joke may be issuing a subtle instruction to bald bílagáanas to cover up. It matters little that the bílagáana will in all probability not be aware of this reproach. It is enough that it is out there, in form of a joke.

¹⁹⁰ Freud, 1905: 11

woman's skirt is pulled over his head, perhaps imagining that he has kindled the geriatric crone's voracious sexual appetite...

If possible variations of interpretation signal ambiguity, then this joke is certainly ambiguous. It is indeed masterfully so: It is conceivable that whoever is perceived as the butt of the joke, changes with its respective audience.

Often it seems that those intent on propriety or conversant with social mores are the ones, who despite all efforts to avoid mishaps, eventually end up being exasperated beyond endurance or confronted with their worst feared scenarios.

Here these would be the old lady's granddaughters whose worst nightmares may well have been surpassed with this scene. It also may be the bilagáana who is being punished it seems, for his baldness.

So, perhaps, these jokes ultimately champion the naïve, hapless and gauche elders who, cocooned in their infirmities, commit unspeakable transgressions in serene oblivion.

The elders in these scenarios appear in the least stressful position in that they are able to avoid bowing to the challenges of adaptation or assimilation.¹⁹¹ And rather than engaging in tepid compromise- that is in this case trying to conform and nevertheless remaining second-class citizens, despite their best efforts- they seem to emerge as the winners, liberated from social and cultural pressures by their frailty, disability and diminished capacity.

And while this interpretation does not extract an altogether optimistic resolution to cultural oppression, at least in these jokes there beckons a future when none of the social yokes and

¹⁹¹ Other examples of jokes revolve around a young person with mounting exasperation trying to mediate something to an impaired (often deaf, blind or illiterate) elder. The elder persists in misunderstanding, in increasingly bizarre ways, until the joke concludes with the realisation that there's no way of getting through to the elder. Repetition here is an effective narrative device: A phrase however reasonable, if repeated often enough, will eventually sound absurd.

It is of course a point of interpretation, but to me it seems that it is the elder who is better off here. While the rest of the world expends itself in grasping the finer points of communication and etiquette, the elder basks in ignorant bliss.

preoccupations tyrannising conformist youth will matter and all will be equalised by the advent of physical and mental infirmity.

So old age simultaneously takes away awareness, mental and physical capacity, flexibility and the ability to adapt, as it bestows serenity, anarchic non-conformism, and oblivious self-centredness.

Anything may be borne with equanimity when lacking awareness, and the habitation of a fools' paradise may present as much preferable to the parameters of an exacting and judgemental 'real world'.

Unconscious processes with their anarchic jumbling of content, imago and fantasy nurture these jokes, which to an extent defy empirical scrutiny: jokes and similarly expressive tools of communication and "playful judgement",¹⁹² are meant to be savoured with a degree of intuition and ego-abandon.

We should not forget however the context in which the 'Grandma's Knee vs. Bald Bílagáana' joke was told: as part of a lecture that Larry King, Navajo, gave to an audience of bílagáana tourists, aficionados of Tony Hillerman, a bílagáana author of mysteries set on the Navajo Nation, on a guided travel-tour through 'Tony Hillerman Country'.¹⁹³

¹⁹² Freud; 1905:11

¹⁹³ Tony Hillerman mysteries are set on the Navajo Nation and feature a Navajo Detective, Joe Leaphorn, and his assistant Jim Chee, who is 'traditional' and an apprentice medicine man.

CONCLUSION

In starting this chapter by focusing on residential schools and early developmental experiences I have tried to represent the interpretive priorities of my informants, who to a majority believed that their people had experienced collective social ruptures, amongst which the forcible removal from home and the harshness of alien environments had had the most impact.¹⁹⁴

The ‘roots of systemic disturbance’ were sought in subjects’ pasts. They believed that function and dysfunction, the capacity to be happy and productive, to raise children successfully and to honour elders rested on the quality of the experiences individuals had had as children.

These views are, as mentioned before, not that far removed from the psychoanalytic object-relations approach. They place the object- or loss of the object, or rupture of relations with the object- at the core of understanding what has gone wrong. Larry King’s observations on sheep and shepherding duties and Melanie Klein’s object-relations theory are not that far apart, I would argue.

Applying a systemic approach makes it possible to transcend polarized dichotomies and to observe operative dynamics by considering all their constituent elements.

Even when power-relations seem pretty unambiguously defined, when inequity is obvious and structural power undeniable, there remains more to individual-, group- or organisational dynamics than ‘meets the eye’.

Envy, it is argued here, is equally related to power structures and inequity as it is to relational desire built on an empathic need to identify with the other by absorbing what they have.

Envy, whether constitutional drive or socially generated sentiment, is commonly seen as negative or destructive.

¹⁹⁴ The (negative) impact of these experiences was however not seen as carved in stone: Individuals had experienced redemption or had redeemed themselves (see Chapter Five) in later life after dysfunctional detours, and most reported that their redemption had been brought about by faith- or tradition-bound support from their community.

But taking an integrative view allows for re-considering envy as relational and indicating aspirational communality. As mentioned before, it is difficult to feel envious of those one has nothing in common with. The envious and their envied are so part of a mutually responsive, relational system.

Humour, as explained by Larry King, is a sort of defence against disappointment, a reiteration of the feebleness of elders in the form of jokes: ‘they did not look after us, because they can’t even look after themselves.’

But instead one may find in humour a whole system of strategies, some of them defensive, some of them offensive, but some it may be argued, transformative.

Is it the elders that are made fools of or that make fools of themselves, or are elders really an emblem to all that ‘shall overcome’?

Who is to say what in the grand scheme of things and in the wheels of time will be seen as good or bad, constructive or destructive, enduring or ephemeral?

One thing that I would state with certainty is that people prefer certainty to ambiguity. So most people here (as elsewhere), had little doubt of what they regarded as right or wrong, and of where they stood: family is good, (Anglo-) individualism is bad; greed is bad, ambition is good; competitiveness is bad; success is good; sobriety is good, alcohol-ism is bad; witchcraft is bad, traditional medicine ways are good¹⁹⁵; tradition is good, modernity bad, but progress is good, bureaucracy...is good? For some.

But in fact, contrary to the certainty they conveyed and craved, most individuals had experienced up-and-downs, turns in fortune and most importantly, changes in perception that had made them into what they were now.

A systemic conceptualisation of dynamics that does not categorise constituents other than regarding them as contributors to a whole that equally draws on all its parts, does not only seem a

¹⁹⁵ Not for staunch Christians

fit¹⁹⁶ tribute to the ‘holism’ of Navajo cosmology, it also helps to attempt an impartial consideration of deeply entrenched and polarised discourses on envy, humour, alcohol and witchcraft and bureaucracy.

The themes raised in this chapter are recorded as the roots of some of the issues explored in later chapters to be carried along by the reader, much like the subjects of the study continue to carry their ‘baggage’ through life.

As this chapter concludes, I think it is significant to point out that – except for the ‘follicularly challenged shoe store bílagáana’, and the purchaser of the horse that ‘don’t look good’, no Anglos make an appearance here. This is not because I deliberately censored them out or chose not to mention them here, but because Anglos were not mentioned.

Even so a lot of what is being implied is derivative of Anglo intervention in Indian lives: The policies implemented, the structures established, the concepts introduced, all permeate – or shall we say – indoctrinate organisational structures, emotional states, social thinking. And yet the dominant society and its machinations remain a mere phantom presence- the [Great White] Spirit. It is in this absence that the true efficacy of the colonial system transpires, and that shows how absolutely clear-sighted Gramsci was in delivering to us the concept of hegemony.

If Gramsci has been criticised for not providing “a neat capsule definition of hegemony”¹⁹⁷ this is because it is not a ‘neat’ concept. We may conceive of hegemony- in Gramsci’s time and place mediated through the tri-partite structure of church, education and cultural institutions- as disseminating its orthodoxies as if by vaporiser, that is invisibly, and unnoticed.

Most of the conversations which have been quoted here started and went on in organisations; organisations that quite clearly had left- and were continuing to leave- their imprint in the form of their ‘subjects’ dysfunction.

¹⁹⁶ -if modest -

¹⁹⁷ Crehan; 2002: 101

The ‘autonomy’ that adults working for- or bound into- these organisations possess now- or imagine they possess- is a great improvement on the state of unremitting subjugation some experienced as students in residential schools or in other oppressive and iniquitous frameworks.

The conditions promoted by these structures were however, visible and clear in the stark polarisation of authority and its subjects, perpetrators and victims, bureaucracy and individuals could at least foment dissent – even if it could not be expressed or acted upon.

But to know who one’s adversary is allows at least for the possibility of resistance or rebellion.

When the spirit of oppression however ‘possesses’¹⁹⁸ the very terrain in which cultural, economic and social production and reproduction take place, and when that spirit resides within structures that perpetuate it, then it is difficult to resist, rebel or even attempt change.

And so a lot of the material in this thesis is overshadowed by the unseen but implicit structures ‘congealing’ within the conditions of historical inequity, albeit in different permutations.¹⁹⁹

“ Every established order tends to produce (to very different degrees and with very different means) the naturalization of its own arbitrariness. Of all the mechanisms tending to produce this effect, the most important and the best concealed is undoubtedly the dialectic of the objective chances and the agents’ aspirations, out of which arises a *sense of limits*, commonly called the *sense of reality*, i.e. the correspondence between the objective classes and the internalized classes, social structures and mental structures, which is the basis of the most ineradicable adherence to the established order (...)by securing the misrecognition, and hence the recognition, of the arbitrariness on which they are based: in the extreme case that is to say, when there is a quasi-perfect correspondence between the objective order and the subjective principles of organisation (as in ancient societies) the natural and social world appears as self-evident. This experience we shall call *doxa*, so as to distinguish it from an orthodox or heterodox belief implying awareness or recognition of the possibility of different or antagonistic beliefs. Schemes of thought and perception can produce the objectivity that they do produce only by producing misrecognition of the limits of the cognition that they make possible, thereby founding immediate adherence in the doxic mode, to the world of tradition experienced as a “natural world” and taken for granted. (...) The political function of classification is never more likely to pass unnoticed than in the case of relatively undifferentiated social formations, in which the prevailing classificatory system encounters no rival or antagonistic principle.”²⁰⁰

¹⁹⁸ ‘Possesses’ here is intended in a double sense: as ‘owning’ and as in ‘demonic possession’

¹⁹⁹ I would like to make clear that I do not consider this an exclusive or culture-specific phenomenon. I believe that in contemporary terms these conditions are perhaps more constructively addressed in terms of class rather than – as they are here – in terms of culture. The introduction of culture as a component in creating societal chasms makes the machinations of inequity clearer to discern, as does the comparatively young history of the United States.

²⁰⁰ Bourdieu; 1977: 164

Systems make individuals and individuals impart themselves to systems. Systems and organisations so are phylogenic versions of individuals, and the perpetuation of power relies on structurally embedded strategies of which depersonalisation is an essential part.

These strategies create, as does Weber's 'Beamtentum', a Golem or phantasm of structural servitude that is virtually unconquerable.

Dominant elements must become embedded in the structures they intend to control so that they cease to be noted as external agents of force, but present as constitutive, integral and neutral elements of cooperation.

They must transform in a process of structural mimicry, appearing now not as power but in the guise of particles of organic cohesion merging what were hitherto external or hostile forces with internal agents or structures to create an order which, though it remains in essence the force that perpetuates orthodox power-relations, now presents in the convincing guise of egalitarian and neutral bureaucratic structures dedicated to 'public service', a natural and just order equally accessible and of service to all.

Systems endure by turning serfs into collaborators. Force itself is only effective as long as it remains in imminent attention. As force becomes established system, it depends on cooperation from those it dominates to secure its rule.

The 'naturalization of its own arbitrariness', the strategies that lead to a merging of 'social structures' and 'mental structures', the question of a 'sense of limits' as a 'sense of reality' reflect what Larry King and others reported having experienced or 'learned' at residential school: they were simply shown their place, or perhaps more accurately their 'displace'.

The re-actions arising out of these experiences are manifold and ambiguous.

Resistance for instance does not need to be flagged as such, or be clearly embedded in structures, or even be conscious in order to be effective. In some instances resistance may be compliance;

and conversely what is perceived to be resistance may- in the greater systemic scheme of things- be constructive.

Activity that seems to be obstructive or destructive, may in fact help to 'flush the staleness out of the system', and generate new 'oxygen'.

In the organisations that I studied, populated by agents that were the subjects of the 'post-colonial enterprise' function and dysfunction appeared unambiguously juxtaposed according to 'how things are supposed to be (done)' and 'how things are not supposed to be (done)'.

As the organisational dogma tends to privilege 'how things are supposed to be' it provides scant vocabulary for and few ways to address 'dysfunction'.

Dysfunction is commonly addressed by attempting to exorcise it, to banish it from the 'functioning' structures that it has taken hold of.

When organisations speak of 'function' they commonly mean 'smooth process': the unobstructed completion of officially defined tasks according to prescribed protocol.

'Smooth process' does not necessarily mean that what is being so smoothly processed possesses sense, sensibility, integrity, principle or logic. It just means that the machinery accomplishes the task it is assigned to.

In some instances- as for example in clinical work- smooth process may be actually detrimental to the original principles of the task (of helping and healing people).

Aspiring to 'smooth process' creates the temptation to disregard- or worse- to guide patients to suppress the 'untidy' chaotic, confused aspects of the human condition, the visceral realities of conflict and unhappiness.

It has led to what some clinicians have called the 'sticking-plaster' approach to distress, the purely symptom-focused approach of short-term distress-alleviation.

Resistance to 'smooth process systems' would generally be regarded as dysfunction, but in terms of ethos could be perceived as function. The more such dynamics are engaged with, the more

ambiguous they seem: in a smoothly functioning system of ‘madness’ or corruption the saboteur is the one possessing moral sanity.²⁰¹

Psychoanalytic theories may here help to conceive of how agents are ‘invaded’ by and introject the effects of these conditions and continue to disseminate them, as unwitting vehicles transporting neurosis and dysfunction, through whatever conditions and frameworks they are immersed in.

The conceptualisation of certain emotions and conditions- like envy- as drive-derivative and early-developmental in their foundation, but essentially as mutable as ‘habitus’ is and operative throughout life, adds an extra dimension to the analysis of organisational processes. These processes are, I would argue, most comprehensibly understood by considering social structures, relational dynamics and unconscious processes as acting systemically and in conjunction.

It is, I believe, a fundamental mistake to make the unconscious the realm of the privileged who pay to explore it, reclining on couches.

There is no necessity to separate the political from the psychological to preserve the authenticity of either. Political structures inform psychological structures, but one should beware of labelling it all as ‘false consciousness’ and be done with it. Capitalist acquisitiveness may for example be conceptualised as drive-derivative: Voracious greed resonates libidinal thrust.

But it is not all Id: libidinal thrust may be regulated, directed, stunted by the structural conditions and social mores it finds itself in.

Unconscious processes and in particular defences however serve to highlight what otherwise remains invisible as integral to systemic structures.

²⁰¹ One of the questions underlying this study (but not answered by it), is whether communally experienced vicissitudes were indeed imported into systems and organisations by their agents, so that a collectively deranged agency made them into places of madness. -Not into especially mad places, but into places of a specific type of madness that is shaped by the particular experiences of its agents. One reason why it was difficult to come to a conclusion is that mental health services (and I’ve worked in a few), often are an organisational mirror of their patients’ dysfunctions. It is conceivable that other groups with different experiences would experience and express group-dynamics differently.

In the obvious chaos of dysfunction we may then encounter an enduring and functional critique and indictment of the system's failures.

The system's smooth function is evidence of its dysfunctionality.

It is conventional perspective that imposes dichotomies on systems whose 'constructive' and 'destructive' constituents are, dynamically speaking, interchangeable.

CHAPTER THREE

BUREAUCRACY AND CLINICAL PROCESS

ABSTRACT

The following chapters explore clinical practice and team-dynamics at the Hózhóní Clinic. The Hózhóní Clinic provides mental health services at the IHS Yádootl'izh Health Center and was the starting point for this study and its original focus on 'bi-cultural negotiation of culturally appropriate treatment'.

In common with other public health services the IHS has become a forum of conflicting priorities. Here patient-needs, insurance company concerns and pharma-industry interests compete with- or against- each other, and clinical staff is constrained by bureaucratic protocol, scarce resources and time-pressures.

This chapter explores how policies, organisational strictures and patient demands manifest in everyday clinical practice and organisational dynamics, and how those at the frontline of clinical work process these pressures.

Clinical process here is examined through the phenomenon of 'parallel process' whereby an organisation's (dys-) function is seen to reflect its wider context and systemic conflicts.

At the centre of this chapter is the supremacy of the bureaucratic dictate, that in terms of facilitating 'smooth process' may be seen as functional, and in terms of its impact on ethical patient-care as supremely dysfunctional.

But the prominence that bureaucratic process is given in mental healthcare can also be understood as unconscious defense against the 'dis-ordered', unruly, chaotic and unpredictable spectre of mental 'illness'.

Then we may regard bureaucracy as the attempt to cope with the overwhelming chaos of emotional distress and 'mental illness' by imposing a taxonomy of dis-order- by diagnostic-, treatment-, funding- and administrative categories- and thereby creating a bureaucratic system of order. Bureaucratic process in clinical practice so presents both stricture and structure, confinement and containment.

* * *

PART I
THE INDIAN HEALTH SERVICE

The Indian Health Service, founded in 1955, took over primary healthcare for American Indians and Alaska Natives from the BIA.

Because of its funding structure, scarcity of resources, bureaucracy, cultural status, and the vast medical needs of the population served, the IHS' reputation is somewhat problematic.

Funding for the IHS is allocated federally by discrete appropriation: each budget is determined according to established need, but subject to available federal funds.

That is to say that IHS funding depends at each funding cycle on the federal budget and therefore on the general political climate. The IHS so cannot rely on increases in its expenditure being met by a federal increase to its funding. As a consequence the IHS operates on a persistent funding shortfall and its per capita spending is less than 60% of the national Medicaid budget.²⁰²

The IHS delivers healthcare to a population group with high needs and significant health-disparities compared to the general population: According to a 2003 report by the US Commission on Civil Rights:

‘Native Americans are 670 % more likely to die from alcoholism; 650 % more likely to die of tuberculosis; 318 % more likely to die of diabetes-related complications and 204 % more likely to die of accidental death.

13 % of deaths occur in the under 25 age-group; Native youth are twice as likely to commit suicide; 70 % of suicidal acts in Indian Country involve alcohol; and overall life-expectancy is on average six years lower than other groups.

²⁰² US Commission on Civil Rights. A Quiet Crisis: Federal Funding and Unmet Need in Indian Country, July 2003. (<http://www.usccr.gov>)

Compared to other population groups, Native Americans on average attend fewer regular medical appointments, but are strongly represented in emergency room visits.²⁰³

An earlier report by the Commission stated that “Native Americans lagged twenty to twenty-five years behind the general population in health-status.”²⁰⁴

The IHS, in conjunction with many services originating in the BIA, has never been considered as a ‘high status’ employer. Its reputation as a marginalised, precariously funded organisation rarely attracts the small number of Native Americans qualifying in the medical field many of whom prefer to practice off-reservation in main-stream services.²⁰⁵

IHS vacancy rates, particularly for medical personnel, therefore are high²⁰⁶ and possibly become higher still because of the uncertain future of some of its services that are subject to be taken over under § 638 of the Indian Self Determination Act.

The 1975 Indian Self Determination and Education Assistance Act²⁰⁷ established the right of tribes to run their own health services and to apply for federal funding, providing tribes could demonstrate compliance with Federal standards and guidelines.

In accordance with the ISDEAA and tribal self-determination, the eventual future of Indian healthcare will be a joint enterprise between IHS and tribal services.

While most biomedical services will remain under the IHS, other services, like mental health and rehabilitation may be taken over by tribal behavioural health departments.²⁰⁸

²⁰³ US Commission on Civil Rights: “A Quiet Crisis”; 2003

²⁰⁴ Ibid; p.34

²⁰⁵ All physicians and medical students: 75 percent male, 51 percent White, 2 percent Black, 3 percent Hispanic, 7.9 percent Asian, 0.1 percent Native American, 33 percent Unknown. [“Council on Long Range Planning and Development Report 7.” American Medical Association. *House of Delegates Proceedings*. Annual Meeting, 2000: 262-270.

²⁰⁶ Total IHS employees: 15,378 (71% are Indian)

	Physicians	Nurses	Dentists	Pharmacists	Engineers	Sanitarians
Number by health professional category	876	2,499	280	508	401	159
Health Professionals vacancy rates	17%	18%	31%	11%	6%	4%

IHS Factsheet; 2008

²⁰⁷ Public Law 93-638

* * *

The notorious chaos and precariousness that is characteristic of mental health services can be plausibly explained by the phenomenon of ‘parallel process’²⁰⁹ where the ‘madness’ inherent in the work imparts itself to institutional dynamics.

Organisational dysfunction is, according to my experience, often characteristic of the dynamics in mental health services, and here the Hózhóní Clinic was no exception.²¹⁰

This chapter focuses on inherent conceptual contradictions and conflicting positions observed in clinical practice which are accelerated by the conflict between patient-needs, inadequate resources and administrative imperative of making healthcare a profitable enterprise.

Patient-care, controlled expenditure and maximum profit are respective goals that are difficult to reconcile. In administrative terms they are in fact conceptualised as separate categories that remain bureaucratically unconnected. In terms of clinical routine stipulations that the interests of patients, insurers and the pharmaceutical industry jointly have to be integrated into treatment schemes present a potential compromise to clinical work.

It is the clinical team’s duty to ‘keep up to speed’ with its multiple responsibilities and more importantly, to leave a data-trail proving that it has done so. It is the collated medical data that is of collective interests to all parties involved in healthcare.

The medical data-system includes patient-files; financial information; clinical-evaluation data; insurance data, practice assessment data and data of interest to the pharmaceutical industry.

²⁰⁸ “ 1. Receive health care services directly from the Indian Health Service (IHS);
2. Contract with the IHS to administer individual programs and services the IHS would otherwise provide (referred to as Title I Self-Determination Contracts); and
3. Compact with the IHS to assume control over health care programs the IHS would otherwise provide (referred to as Title IV Self-Governance Compacts). “ (ibid)

²⁰⁹ This is further discussed in Chapter Four

²¹⁰ The more rampant manifestations of systemic disorder will be explored in a separate Chapter ‘Witchcraft and Strife.’

In the Yádootl'izh setting medical data-systems were argued to primarily help patients: they facilitate referrals and the communication between different services; they make a patient's medical, diagnostic and treatment history immediately accessible to all involved clinicians etc. But data-systems also serve as meta monitoring devices that help health-services to determine their clinical and organisational efficiency, to measure them against other services and to increase profitability.

In common with the wider trend towards the quantification of medical practice the clinicians of this study spent considerable time generating and processing data. At times it seemed as if the data-system, rather than being an aid for efficient clinical practice, had itself become like a patient requiring attention- and a needy one at that.

The relationship of clinicians to bureaucracy is complex and ambiguous. At the Hózhóní Clinic there was occasional evidence that bureaucratic protocol could get in the way of patient care, but little evidence that clinicians minded doing 'the paperwork'.²¹¹

Quite on the contrary, it seemed that the administrative tasks required from clinical staff provided them with a buffer-zone from the chaos and disorder that ruled their patients' lives.

Clinicians face daily exposure to conditions that cannot be remedied, tasks that cannot be completed, and catastrophes that cannot be contained. The vernacular for what clinicians can do and do for their patients is 'fire-fighting', the short-term dousing of a problem area without being able to either determine the cause of the fire nor being able to prevent further spreading.²¹²

Clinical practice is realistically evaluated only if the contributing element of clinicians' human frustration is factored in.

²¹¹ Although paper was rarely involved anymore, I heard the term paperwork for clinicians' administrative tasks used quite often.

²¹² This does not mean that clinicians never feel that what they do is helpful: some patients report fundamental changes and great benefit from counselling. Clinicians would sometimes say before going home "Today was a good day", meaning that they had 'got somewhere' with patients and were hopeful that their client's situation would 'turn around' and change for the better.

Logically viewed that frustration should be increased by all the factors that place restrictions and limitations on clinicians' capacity to care for patients. But this is not necessarily the case.

The focus of clinicians' frustrations was at times the patient (obstreperous, in denial, manipulative), or fellow clinicians (obstreperous, manipulative, mendacious, obnoxious), but rarely the 'system' which was like the Anglos, like the weather, just there to stay.

But how do clinicians deal with the daily repetition of crises, hardship and tragedy that realistically they can do little to remedy because the system they work for places such restrictions on necessary resources?

How do clinicians manage to greet each patient that comes through the door offering them a private staging of 'Groundhog Day' with a fresh eye and fresh hope that something can and will be done?

How would Sisyphus have felt had he perceived his exertions in terms of endless futility?

"This universe henceforth without a master seems to him neither sterile nor futile. Each atom of that stone, each mineral flake of that night filled mountain, in itself forms a world. The struggle itself toward the heights is enough to fill a man's heart. One must imagine Sisyphus happy".²¹³

"One must" as Camus instructs us "imagine Sisyphus happy". A man who feels hope, every time, that in this instance he will succeed.

We must imagine Sisyphus as happy. A man for whom satisfaction lies in 'getting the ball rolling'. That must be enough.

* * *

²¹³ Camus, Albert: *The Myth of Sisyphus and Other Essays*;
<http://www.josephkenny.joyeurs.com/PhilTexts/Camus/Myth%20of%20Sisyphus-.pdf>

PART II

THE HÓZHÓNÍ CLINIC AT THE YÁ DOOTL'IZH CENTER

The Hózhóní Clinic is housed in the imposing Yádootl'izh Health Center²¹⁴, whose departments fan out from a central atrium conceived as architectural tribute to the traditional Navajo style of an octagonal hogan. The Clinic is located in the west wing at what is in effect the health centre's back entrance. The Clinic is apart and away from the medical departments, off a long, quiet, perpetually buffed corridor.

The Hózhóní's entrance door opens into a waiting area, to the left of which is the reception office separated by a counter from waiting patients. Two receptionists are stationed behind the counter. They note arrivals, call patients for appointments, answer phones, schedule appointments, provide secretarial support and administer files. The administrative manager occupies a work-station at the recesses of the reception-office, shielded from patients' view.

The reception office hosts medical filing cabinets and clinicians' pigeon-holes. A door opens from the patients' waiting area to a corridor leading to the clinical offices. There are offices to the

²¹⁴ The Yádootl'izh Health Center though located in a regional hub of the Navajo Nation is not well served by public transportation. There are two daily buses, one to Yádootl'izh and the Health Center, leaving Appleton, the border-town, in the mornings, and another returning to Appleton from Yádootl'izh in the afternoon. The buses are mainly used by hospital-workers.

Patients living on the Reservation so must make their own transport-arrangements and travel either in their own car, arrange a ride, or hitchhike. Many patients have to travel considerable distances to attend appointments. Because of the infamous IHS waiting-times, an appointment or emergency consultation may well occupy most of a working-day. People who do not own a vehicle or who do not have unrestricted access to 'a ride' may find it particularly difficult to attend their appointments. Many hitchhike, hoping for a 'relative' to pass who will oblige them with a lift to the hospital.

Furthermore, employers, particularly those providing the low-wage jobs that are prevalent in and around the Reservations and border-towns, often are reported to take a dim view of employees requesting time off for appointments. The less the wage the less secure the job, and the fewer the employees' rights it provides. A considerable number of patients therefore only present once – when at crisis-point or return when they need another medication prescription. Some do persist with regular counselling sessions over a longer term, this particularly applies to children whose parents are anxious for them to receive help.

left and right side of the corridor. There is a staff kitchen, equipped with basic cooking facilities, fridge, coffee machine, table and chairs, and at the centre of the clinic the staff meeting room. These rooms are 'internal' with no windows to the outside. At the end of that corridor are the clinic's 'external offices, whose windows afford pleasant views of Yádootl'izh scenery or the health centre's landscaped patio.

At the time of study, the western external offices with views of Yádootl'izh were all occupied by Anglo staff. The eastern corridor with external windows opening into the patio was occupied by Navajo clinical social-workers.

Junior and temporary staff and locum psychiatrists were allocated internal windowless offices. Permanent staff consisted of two reception staff and the administrative manager, one psychiatrist, (the Acting Clinical Director), one clinical psychologist, (the ex-Acting Clinical Director), six Mental Health Specialists (Master's level licensed social-workers), and the five employees of the Day Center providing services for patients with chronic mental illness, which was housed in an external building.

The psychiatrist and clinical psychologist were Anglo, all other Clinic staff Navajo. The Clinic at the time of fieldwork was seeking to fill two vacancies for permanent psychiatrist posts. In the interim, which lasted through most of the time of fieldwork the open positions were filled with locum psychiatrists recruited through a national medical recruitment agency. Locum psychiatrists stayed according to availability and suitability from one week to a few months.

The Clinic received predominantly self-referred patients who presented for an initial Intake Interview. The Intake Interview was an unscheduled appointment that lasted approximately 45 minutes and which was conducted by a Mental Health Specialist. If the assessing clinician thought that the patient needed further diagnosis and/or medication they would be scheduled to see the psychiatrist.

Mental Health Specialist rotated Intake duty; each MHS did one Intake day a week.

Intake appointments were on a first come basis and waiting-times could be substantial, up to half a day, depending on demand. Seeing a psychiatrist commonly required an additional 1-2 hours wait.

The Intake process was allocated one hour; of this time 45 minutes were usually given over to interviewing the patient. The remaining 15 minutes were used to write up the 'Mental Health Intake Summary', to complete the 'Mental Health Status Examination' and to process the information on the Yádootl'izh Health Center's computerised data-base.

Many patients presented in a crisis, but nevertheless first would have to undergo the Intake Interview as a priority, so that a file could be opened for them. This was necessary for submitting the invoices for third party reimbursement²¹⁵ critical to the hospital's funding.

Mental Health Specialists determined if patients were to see a psychiatrist for an additional diagnostic assessment and for a medication-prescription, or they would schedule them for regular counselling appointments or follow-up appointments.

Often patients would be scheduled to see the person who had conducted the initial interview²¹⁶, or their case would be presented at the weekly clinical meeting to discuss if they could potentially benefit from a colleague's expertise. Each Mental Health Specialist had their (unofficially appointed) special field or demographic group in which they were perceived- or perceived themselves- to be particularly effective or inclined towards, be it children, abused women, traditional elders, veterans or 'delinquents'.

The clinic also ran an 'Anger Management Group' for court-mandated clients, which took place once weekly over twelve weeks and which drew on cognitive behavioural approaches. Clients were referred to the group for various offences and misdemeanours, ranging from domestic violence, assault, public brawling, intimidation to employer-referred 'insubordination'.

²¹⁵ The health centre itemised and billed health care funding agencies - insurers, Medicare, Medicaid, for services rendered.

²¹⁶ Depending on available vacancies

Domestic affray was the most common cause for referral, with the number of women referred almost equalling that of men. Whilst alcohol was named the cause for some of the altercations, a significant percentage of disputes escalated when perpetrators were sober.

Amongst the clinic's patients were a high number of children who had been referred by teachers and who attended weekly counselling appointments with one of the clinical social workers who specialised in working with children.

* * *

PART III

PAPER TIGER - DATA DRAGON

At the time of fieldwork, a new computerised data system was being established across the clinic. Its purpose was to collate patient information between various departments primarily to help expedite the third party reimbursement process.

Through the new system the finance department would have immediate access to billable medical procedures and clinical interventions recorded in patient files, without the trouble of manually extracting information from files when they eventually found their way there from the clinical departments. It was hoped that this would speed up the notoriously slow reimbursement process and help to bring some order to the financial administration. Of course the new computerised medical filing system was said to bring benefits to clinical staff as well: ‘All records at the tip of your fingers’ etc.

The data-input system, as I remember it, was not for the faint-hearted. It was reminiscent of the early age of intricate computer programs whose impenetrability scared many novices into becoming committed luddites. No icons here. Users had to learn specific keyboard commands without intuitive visual aids.

The monochrome screen was a hard task master. The system was, I found, prone to swallowing data irretrievably: One inadvertent keyboard contact and gone were carefully formulated clinical pronouncements.

The new computer-system was evidently regarded of central importance to the clinical work. Most of my induction training was spent on computer training. My clinical supervisor seemed principally preoccupied with my capacity- or lack thereof- to grasp the finer details of data-input. To my consternation an elderly, benign locum psychiatrist- we had started our ‘placements’ at the same time and I therefore felt some kinship with him- was ‘let go’ after only a week. Clinical management had decided not to extend his contract because he could not master the new

programme in the requisite time. The man had hoped for a couple of months' employment and looked mortified at his dismissal.

In my first week I so had already witnessed the computer, tyrant of the work-space, claim its first victim. While I, the newcomer, was disturbed by the elderly clinician's abrupt leaving, permanent staff seemed unperturbed by the psychiatrist's brief sojourn in their midst. It seemed he had barely registered. This was not so much callousness, but probably more due to them being used to the continuous transit of locum psychiatrists, who would stay for days, months or weeks, confined to a windowless office, heaped with the grunt-work of which they were employed to relieve the permanent staff. Locum psychiatrists usually occupied either end of the age spectrum: They were either barely past qualification, seeking experience or filling time until a 'proper job' came along; or they were past retirement age, wanting to 'keep their oar in' and supplementing their funds by temporary work.

The majority of doctors were recruited by employment agencies and came from outside the region. Many were not familiar with the IHS, or the tribal population they were expected to work with. Some showed considerable willingness to learn about the culture and to consider its implications for treatment, while others seemed barely aware of the context in which they were working. Few if any, it seems fair to say, were intent on making a permanent career in the IHS. So it was little wonder if staff did not pay particular attention to temporary psychiatrists. The detachment from comings and goings of strangers was also enforced by clinicians' workload which may have left them with little time for curiosity or commiseration. On first impression clinicians seemed to spend their days staggering between reception and their offices, arms heaped eye-high with medical files. Each of these files signified a patient who was to be seen (usually for an hour).²¹⁷

²¹⁷ Clinicians got their well-deserved respite through the fairly high number of cancellations (when patients called beforehand that they could not make their session); and the even higher number of DNAs (Did Not Attend, when patients didn't show up for their sessions.) The occurrence of cancellations and DNA

When I was finally deemed to be computer competent,²¹⁸ I was almost ready to be let loose on patients. Considering the amount of time devoted to data input measured against the amount of time spent being instructed on clinical work, it seemed that either data-management was being given priority over clinical skills or that perhaps one skill was perceived as confirming the other.²¹⁹ In any case the data-system seemed to be considered- and perhaps rightly so- more temperamental than the patients.

The part of my induction not being taken up with computer-training had me sitting in and observing clinicians' Intake interviews with patients.²²⁰ When I had observed a number of intakes, I was asked to conduct a supervised Intake interview before being 'signed off' for practice. I was cleared for practice and was reminded not to ask for more than the protocol required and not to let patients 'go on too much'. After all, the entire Intake and the processing thereof had to fit into less than an hour, including onward referrals, communication with the administrator and psychiatrist and so forth.

Little reference to the cultural context was made throughout my induction process. The Yádootl'izh's web-site had a 'Cross Culture Medicine' link, introducing incoming staff to Navajo culture and customs as relevant to a clinical employee's comportment.²²¹

seemingly was factored into clinicians' day. Without patients staying away it is arguable that clinicians could not have managed all the cases they were scheduled to in their working day.

²¹⁸ -After a good few days filled with frustration and the search for data swallowed by the spiteful system...

²¹⁹ This is a slightly cheap jibe. It is likely that the clinician who had brokered the placement in the first instance, was reassured by my qualifications, UKCP professional registration and academic background in Anthropology, which had led me to seek out the Navajo health-system for my focus of study. Perhaps it was felt that an Anthropologist and Intercultural Psychotherapist would not need to be enlightened as to Navajo cultural particularities.

²²⁰ Mental Health Specialists, particularly those who had been working at the Clinic for a longer time, were generous in granting access, under the condition that patients agreed to my presence.

²²¹ For incoming clinicians the IHS Navajo homepage²²¹ dispenses the following advice regarding cross-cultural medicine:

“Cross Culture Medicine

Cross cultural medicine offers unique opportunities for service and at the same time it offers individual growth for those serving. While new employees of the Navajo Area Indian Health Service may have been exposed to cross cultural environs as they grew up, during academic training, or previously in their professional careers, exposure to diverse peoples only partially prepares one for life among the Diné (the Navajo People).

The subtleties of interpersonal relationships (which, when understood by health professionals make them more successful in caring for patients) are particularly important among the Navajo.

In NAIHS healthcare facilities the following situations or realities may be encountered.

- Direct eye to eye contact with others is not common on the Navajo.
- Handshakes (when a hand is extended to someone) is a touching of hands as opposed to a firm handshake.
- The perception of time is different in that problems may have begun "awhile ago" and menses may be marked in their relationship to lunar cycles. The history of present illness for an acute illness may result in a story which relates the cause to events in the patient's personal life as far back as 50 or more years.
- History taking is perceived particularly by Navajo elderly as unnecessary. Traditional healers "know" what the problem is without oral history taking sessions. Combining the history while a physical examination is underway can yield better results.
- The review of systems can be particularly problematic in that if the patient felt they had concerns about a particular organ system they would have informed the practitioner of such at the outset of their interaction. Again, combining ROS with the P.E. can be helpful.
- Most often the answer to a question like "you don't have a headache do you" will result in an answer of "Yes", which means "Yes, I do not have a headache".
- Religious beliefs should be understood so that therapies of education can be appropriately tailored to each individual. Counseling emphasis for a prenatal patient is best given once religion is determined as the approach would be different for a Navajo who believes traditionally, for Navajo American Church members (who use peyote) and for Navajos who have converted to Christianity.
- Providers should offer tissue to patients for disposal such as toenails (after removal), scalp hair (if removed to suture a laceration), and even normal placentas. Traditional Navajos know what is appropriate for the disposition of these.
- Many Navajos still point directionally with their lips and not with their fingers and arms.
- Family decisions regarding health matters are common place. This is particularly true of surgery and delays in surgery may be misunderstood by those not appreciative of the fact that families require time to gather and weigh the options with the patient.
- Therapies may be delayed by the patient so that a traditional healer can be consulted and on occasion a ceremony performed in their hogán (home).
- Practitioners should always ask (especially the elderly) before showing X-Rays with patients as some have strong beliefs about any pictures of themselves and X-Rays have certain meaning to some patients.
- Assessing the home environment is essential before therapies are prescribed. Many people still have no electricity (no refrigerators) and no in door water source (no bathroom). Alternatives exist seasonally for ice/heat treatments and storage of medications and these should be appreciated by the practitioner.
- Conversational "courtesies" which are common in non-Navajo society (thank-you, excuse me, etc.) are infrequently heard on the Navajo but appreciation is felt and expressed by patients particularly after they get to know their provider over time.
- Translation into the Navajo language (which is descriptive) is extremely difficult and many health related terms have no single word counterpart in Navajo. A "simple" question when interpreted into Navajo takes much longer to ask in Navajo than in English.
- Patients may arrive for healthcare with their skin blackened with charcoal which mean they have recently had a ceremony performed for them by a traditional healer.
- After ceremonies, patients have to observe certain practices outlined by the healer (only eat certain foods, avoid anything dead, etc.). These do not generally interfere with prescriptions by non-Navajo practitioners.
- Pinon tree sap and herbs may be placed on wounds prior to arrival in the E.R. and harsh criticism of this (which represents a belief system) will adversely affect the relationship with the patient.
- Patient encounters with spider webs cause problems for some patients even though the non-Navajo practitioner may not be able to see a rash or believe that shortness of breath is a spider web induced.
- Avoidance of the phrase "there is nothing wrong with you" is best. Advising the patient that one can't determine the nature of their problem at this time is better.
- Many Navajo believe that by stating something may happen in the future (potential complications including death for example) will cause the event to occur. This has obvious implications for health education efforts.
- Navajo concepts of being, health, disease, and the environment are deeply intertwined with Navajo religion.

This available 'cross-culture advice' was not explicitly mentioned to me. I came across it while browsing the Yádootl'izh website. Other than that, no particular mention was made of cultural context and how it pertained to the interaction with and treatment of Navajo patients.

* * *

The majority of clinicians conducted Intakes from their desk, possibly because of time restrictions or because they just found it more efficient. They elicited patients' histories partially obscured by computer screens, while simultaneously typing notes and processing patient data.

The remaining 15 minutes after patients had left were used to determine the diagnostic category fitting patients' presentations; to complete the Mental Status Examination form and to editing notes. The receptionists would be asked to schedule patients for regular or follow-up appointments,²²² and patients would be given details of the next appointment by receptionists when leaving.

Interviews were conducted with remarkable punctuality. Patients rarely overstayed their allotted time, despite many presenting with what seemed a lifetime's accumulation of tragic and traumatising events. Shortage of time was the rational explanation for the simultaneous interviewing and data-processing technique.

■ There are many types of traditional healers (crystal gazers, herbalists, stargazers, hand tremblers) and the right one must be sought out for the patient (by the family) for specific problems. Navajo Area Indian Health Service employees must respect the patients served which includes their belief systems. Doing so will lead to mutually satisfying relationship among patients, families, community members and those who choose to live among and serve the Diné.”

http://www.ihs.gov/navajo/index.cfm?module=nao_cross_culture_medicine

²²² Some patients left a future appointment 'when and as', taking on the scheduling of an appointment on their own initiative, when they felt they needed it.

After a while of observing and then conducting intake interviews myself²²³ I came to regard clinicians' use of desk and computer-screen during Intakes as possibly signifying much more than just efficient time management.

Screen and desk formed a symbolic divide, a kind of barricade between clinician and patient.

Positioned behind it clinicians truly became 'the other', inhabitants of official privilege, commanders of information and holders of healing ability.²²⁴ But these barricades did not just serve as status-signifiers; they also sheltered clinicians from the relentless onslaught of human misery that made up much of their working life. The desk-screen boundary mediated, efficiently and non-verbally, the limits that patients were to put on their expectations.

They were visible and concrete boundaries, communicating the limitations of the clinic's capacity to help.²²⁵ Desk and screen, the meticulous adherence to time, the protocol of the Intake Interview all signalled the organisation's cultural alliance. Excepting a few items of artwork and artefacts that some clinicians used to decorate their offices with, there was little other reference to Navajo culture. Although the clinical encounter was a meeting of Navajo, it was conducted according to Western/ Anglo cultural parameters.

The time apportioned to Intakes seemed particularly inadequate in view of the multiple tasks that had to be completed during the interview: history taking, counselling, diagnosis, treatment plan. Clinicians however argued that the Intake should be seen as a preliminary meeting used to collect patient information. They said patients would have enough time later in follow-up appointments to 'talk about everything'. But many patients presented just the once when in crisis and did not necessarily make the distinction between 'only' an Intake Interview and a counselling session.

²²³ As a volunteer and auxiliary worker, my time at the Clinic was more or less my own, so I conducted the interview first, and then processed the data. Both components usually took me considerably longer than the 45 and 15 minutes respectively that were allocated to the tasks.

²²⁴ This reflects in no way on clinicians' attitudes, but is merely a comment on the embodied presentation of clinical hierarchies.

²²⁵ "Yes, this may be the IHS, the Indian Health Service, but there will be no talking-circle, no listening as long as you need, we are not all in this together in a hogan, you are here, I'm over there, we do not run on Indian time ..."

Particularly when they had come to the Clinic at crisis point they expected to be helped now.

Many of these patients did not return unless another crisis occurred. While this could be because the crisis was over, it is also possible that some patients were deterred by an experience that had intimidated them.

The clinical encounter, however, works on many levels, and it is equally possible that the rigidly structured protocol offered a degree of therapeutic containment. Patients seldom appeared put off by clinicians perched behind computer-screens, typing away. Perhaps they did feel that the prominence of information technology here was a reassuring symbol of buoyant competence.²²⁶

The manifestation of bureaucracy maybe had the effect of guiding patients through a demonstration of contained functionality. To witness clinicians impose coherence on chaos itself may work as a therapeutic role-modelling of how to overcome difficulties. Clinician and patient are both part of a system in which they reciprocate in a symbiotic quest for reassurance and meaning. But it is also conceivable that the apparent tolerance- or docility- with which patients endure a treatment that seems less focused on meeting their needs than towards appeasing administrative demands made on clinicians, may have been acquired through a lifetime of being confronted with fundamentally unsympathetic systems.

The rigidity of time-constrictions stood in striking contrast to the tendency of most patients to begin their assessment with an innocuous complaint:

“I don’t sleep real well”; from which they proceeded incrementally:

“My husband lost his job a couple of months ago”; to ever more severe events:

“My daughter died in a car-wreck”; to culminate finally in a report of considerable trauma:

“My father killed my mother”.²²⁷

²²⁶ The typing perhaps was perceived as Gestalt therapy by proxy, a staged role-modelling of purpose and competence ‘*See, this is what you can do once you get out of this*’,

²²⁷ These are merely examples to illustrate the severity of escalation of reported difficulties and their causes, any resemblance to real case-histories are purely coincidental.

It was difficult to determine if by this incremental disclosure patients ‘tested the water’ by presenting a comparatively mild complaint to start with to see how clinicians would react or if they needed to acclimatise and ‘warm up’ for the core-complaints; or whether they were using an inversely chronicled narrative structure.

To me it seemed that this narrative trajectory presented clinicians with two choices: One was to honour patients’ needs and to allow for some leeway;²²⁸ the other not to let patients immerse themselves too far in their narrative. The inverted narrative structure made it possible for clinicians to formulate an intervention at the first complaint:

“I don’t sleep real well”, *‘we’ll send you over to Dr X, he’ll give you a prescription’*

or the second:

“my husband lost his job a couple of months ago” *‘Ah, so you are worried. That’s why you are not sleeping well. We’ll send you over to Dr X, he’ll give you a prescription’*,

even at the third, if there was still time available.

The initial critique of my Intakes that I encouraged patients to talk too much so made sense- it was not strictly necessary to get all the details of a patients’ entire histories to proceed with diagnosis or treatment. It is possible to interpret clinicians’ curtailing of patients’ accounts purely in terms of restricted resources: the patient must be out of the door in 45 minutes and whatever he has to say needs to be completed in the time available. But it is conceivable that the rationing of individual narratives chimes with a memory of a tribal ethos where no one person should take something just for themselves. Perhaps Navajo patients at the Hózhóní were less certain of their entitlement to ‘Me-time’ than their Anglo counterparts. Maybe they experienced the urge to speak about themselves as a type of shameful greed. And in a sense it was: had they insisted on staying until they had ‘spilled’ all, they would have taken time away from others.

²²⁸ This was usually not possible, because on any given day the reception room would be full of patients waiting for Intake Interviews.

Time-restrictions²²⁹ imposed on clinicians and their impact on patient narratives however were quite obviously in contradiction to the cross-cultural advice the Yádootl'izh' dispensed on its website:

“The history of present illness for an acute illness may result in a story which relates the cause to events in the patient's personal life as far back as 50 or more years”²³⁰.

“History taking is perceived particularly by Navajo elderly as unnecessary”²³¹.

* * *

²²⁹ Obviously all clinical services, whether public or private, necessarily impose time-boundaries on their clients/ patients. It is just that for a population group as here that tended to seek help primarily when at crisis, and for the number of tasks: patient-history + current complaints and symptoms+ assessment + MHS + diagnosis; that needed to be performed, the time-frame seemed not only inadequate but also clearly privileged administrative protocol over clinical intervention.

²³⁰ http://www.ihs.gov/navajo/index.cfm?module=nao_cross_culture_medicine

²³¹ *ibid*

PART IV

THE DIAGNOSTIC PROCESS: CUNNING AND UNREASON

Despite its brevity, the initial assessment- the Intake Interview- is patients' perhaps most significant appointment at the Hózhóní Clinic. Assessments create patients with DSM IV-categorized²³², insurance-recognized mental disorders and establish medical records.

The Intake Interview is a dense multi-tasked encounter, where distressed individuals must be contained, clinical histories gathered, diagnoses formulated, referrals decided and treatment plans devised. Here clinicians acquire from patients the information that will eventually be transformed into their medical records.²³³

From an administrative perspective diagnoses are the priority. Diagnoses confirmed the professional standards of the Clinic and they provided the evidence of treatment integral to the financial reimbursement by insurers.

For patients on the other hand, their diagnosis may have been the most irrelevant and obscure aspect of the encounter, one that they were not necessarily even aware of.

²³² At the time of study the DSM IV (Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fourth Edition), and DSM-IV-TR were in use.

²³³ The Mental Health Intake Summary was comprised of the following sections:

- PAST PSYCHIATRIC HISTORY
- CHEMICAL DEPENDENCY HISTORY
- PERSONAL HISTORY
- FAMILY PSYCHIATRIC HISTORY
- MEDICAL HISTORY
- FAMILY MEDICAL HISTORY
- SOCIAL HISTORY
- MENTAL STATUS EXAM
- ASSESSMENT & RECOMMENDATIONS:
- DIAGNOSIS
 - Axis I:
 - Axis II:
 - Axis III:
 - Axis IV:
 - Axis V:

SHORT TERM PLAN

Few patients ever got to see their files, and only a minority showed any interest in what information the files contained.

Many patients so never knew their diagnosis, although in terms of their medical record it would accompany them for years. There was evidence of a paradox of clashing priorities between clinicians' focus on diagnosis and patients lack of awareness of it which in a sense symbolised the problems inherent in the clinical process.

Clinicians seemed ambiguous in their attitudes towards the diagnostic process. Diagnoses frequently were referenced as concrete manifestations of professional prowess because only clinicians trained to Master's level were 'allowed' to make diagnoses.

On the other hand the relevance of diagnoses and their possible impact on patients' futures were habitually dismissed.

"You can always change a diagnosis with every visit" clinicians often said, pointing to the transitional nature of the diagnostic process.

In practice however, once established, diagnoses were rarely reviewed. Often there was simply not enough time to review patients' files. Rather than thumbing through the DSM-IV-TR in search of a new, more appropriate diagnosis staff would routinely copy diagnostic codes as recorded in the medical file on previous visits.²³⁴ Furthermore changing a diagnosis also could be taken as an implicit critique of a colleague's opinion and so some clinicians may have been reluctant to 'meddle' with another's work.

Besides it was the licence to diagnose that was the ultimate source of professional validation. It distinguished professionally licensed, Masters Degrees holding clinicians from their lesser qualified colleagues. A newly qualified social worker said enthusiastically on receiving his diploma: "From now on I'll sleep with the DSM under my pillow".

²³⁴ This is not to deny that diagnostic revisions may have happened when they were felt necessary, but I was never privy to this process and it was difficult to see how clinicians would have gone about a re-diagnosis, given the afore mentioned strictures and pressures of the system

The DSM-IV here emerged as much as a tool for patient care as it was a symbol of proficiency and upward mobility, towards which the patient is a vehicle.

Practically speaking the only thing separating Mental Health Specialists from psychiatrists were that they could not issue prescriptions. And in fact, this seemed to be seen as the psychiatrists' main purpose: prescribing medication.

However, when a newly employed psychiatrist ran DSM-IV training workshop for staff it became clear that whereas all clinicians had memorized codes and were able to pair them with diagnostic categories, there was less certainty about the meaning of diagnoses. It also transpired that one of the core rules of the DSM-IV, that symptoms had to be present for specific amounts of time before a valid diagnosis could be made, was hardly ever adhered to.

The diagnostic process was in a sense a matter of clinical 'habitus' where the DSM was only one contributing factor.

Diagnoses were idiosyncratic constructs in that they reflected staff's attitudes and preoccupations. Just as clinicians had 'their' preferred patients, so they had diagnostic categories they preferred. Some clinicians were inclined towards severe diagnostic categories and had a tendency to err on the side of pathology, while others habitually settled for more innocuous disorders.

In practice clinicians often seemed to resort to their 'intuitions'. They glossed this as a seasoned clinician's practiced routine "You just learn to recognise a typical presentation..."; "I've seen a few of those in my time..." etc. What clinicians justified as intuition acquired through long-term practice also manifested as the short-circuiting of complex analytic processes sacrificed for lack of time and resources.²³⁵

²³⁵ Ethnographers studying (health-) organisations often err on the side of respect: They assume that the thinking invested in treatment goes on in discrete spaces and is not necessarily apparent to an outsider. As well they might. Because when clinicians are asked by observers about the rationale of their clinical decisions, these encounters create opportunities otherwise not often available of taking thinking-space and discussing the complexities of treatment. Rather than being taken as representing thought-filled clinical reality, these occasions should be seen as performances effecting a temporary reinvention of harried cog-in-machinery to autonomous and engaged professional. Complex thinking remains usually the domain of

It is plausible that the idea of intuition as clinical competence served as a defense against organisational anxiety generated by the perpetual shortfall of adequate resources necessary for sound clinical work. ‘Clinical intuition’ here perhaps was akin to magical thinking where reality is denied by power of will and imagination.

* * *

Frequently children would be brought in to the clinic who ostensibly suffered from behavioural problems. Families reported that a teacher or someone professionally involved with their child had recommended that the child be assessed.

Family assessments were allocated more time than individual Intakes, as the family was first seen together, then the child on its own, and finally the family again, for a joint discussion of the clinician’s conclusions and further treatment options.

On one occasion a mother presented with her three children, the oldest a boy of about eight, a toddler and a baby.

trainees and students, who bright-eyed and bushy-tailed are eager for new experiences and who may still believe that their motivation and dedication to caring for the patient stands a chance against the system. Lührman (2000) in a wide-ranging study of trainee psychiatrists mines depths of erudition regarding clinical, personal and conceptual attitudes towards psychotherapy and biomedicine. Although the study is set in different psychiatric units with variable access to resources and varied patient demographics – which in turn influence psychiatrists’ attitudes towards and choice of treatment – trainee psychiatrists emerge as uniformly thoughtful, committed and engaged with the philosophy of treatment. These attitudes which seem so integral to patient-care are actively exorcised through the reality of clinical practice, where the ability not to think is equated – and possibly rightly so – with clinical efficiency. When balancing along an abyss, it is wise not to contemplate vertigo. Thoughtfulness is the domain of the idle, eagerness to deliberate a sign of professional uncertainty; the ideal clinician in a setting of strictures is the person of action, in whose deft hands complexities turn into diagnostic codes. Horkheimer and Adorno speak of the regression to undifferentiated states as *‘blindly following pragmatized thought’* and see its consequences as a loss of connectedness to truth („verliert das blindlings pragmatisierte Denken seinen aufhebenen Charakter, und darum auch die Beziehung auf Wahrheit.” Horkheimer, Max und Theodor W. Adorno; 1969/2004:3.) The imperative for pragmatized thought may in fact be seen as a new hegemony disseminated by the compulsory incorporation of economic priority into every domain. Thoughtfulness, such as Lührman encounters, may happen during lunch breaks or in interviews with personable researchers; however it does not, because it cannot, happen in clinical practice.

The eight- year old was to be assessed because the boy's teacher had suggested that he might 'be ADHD'²³⁶. His mother agreed that her son was getting difficult to manage.

I was observing the Intake and so it fell to me to entertain the child. The boy seemed, if anything, precociously mature and inclined to take responsibility for his siblings as well as his mother. He told me that for quite a while he and his little brothers had been staying at different relatives' homes while 'mom was away'.

²³⁶ Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder

DSM-IV

The diagnostic criteria outlined in DSM-IV assume that attention deficits (1) are a distinct, differentiated condition; (2) can be reliably measured using objective, behavioral measures; and (3) are abnormalities resulting from organic/biological origins.^[132]

IA. Six or more of the following signs of inattention have been present for at least 6 months to a point that is disruptive and inappropriate for developmental level:

Inattention:

Often does not give close attention to details or makes careless mistakes in schoolwork, work, or other activities.

Often has trouble keeping attention on tasks or play activities.

Often does not seem to listen when spoken to directly.

Often does not follow instructions and fails to finish schoolwork, chores, or duties in the workplace (not due to oppositional behavior or failure to understand instructions).

Often has trouble organizing activities.

Often avoids, dislikes, or does not want to do things that take a lot of mental effort for a long period of time (such as schoolwork or homework).

Often loses things needed for tasks and activities (such as toys, school assignments, pencils, books, or tools).

Is often easily distracted.

Often forgetful in daily activities.

IB. Six or more of the following signs of hyperactivity-impulsivity have been present for at least 6 months to an extent that is disruptive and inappropriate for developmental level:

Hyperactivity:

Often fidgets with hands or feet or squirms in seat.

Often gets up from seat when remaining in seat is expected.

Often runs about or climbs when and where it is not appropriate (adolescents or adults may feel very restless).

Often has trouble playing or enjoying leisure activities quietly.

Is often "on the go" or often acts as if "driven by a motor".

Often talks excessively.

Impulsiveness:

Often blurts out answers before questions have been finished.

Often has trouble waiting one's turn.

Often interrupts or intrudes on others (example: butts into conversations or games).

II. Some signs that cause impairment were present before age 7 years.

III. Some impairment from the signs is present in two or more settings (such as at school/work and at home).

IV. There must be clear evidence of significant impairment in social, school, or work functioning.

V. The signs do not happen only during the course of a Pervasive Developmental Disorder, Schizophrenia

When sleeping in an unfamiliar place, at night he often felt frightened in the dark. Sometimes he would wake up and not remember where he was. In strange homes he did not always know his way around. In the dark he was not sure if he could find the bathroom when he needed it. Then he could not go back to sleep, because he was anxious that he would wet the bed. One relative had a dog that the child found very scary. When he stayed at that house he did not dare to get up at all because of his fear that the big dog was there, waiting for him in the dark.

Boris, the social-worker interviewed the mother at length, and then took some time with the child alone. He had, as he later told me, ‘not bought’ the mother’s version that the boy was the sole source of the family’s problems. The mother eventually disclosed that she and her partner were binge-drinkers and currently ‘going through a phase’.

They would accommodate their children with whoever was willing to look after them while they travelled to border-towns on drinking sprees. The boy had indeed taken on the responsibility of looking after his younger siblings. All the children had been a bit unsettled, maybe because ‘of the travelling around’. Mother insisted however that her son had recently been ‘a lot of trouble’. She had found it really difficult to manage him. The teacher had said that this was probably because her son had ADHD. The boy hadn’t been doing too well at school either.

Boris concluded the interview and completed the paperwork. He told the family that they were to see the psychiatrist. After mother and children had left the office, I asked Boris if he thought that the boy had ADHD.²³⁷

“No”, Boris answered roundly.

“So, what have you put in his file?”

“ADHD”

²³⁷ I had spent a long time with the boy, we had talked and played and I had shown him round the Clinic, and at no point had I gotten any inkling of an impression that there was any ‘deficit’ to the boy’s capacity of ‘attention’. Everything he had told me about his present life made it plausible that his behaviour would be disturbed and his school-work compromised.

“But why, if you don’t really believe he has it?”

“Well, his mother was really insisting that he has ADHD, and besides I’m sending him on to Dr Brownstone. He’s the psychiatrist, it’s his call. He can make that decision.”

Dr Brownstone was an affable colleague who accepted clinicians’ diagnoses with unquestioning routine and who did what was seen as a psychiatrist’s primary task: prescribe medication. When I later looked up the boy’s file, I found a diagnosis of ADHD- and a prescription.

Whether ADHD really constitutes an easily reversible diagnosis, as clinicians so often claimed about the diagnostic process, is debatable. Patients will have been on medication over weeks or months by the time they attend (if at all), a follow-up appointment. If no adverse side-effects or a worsening of behaviour are reported, then there is no need for the diagnosis to be reviewed. That there is no observable deterioration in the child’s condition does however not necessarily indicate that no adverse effects exist. It merely confirms belief in the efficacy of medication.

The diagnosis of young children with ADHD, as in the case above, was a common enough occurrence. Children’s teachers were frequently involved in referrals. The high numbers of ADHD assessments were probably linked to the wider political context of the education system, as much as they reflected on children’s behavioural difficulties.

The No Child Left Behind Act²³⁸ had according to some teachers²³⁹ made the educators’ lot that much harder. Particularly in inadequately funded schools in economically deprived and culturally marginalised areas teachers were faced with a student population needing considerable remedial help to achieve the national educational standard.

²³⁸ No Child Left Behind Act (2001), passed under George W. Bush, implements a yearly standardised test in public schools to monitor teaching and education standards nation-wide. The Act targets schools in disadvantaged areas with low standards of educational achievement.

²³⁹ After the case of the boy that was diagnosed with ADHD I followed up this issue in the Clinic and outside. I met a number of people, teachers, relatives, carers who queried their child’s ADHD diagnosis. The teachers I spoke to thought that the proliferation of mental health diagnoses of disruptive children had more to do with the strained education system than being a reflection on the mental health of children. But these teachers also thought that some good could come out of these diagnoses: there would be additional help and attention for the kids; and implicitly they believed, as did clinicians, that diagnoses were temporary and did not have that much impact.

The 'No Child Left Behind Act' created a system that works through sanctions. Schools and teachers who fail to succeed in 'leaving no child behind' are penalized. Any child needing special attention is literally a mill-stone round the educational establishment's neck, potentially causing the whole class to sink. A diagnosis of ADHD or another disorder hindering educational progress however reclassifies academic failure as 'special needs'. 'Special needs students' secure additional funding and classroom assistance, instead of bringing about the negative appraisal of the school.

Well-intentioned policies so may have unintended negative effects. In this case the negative effects are borne by children who need extra attention and who are found by an overstretched education system to be too 'difficult' to manage. Referrals to mental health services and 'requests' for diagnoses can be understood as schools' attempts to recruit auxiliary external help, as much as they constitute statements regarding children's competence. None of the parties involved- teachers, parents, social-workers or psychiatrists- should be accused of pursuing wrongful diagnoses intentionally. It is understandable if an overworked, pressurised teacher experiences a student who needs more than a modicum of the attention available as severely disturbed and in all sincerity believes that such a diagnosis will be helpful to child and family. So the child is referred for a mental health assessment to services that are similarly overstretched and staffed with over-worked professionals.

These inter-agency referrals are a cyclical recycling of hope: hope that comes alive in the transitional 'inter-space' between referrals to the next agency, authority or expert; a hothouse space where expectations of effective and conclusive help are allowed to blossom- albeit briefly- away from the wintry chill of practice-reality. What keeps the cycle alive is a- perhaps envious- fantasy of other agencies operating under more privileged conditions and so being better equipped to provide effective interventions.

In the above case of clinician 'passing the diagnostic buck' to psychiatrist, it is a case of social-worker finding himself caught between agents. Squeezed by organisational constraints, but eager

to be helpful, he obliges. Like the Intake diagnosis that can be reviewed ‘at every visit’, Boris sees his diagnosis as temporary- hopefully as temporary as is the walk along the corridor from his office to Dr Brownstone’s. Dr. Brownstone with his psychiatric expertise will take no time at all to see that the child is not ADHD and will revoke the diagnosis.

Perhaps there is a tinge of ‘Schadenfreude’ to Boris’ ‘he’s the psychiatrist, he can make that decision”. Let the man work for his salary. Let him confront the dilemma and make that choice. The comment also implies that Boris does not feel that he has made a decision. He has simply made a non-binding proposal with the primary goal of pacifying the young patient’s mother. It is understandable that Boris transfers his responsibility to the next level of authority, Dr Brownstone, who in turn, relying on Boris’ clinical judgement, ‘signs off’ the diagnosis and issues a prescription. In this system the patient is a pinball in the organisational machinery perpetually ricocheting between agents and agencies.²⁴⁰

But while in terms of institutional dynamics it may be plausible that the diagnostic process follows bureaucratic stricture and organisational pressure, it is indisputable that in this instance the DSM-IV diagnostic guidelines were not adhered to. Boris himself was quite open about the fact that he had made a diagnosis that he did not believe to be correct. In terms of the ‘bare bones’ of ethical practice this case constitutes clinical misconduct or at least clinical neglect. Implicitly it also makes the DSM as reference for authoritative information redundant: Here DSM tools were used in a way that the manual explicitly cautions against.

Boris presents his decision in a pragmatic light. He believes the duration of the diagnosis will be time-limited, and therefore of negligible impact. Boris sees what he wrote on his referral to Dr Brownstone less as a diagnosis than as a suggestion to be overruled by an authority higher up in

²⁴⁰ Similar cases recur routinely and should not be dismissed as isolated aberrations. I would like readers to consider this study as an ethnography of resource-strapped and fragmented organisations rather than a culture-specific study. Apart from nominal differences in the policies that direct them, I have encountered similar dynamics in UK organisations. And whereas there are new easy remedies and strategies to deal with either scant resources or fragmented organisations, it is the unconsciously adopted flight into salvation fantasies and magical remedies that these types of diagnoses constitute that should be urgently noted.

the institutional hierarchy. It is likely that this calculation has been made on the basis of experiences that have taught clinicians to regard their own judgments as supplementary to clinical procedure rather than fundamental to it.²⁴¹

Whatever dynamics, pressures, paradigms and historical processes have conspired to create this particular clinical mentality, one should not ignore that the system voraciously creates its victims in the form of the many children who are medicated as a consequence of inaccurate diagnoses.

The question whether medication prescribed to children should be considered as ‘gateway drugs’ is part of a discourse around the controversy of ADHD diagnosis. Assuming that children have been correctly diagnosed with ADHD, it may be complicated to determine whether illicit drug use in later life is principally linked to their pre-existing disorder, or has been stimulated by previous habituation to prescribed drugs.

But what of those children who are wrongly diagnosed? In cases of misdiagnosis as with Boris’ young patient, the pressured health-service rarely stretches to diagnostic reviews. Children’s diagnoses are carried over until they are taken off medication in adolescence. The longitudinal effects on patients are difficult to determine. There is, understandably, no category in medical data-bases for ‘misdiagnosed.’

* * *

The DSM²⁴² was a project that emerged out of the medical establishment’s attempt to collate diversified references to occurring symptoms and diseases under a unified code. The project gathered momentum after WWII when troops returned from the war as patients with a variety of

²⁴¹ Perhaps it is noteworthy that Boris is the individual who once told me about Navajo disinvesting themselves of responsibility and initiative when in the 19th century the tribe agreed to a truce with the Federal army and surrendered to Carson’s Long Walk to Bosque Redondo. With this capitulation the Navajo simultaneously gave up fending for themselves and wholly submitted to the White Man’s dictate and charity, a position, Boris said, that endures to this day.

²⁴² Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders

‘mental disorders’. The international dialogue between representatives of national medical establishments trying to decide on a cohesive inventory of diseases eventually led to the publishing of the ICD- the ‘International Classification of Diseases’ - by the World Health Organisation. The ‘American Psychiatric Association Committee on Nomenclature and Statistics’ developed an addendum to the ICD which focused on ‘Mental Disorders’, published as the DSM-I in 1952.

The DSM has since been revised five times (the DSM-5 is due for publication in 2013), to accommodate as the American Psychiatric Association states on its web-site, “many advances in diagnostic methodology.”²⁴³

The “DSM-III introduced a number of important methodological innovations, including explicit diagnostic criteria, a multi-axial system, and a descriptive approach that attempted to be neutral with respect to theories of etiology”²⁴⁴, while revisions for the DSM-5 whose publishing is underway “involved conducting a comprehensive review of the literature to establish a firm empirical basis for making modifications”.²⁴⁵

These revisions and the APA’s assertion of continuous commitment to improvement may be read as conceding that the DSM’s conceptual outlook is to a degree paradigmatic. Admission to the DSM’s theoretical limitations however remains confined to the APA website. In practice the DSM takes on a cloak of immutable authority; reference to it legitimises professional judgement and cements clinical opinion.

The DSM is not only responsive to paradigmatic shifts, it also creates them. The DSM has advanced the ‘medicalization of emotions’ whereby states formerly accepted as an inevitable part of the ‘human condition’ now are perceived as pathological. This presents a ‘cultural turn’ where

²⁴³ <http://www.psychiatry.org/practice/dsm/dsm-history-of-the-manual>

²⁴⁴ *ibid*

²⁴⁵ *ibid*

medical progress offers a mirage of enhanced human prowess, resilient and unencumbered by vulnerability.²⁴⁶

Horwitz et al argue²⁴⁷ that sadness, for example, is no longer regarded as a normal, inevitable part of the human experience, but is perceived as a 'disorder'. When sadness however becomes depressive disorder that can- or rather must- be treated, then it becomes unendurable. Why bear something that can be remedied?

But with the advent of the remedy, the meaning of sadness; the respite that temporary states of sadness, discontent, low mood offer; the opportunity for 'time-out' and reconsideration of one's state of life and operative values; the chance 'to recalibrate'; are lost.

When the once potentially productive state of melancholy is declared as dysfunctional, with it the sufferer's autonomy is diminished and medical professionals and the pharmaceutical industry become the only instances that are deemed competent to offer cures.

The DSM so has made itself into a tool in the service of the pharmaceutical industry, for whom the transformation of emotional difficulties into diagnostic categories has been hugely profitable.

The banishing of sadness from everyday life, its quasi-stigmatisation is a phenomenon of potentially far-reaching effect: In the clinical context rash diagnosis and the quest for rapid interventions reflect the scarcity of contemplative space afforded to clinicians, who are beholden to a system that equates speed of action with depth of skill.

Efficacy in clinical terms is the opposite of taking time. The level of qualification makes time-consuming thoroughness redundant: The emphasis on efficacy in clinical practice parallels the curtailing of the 'psychic' processing of emotions by prescribing medication.

In both cases operative realities are denied: The glossing of plausible reactions to relational, social and economic hardships as disorders is reflected in treatment trajectories required of

²⁴⁶ This is not to deny the existence of either 'disorder' or minimise the seriousness of depressive illness. This commentary focuses on the phenomenon of broadening the definition of disorder observable in contemporary clinical perspectives and practice.

²⁴⁷ Horwitz and Wakefield; 2007; Horwitz; 2002

clinicians, that conceive of disorders being located between ‘cause’ and ‘outcome’ and treatment efficacy as established by quantifiable ‘evidence.’

The loss of sadness in clinical practice is a process of disenchantment.

In the taking away of meaning from sadness we detect a contemporary version of what was to Tolstoy the question of the significance of death for civilized man.²⁴⁸

For civilised man driven by the spectre of progress death is meaningless because it presents not the finality of life, but merely the disruption of a trajectory of possible achievement. Death for modern man is a nuisance interruption in the grander scheme of progress where every achievement is surpassable.²⁴⁹

Weber remains characteristically ambiguous on whether disenchantment for modern man represents loss or enhancement of vision. In the same way it is difficult to determine whether the use of psychotropic medication for ‘normal’ psychic phenomena constitutes a far-reaching visionary project aspiring to enhance human resilience, or is essentially ‘de-spiriting’, a futile attempt to stem the inexorable processes that attests to our ultimate mortality.

* * *

²⁴⁸ Kaesler; Dirk ed. Max Weber Schriften 1894 – 1922 Alfred Kröner Verlag Stuttgart 2002
<http://www.wsp-kultur.uni-bremen.de/summerschool/download%20ss%202006/Max%20Weber%20-%20Wissenschaft%20als%20Beruf.pdf>

²⁴⁹ As cited by Weber: “...ob der Tod eine sinnvolle Erscheinung sei oder nicht. Und die Antwort lautet bei ihm: für den Kulturmenschen – nein. Und zwar deshalb nicht, weil ja das zivilisierte, in den »Fortschritt«, in das Unendliche hineingestellte einzelne Leben seinem eigenen immanenten Sinn nach kein Ende haben dürfte. Denn es liegt ja immer noch ein weiterer Fortschritt vor dem, der darin steht; niemand, der stirbt, steht auf der Höhe, welche in der Unendlichkeit liegt. Abraham oder irgendein Bauer der alten Zeit starb »alt und lebensgesättigt«, weil er im organischen Kreislauf des Lebens stand, weil sein Leben auch seinem Sinn nach ihm am Abend seiner Tage gebracht hatte, was es bieten konnte, weil für ihn keine Rätsel, die er zu lösen wünschte, übrig blieben und er deshalb »genug« daran haben konnte. Ein Kulturmensch aber, hineingestellt in die fortwährende Anreicherung der Zivilisation mit Gedanken, Wissen, Problemen, der kann »lebensmüde« werden, aber nicht: lebensgesättigt. Denn er erhascht von dem, was das Leben des Geistes stets neu gebiert, ja nur den winzigsten Teil, und immer nur etwas Vorläufiges, nichts Endgültiges, und deshalb ist der Tod für ihn eine sinnlose Begebenheit. Und weil der Todsinnlos ist, ist es auch das Kulturleben als solches, welches ja eben durch seine sinnlose »Fortschrittlichkeit« den Tod zur Sinnlosigkeit stempelt.”
Ibid.

At the Hózhóni clinicians professed that they preferred documents that mediated a minimum of ambiguity, and tools that generated clinical certainty. They praised the quality of templates that provided straightforward guidance through particular processes. Ideally these documents reduced the amount of decision-making required in the course of clinical work and facilitated a smooth completion of tasks.

The Mental Status Examination²⁵⁰ (MSE) fell into such a category and was by Hózhóni clinicians considered an important and valuable part of the diagnostic process.

²⁵⁰ MENTAL STATUS EXAMINATION

APPEARANCE: The patient appears to be the stated age (younger than the stated age; older than the stated age; emaciated; frail; ill at ease; obese; poised). The patient presented with dress and grooming that was appropriate (bizarre; inappropriate; meticulous; neat and clean; unkempt; well groomed; dishevelled). Eye contact can be described as good (averting eye contact; eyes frequently closed; fair; vacantly gazing; poor; staring at the examiner).

MOOD: Affect is appropriate (bland; blunted; constricted flat; inappropriate; intense, labile; restricted in range; lethargic; stuporous; unresponsive). Mood is euthymic (anxious, cheerful, depressed, elated; elevated; empty; euphoric; expansive; fearful; irritable, panicky). Psychomotor activity can be characterized by normal movements and activity level (difficulty remaining seated; fidgetiness, hyperactivity; psychomotor agitation; psychomotor retardation; restlessness; slowed reaction times; squirming; tics; tremor).

SENSORIUM: The patient is well oriented in three spheres (not oriented for person; not oriented for person and place; not oriented for person, place and time; not oriented for place; not oriented for time; not oriented for time and person; not oriented for time and place). Regarding level of consciousness the patient is alert (drowsy, hyperalert). Speech was logical and coherent (animated; characterized by blocking; characterized by flight of ideas; characterized by loosening associations; disorganized; excessive; halting; hesitant; incoherent and illogical; laconic; loud; minimal; preservative; pressured; rapid; slowed; sparse; spontaneous; tangential; terse; unresponsive). Recent memory appears unimpaired (mildly impaired; severely impaired). Remote memory appears unimpaired (mildly impaired; severely impaired).

COGNITIVE FUNCTION: Regarding conceptual disorganization there was none evident (it appeared to be mild; it appeared to be moderate; it appeared negligible; it seemed severe). Thought content is characterized by no significant preoccupations (homicidal ideation; delusional thinking; hypochondriacal symptoms; ideas of reference; obsessions, phobias, preoccupation with external stressors; preoccupation with illness; suicidal ideation). Regarding perceptual functioning the patient denies hallucinations and none are evidenced (reflects depersonalization; reflects derealisation; experiences déjà vu; experiences illusions; reports hallucinations).

ATTENTION, FOCUS & IMPULSE CONTROL: Attention and concentration are characterized by the ability to attend and maintain focus (difficulty ignoring irrelevant stimuli; distractibility; poor attention span). Regarding impulse control, the patient is reflective and able to resist urges (is overly controlled and restrained; acts without considering alternatives; is volatile and unpredictable; seeks immediate gratification of urges; shows poor frustration tolerance; shows poor planning).

JUDGMENT & INSIGHT: As far as insight is concerned the patient shows awareness of problems, consequences and causes (awareness of problems but blames physical reasons; awareness of problems but blames others; awareness of problems but not causes; complete denial of problems; partial awareness of problems). Judgment is good (fair; poor).

The MSE is a systematic inventory of patient mental functioning as manifested in presentation and behaviour. Dr Brownstone, the psychiatrist had an interest in computer programming and had converted the MSE into a 'Word' template which clinicians could complete via pull-down menu-fields.

Under the rubric '*Appearance*' for instance there would be: "The patient appears to *be the stated age*" with the options: "*younger than the stated age; older than the stated age; emaciated; frail; ill at ease; obese; poised*" listed in the pull-down menu.

Clinicians were fulsome in their appreciation of Dr Brownstone, whose template enabled them to negotiate the previously awkward MSE in record time. The MSE functioned as a kind of documentary insurance against negligent process. Clinicians felt that because the MSE forced them to (re-) consider every aspect of a patient's presentation, it minimised the risk of 'overlooking' a serious issue. The MSE to clinicians combined user-friendliness with methodical thoroughness.

At cursory examination the MSE consisted of an inventory of quasi subjective judgements:

In terms of 'Appearance' what constitutes '*bizarre*' and what is '*poised*'? Is '*fidgetiness*' during a Mental Status Examination always indicative of mental health problems?

When is eye-contact '*good*' and when is it '*staring at the examiner*' or '*staring vacantly*'?

Eye-contact, not to forget, must be assessed in a culture that according to the organisation's own 'cross-cultural' advice to professionals tends to eschew it.

Is '*good eye-contact*' in a Navajo consequently a sign of disorder in that it contravenes normative behaviour? The Mental Health Specialists being Navajo would presumably be able to distinguish conventional from disordered behaviour. But what of the locum psychiatrists? Would they be prone to mistake shy reticence for flat affect- an error often made by visitors to the Reservation? Like the DSM-IV the MSE had been adapted to clinicians' needs shaped by the imperative of a clinical protocol which primarily served to limit liability.

In practice this amounted to sticking to the protocol while simultaneously contravening it: everything on record was followed to the letter, but the implicit guidelines not incorporated into the protocol could be ignored.

Like the DSM, the MSE advises cautious use. ‘Considerable skill’ is necessary to accurately assess patients’ mental functioning. Questioning should be thorough and circumspect, observations meticulous in attention to detail and ‘objectivity’ must be maintained at all times. According to my observations most clinicians completed the MSE as an inventory of recollected impressions.

Dr Brownstone’s time-saving template had made it possible for clinicians to short-circuit the protocol. The priority in clinical practice is to be seen to be doing the right thing rather than actually doing it right. In terms of bureaucratic process it is irrelevant by what method a required piece of documentation is produced, providing that it can be authenticated.

Clinical attitudes so draw on a peculiar melange of strategic opportunism and denial of the precarious proximity to crisis.

* * *

PART V

“CYA”

The impression of strategic opportunism in clinical practice was borne out in an emergency assessment that I was asked to carry out. One day when I was on Intake duty Gaby, the receptionist called me shortly before closing time to assess a patient who had just come in. Normally the patient would have been asked to return early the next day, but the experienced Gaby thought that this lady could not wait and should be seen urgently: “She’s saying she wants to kill herself and she looks serious about it. I think she’s in a real bad state.”

As a volunteer I did not feel particularly confident at being left, after hours, alone with a patient who was at risk, and who would quite likely require the attention of a psychiatrist.

Also my confidence had been undermined by the frequent mentioning of ‘Tort-laws’ which had paved the way for civil lawsuits in cases of medical malpractice. The medical establishment blamed Tort-laws for the increasing risk that medical professionals faced from a trigger-happy litigious populace. How tort claims could be procedurally minimised or prevented was an important strategic focus of the clinical management.

Eager to pass on the responsibility I waylaid Dr Cardigan, the clinical director, who was on his way to catch the Appleton commuter-shuttle, and tried to persuade him that it might be safer if he took on the assessment.

But Dr Cardigan said that the assessment shouldn’t be a problem. He suggested setting up a contract with the patient. “A contract?” I enquired uncertainly. “A contract” confirmed Dr Cardigan: I was to present the patient with a document which stipulated that she agreed to keep herself safe and that in the case she felt at risk she would promise to contact the Health Center’s Emergency Services (contact details provided) or present at the A & E. The patient was to sign this document.

The question whether it was wise to trust a suicidal patient's signature so implicitly occurred to me - after all what is a signed contract in the face of eternity?

But Dr Cardigan had already vanished in pursuit of his ride, having called a cheery "don't worry" over his shoulder.

In the event the patient quite happily signed the statement after an extended assessment- and counselling session.²⁵¹ She left saying that she felt much better now and would keep herself safe. Indeed she seemed much more contained than she had at the beginning of our meeting. My unease regarding what I felt a peculiarly inappropriate approach of coercing a potentially suicidal patient to collude in strategic bureaucracy apparently was not shared by the patient.

She had seemed neither curious nor fazed by the document I produced for her to sign. Maybe this woman, a mother and grandmother in crisis, over-burdened by responsibility, had been appreciative of an environment that, for once, granted her primacy.

She had been given space to herself, she had been listened to, and she had been the recipient of a concern that she otherwise had to incessantly show her dependents. Perhaps that had been good enough. Perhaps the appointment had functioned as- albeit brief- respite care, a time-out from demands made on her, where she could for a while feel supported rather than being the supporter. Expressing suicidality here may have been necessary to make clear to us just how overwhelmed she was feeling.

Contrary to my misgivings my patient did not seem alienated by the bureaucratic protocol.

Thinking about the situation later, once the fog of crisis had cleared, it occurred to me that she had perhaps understood the document to present a reassurance that there were services available to support her and look after her, if she happened to reach the end of her tether.

²⁵¹ As it was after hours and the time my own I was at liberty to take as long as I felt was needed (which in this case was considerably longer than the usual Intake time)

Quite unplanned, bureaucratic strategy and patient support here had converged in a common cause: What had been undertaken principally as a strategy minimising clinical liability had been accepted by the patient as a safety-net.

If nothing else this taught me that a situation is constructed out of diverse perspectives: Just because clinical process may be flawed, does not mean that it cannot be helpful to the patient. In terms of clinical procedure this assessment was a ‘mission accomplished’ and -most importantly- I had the *paperwork* to prove it.

During the next team meeting I mentioned the case and the difficulties it had presented. Such crisis presentations were apparently frequent enough that a number of colleagues kept pre-typed ‘Safety Agreements’ for suicidal patients on file.

When I asked if ‘Safety Agreements’ were not something of a paradox, John, an older clinician responded: “It’s CYA, you know.” The team nodded in unison. “CYA?” I asked, and thought: another acronym to learn, another convoluted procedure to understand...

“Cover Your Ass” said Boris helpfully.

The cynicism ‘CYA’ implied and what I took as the shamelessness in accommodating this cynicism corporeally initially staggered me. The uninhibited use of the CYA acronym seemed to establish that staff’s professional liability were prioritised over patient welfare. CYA casually factored in clinical negligence, malpractice or the adverse impact of treatment on patients. John’s applying CYA to the strategic dispensing of ‘Safety Agreements’ confirmed what I had felt when Dr Cardigan suggested the ‘contract’, namely that the patient was being involved in a process that was designed to serve me rather than her.

Reconsidering my impressions later, I wondered if the cynicism should not be understood as a defence against the constant anxiety confronting Clinic staff.

As I had found myself, the CYA imperative focused the mind wonderfully. It instilled diagnostic procedure with a linear quest, instead of making it prey to the chaos of a disquieted mind. And it is conceivable that the CYA so helped to contain the patient.

* * *

Menzies, a psychoanalyst, writes about an attitude of somewhat disconcerting robustness, if not insensitivity among hospital nurses.²⁵²

Menzies understands this attitude as a part of strategies that help to “avoid the experience of anxiety, guilt, doubt, and uncertainty. As far as possible this can be done by eliminating situations, tasks, activities, and relationships that cause anxiety or, more correctly, evoke anxieties connected with primitive psychological remnants of the personality”.²⁵³

Hospital nurses, like mental health workers, are confronted day-in and day-out with inevitable suffering and morbidity. Some suffering may be alleviated or eliminated, but the reality of nursing, writes Menzies, is impotence and powerlessness, exacerbated by nurses’ position in the medical hierarchy.

Most of all it is the perpetual loss (of patients), the erosion of omnipotence these losses manifest, the guilt about not being able to save patients, that must be defended against.

Menzies glosses these mechanisms as “psychic defences” embedded in “social defence systems”. It is not institutions that operate defences but individuals, whose “behaviour is the link between their psychic defences and the institution.”

In these terms CYA may be understood as both procedural and as a defence against the clinical reality of helplessness. ‘Cover Your Ass’ is defiance that contains an admission of the inadequacy to help and heal: ‘While I may not be able to heal you, I can at least protect myself’.

To contemplate clinical situations purely from clinicians’ points of view however is to create false dichotomies between clinicians as agents and patients as objects.

It would be more accurate to acknowledge that patients too have agency, albeit that their agency may not register if viewed purely in structural terms of power-relationships. Inequities of power-

²⁵² Menzies;1961

²⁵³ Ibid.:17

distribution doubtless are significant, but the impact of patients' drives and defences on institutional dynamics should not be overlooked:

“...each purposive organism will have created an order for itself by selecting a set of possible relations between possible things in the world (...), still its world will tend towards entropy because any number of other possible permutations of relations are likely to occur to it in future. Order and pattern in the world are eaten up by the organism shuffling and recombining the relations between components of circuits...”²⁵⁴

* * *

²⁵⁴ Rapport & Overing; 2000 :109

PART VI
MEDICATION / SALVATION

To claim that diagnosis was the exclusive realm of clinicians would be inaccurate. The pharmaceutical industry in the United States has a strong presence throughout the media and popular culture. Its advertisements provide people with information encouraging them to become their own diagnosticians, and by extension unpaid advocates for its products. The pharmaceutical industry has been instrumental in shrinking the perception of what is considered a ‘normal state of health’ and has managed to expand perception of what is pathological: Blood-pressure, blood-sugar, cholesterol-levels, bone-density and mood all have been subject to reviews that have nudged the standard of ‘normal’ health towards an ‘ideal’ health.

Whereas the ‘normal’ state of health once thought of as ‘good enough’ may have seemed maintainable or attainable to a majority, the ‘ideal’ is unachievable to most.

To achieve a state of ‘ideal health’ requires the support of science. Pharmaceutical advertisements promote an essentially aspirational outlook on the body as capital investment with health as the dividend. Pharmaceutical ads usually begin by detailing complaints and conditions that are generally perceived as common and innocuous, although prospective patients (the viewers), are soon made to realise that the conditions being described here may very well indicate serious pathologies. Few viewers of pharmaceutical advertisements will never have felt sleepy, listless, moody, had joint-pain or experienced headaches and dizziness. Now they are alerted that these very symptoms may be reasons for concern. If viewers find they suffer from any of the exhaustive list of symptoms mentioned they are advised to approach their medical care provider and: “ask your doctor if ‘Morfidronox’ can help YOU”.

At the Hózhóní Clinic quite a few clients followed the pharmaceutical industries’ advice and came in with a pre-formulated self-diagnosis and suggestions for medication.

“I think I am bi-polar. I saw this ad and all the symptoms they were mentioning I have. It makes real sense to me now how I’ve been feeling all these years. My wife always asks: what is wrong with you? Because of my mood-swings.”²⁵⁵

The patient presenting with a preliminary self-diagnosis of bi-polar disorder had come, as instructed in the TV ad, to “discuss ‘Equilibrix’ with the doctor”: “I feel it can help me”. He had recognised in himself many of the symptoms listed: listlessness; difficulties sleeping; difficulties concentrating: “And my wife complains I’m real moody.”

During the assessment the patient disclosed - delivered in a concise and coherent narrative - a history of difficult, not to say traumatic experiences, separations, losses, bereavements, destitution that would have likely left their marks.

He had been educated in a particularly harsh boarding-school; bullied by his peers; he was the offspring of a notoriously dysfunctional family; he had had a number of bereavements; he was unhappy in his employment; his financial situation was precarious; a close relative had been diagnosed with a terminal disease. The patient deemed further exploration of the causes of his present ‘mental status’ superfluous, now that he had found out what was wrong with him.

Why waste time on introspection, when help can be had so easily? The man was quite fixated on having his self-diagnosis confirmed, and although I did not share his conviction, it was quite clear why he wanted it confirmed: Having a diagnosis not only offered a plausible explanation for moods, irritations and aberrant behaviour; more importantly it offered a simple, accessible solution in form of medication. Who would not think that the banishing of the accumulated difficulties of a life-time by swallowing a little pill is anything less than magic? And here I came to quite understand the clinician Boris, who had bowed to a mother’s desire to have her little boy diagnosed with ADHD. After all, resources are limited; time is short and when people come to you knowing what they want, why stand in their way?

* * *

²⁵⁵ Patient during Intake Interview

In fact clinicians did make decisions as to which patients' demands they acquiesced to, and which patients' wishes they resisted on a near daily basis. These decisions were made, as were many others, according to intuition, a professionally acquired 'gut-feeling' which alerted clinicians to who wanted medication for the 'right reasons' to help with a particular symptom; or the 'wrong reasons' to feed their habit to prescription medication, to supplement their consumption of illicit drugs, or to substitute the consumption of illicit drugs through legal substances.

According to clinicians there were 'deserving' and 'undeserving' consumers of medication and most seemed to feel strongly that it was their duty to function as gatekeepers in separating legitimate patients from those in search of 'prescription-highs'.

Systemically viewed the tendency of inverting supply and demand (that is supplying those who didn't ask for medication, while withholding it from those who demanded it), created something of a paradoxical situation where the majority of 'deserving' patients departed well-supplied with unsolicited prescriptions, while patients who wanted medication- the undeserving with suspected dependency issues- were given it reluctantly or not given it at all.²⁵⁶

It is conceivable that a few months hence, those clients with newly prescribed medication would return as patients now accustomed to and demanding (more) medication.

An easy way to distinguish one from the other was to establish whether patients had a history of alcohol- or substance- misuse. If this was confirmed it was seen as more likely that patients had come to the Clinic in pursuit of prescriptions.

Past histories of substance misuse made it more likely that patients' wishes- if they happened to include medication- would be resisted by staff.

²⁵⁶ It should also be stated in all fairness, that trying to 'catch out' patients was not a prerogative to this particular setting but most clinical staff need to defend against the suspicion that they are occasionally being *played for suckers* by patients. Particularly in the work with adolescents a certain frisson emerges through the testing of the limitations of staff omniscience, and in that particular milieu a well-timed challenge or a rightfully substantiated suspicion can actually help to solidify a therapeutic alliance.

The implicit principle was never to trust a ‘user’s’ stated motives (as in wanting to get clean, off drugs, withdraw), as their primary intention was always to wheedle a prescription out of clinicians.

Staff eagerness to bestow medication on ‘good’ patients stood in striking contrast to harshly suspicious attitudes towards ‘users’.

With ‘good’ patients it seemed that clinicians at times felt that what they could do to help was not enough. I observed a number of clinicians for whom the mention of medication seemed to function as the crescendo of an intervention. The more tragic patients’ experiences, the more likely it was that they would be offered medication.

With ‘user’ patients there was an operative game of cat and mouse, where clinicians tried to catch out the undeserving at fibbing. Patients would be interrogated, much in a style that I imagined may have been characteristic of residential school matrons.

When I brought the case of a young man with self-reported alcoholism and a record of the most extreme felonies to the team, staff’s main concerns were: “Why is he coming here now?” “What is he hiding?” “What does he want?”

My willingness to take at face value the patient’s narrative of an episodically recurring attempt to straighten himself out, brought about by being fed up with the strain that ruled a drinker’s everyday life; the crass mutual exploitation operative in his network of drinking buddies; a disintegrating relationship; his family’s constant disappointment in him etc. etc.; was seen as naïve by my colleagues.

The team felt that it was most likely that the patient had committed another crime and was now in an advance move trying to establish credentials for himself as an individual eager to reform.²⁵⁷

²⁵⁷ It may have been that on an unconscious level I shared some of staff’s concerns: This young man’s history was one of chaos and destruction that stood in stark contrast to his competent, eloquent and self-analytic presentation. According to his narrative he had through the many spells he had spent in corrective institutions, always been afforded another chance, or special treatment, but had inevitably ‘blown it’ in the end.

Clinicians' suspicions regarding patients' motivations at times was realistic:

One of my first 'solo-conducted' assessments was of a man who told me he had fallen off the wagon after years of sobriety. This had come about because some work-colleagues had pressured him into taking a drink with them.

Since 'falling off' he had imbibed non-stop for weeks. Now he was trying to sober up, and it was taking a terrible toll on him. He couldn't sleep, he felt anxious, restless, depressed, his appetite was diminished....

With a background of strictly non-medicalised psychoanalytic enquiry, I was, it seems, slow in the uptake. I listened sympathetically to the battery of withdrawal symptoms he was describing whilst intermittently trying to apply a spot of Motivational Interviewing to help buoy his resolve to maintain sobriety. The patient kept returning to the theme of withdrawal symptoms that plagued him:

"And" he said finally, exasperated "I have the DTs!"

Intrigued, I asked whether he had any hallucinations to report.

"Yes, I do see things." he said.

"What do you see?"

"Little furry animals."

"Are you seeing some now?"

"Yes" he answered, without much emphasis, pointing to the right of my chair:

"There's one sitting right by you."²⁵⁸

* * *

²⁵⁸ At that point even I, the rookie, started to feel he could have endeavoured to be a bit more convincing.

Clinicians acting as detectives, or ‘headmasters’ spotting patients’ concealed motivations and challenging suspected or attempted manipulations of the system, occurred fairly frequently. Patients’ accounts often did not seem to be taken at face value, depending on what was known about their background.²⁵⁹

Clinicians’ ‘clinical doubt’ was a multi-causal phenomenon propelled as much by the realistic assessment of some patients’ motivations, as by clinicians’ own experiences with intrusive authorities.

This was added to by a conservative social ideation that many clinicians subscribed to regarding the differentiation between the deserving and the productive; and the parasitic and the malingering.

Clinicians so made themselves into agents of social control. Curbing the appetites of addicts- by withholding medication may have been one of the few domains for autonomous clinical decisions left to staff. The prospect of ‘catching out a user’ and ‘foiling his game’ seemed to enliven and engage some clinicians. Sometimes this attitude seemed authoritarian and controlling, at others paternalistic and protective

On occasion there was in the vigilance of staff a subtext of gleefully inhabited authority, a relishing of the position of corrective power that seemed to be drawing on earlier experiences that staff may have undergone themselves.

A harsh super-ego persona emerged in those inhabiting official roles, and it may be that it reflects an impression projected by the colonial project’s authorities as omnipotent and omniscient powers from which their ‘subjects’ could not escape. This voracious inhabiting of authority

²⁵⁹ This background knowledge did not necessarily emerge from medical files, but from extra-clinical knowledge that members of staff had of individuals, their relations or communities. On occasion an extended family was glossed as problematic, with the patient ‘typical’ of their ilk. The net here was cast wide, with staff referring to individuals or events a hundred miles or more across the Reservation. The bricolage of knowledge regarding patients may either be seen as gossip or alternatively as family-case-conferences, or perhaps a bit of both. While contributions of details on patients garnered outside the clinical framework at times seemed somewhat intrusive and judgemental (to a clinician used to working in anonymous urban contexts), they could equally be helpful in constructing a more comprehensive and complete impression of the presenting individual.

represented a variation of what has been called ‘identification with the aggressor’²⁶⁰ - an aspirational identification with authority.

Considering however that substances and alcohol are imports from the White Man’s culture, part of his destructive impact on Native communities, it is conceivable that clinicians perceived themselves as gatekeepers and guardians protecting ‘their’ people from coming to further harm. Perhaps they felt that it was in protecting substance-users from following their addiction that they were doing true service for the community: helping to turn patients away from the White Man’s way which they themselves had to adhere to in the form of bureaucratic process and clinical protocol.

There was very little ambiguity regarding the community’s position vis-à-vis drinking and using drugs: It was a bad thing that not only damaged individuals but also their communities. In contrast to many of the mental ‘disorders’ conceptualised by the dominant society, ‘addiction’ and alcoholism were ‘real issues’ in Native communities, issues that demanded the valiant engagement of the whole community to combat them successfully.

And like the Health Center itself, alcohol was part of the colonial legacy, which had- unlike the Health Center- become internalised, an- albeit problematic- part of Native culture. A number of clinicians themselves had children who either had substance- or alcohol-problems, or about whose potential of ‘going down that route’ they worried. So it is conceivable that these clinicians were overzealous in their interventions with users because they projected their worries about their own children onto patients.

* * *

²⁶⁰ The term ‘identification with the aggressor’ was coined by Anna Freud who elaborated on it as a defense mechanism, whereby “the subject identifies himself with his aggressor (...) by appropriating the aggression itself, or else by physical or moral emulation of the aggressor, or again by adopting particular symbols of power by which the aggressor is designated.” Laplanche & Pontalis; 1988

PART VII

DAS STAHLHARTE GEHÄUSE

The Yádootl'izh Health Center did not seem to enjoy a particularly good reputation in the community, where some described it as a bastion of privilege hosting a surfeit of the self-serving and self-important who used their position to patronize their own people.

“They think they are White People” a disgruntled shopkeeper told me apropos her experiences in the Yádootl'izh, “They think their shit don't stink.”

Mr Tsosie, my Navajo language teacher, normally a serene and self-contained man was incandescent with fury after he had had to visit the Health Center because he had broken his foot. Why- he raged- did they call themselves a health service for Navajo when all the staff that he had met there could barely utter a word in the language, barely managed to be civil to patients who after all kept them in well-paid work, and even if they did speak Navajo would go out of their way to show their contempt for their own people?

Mr Tsosie, who was fluently bi-lingual, was outraged on behalf of elders whom he had witnessed being treated with a lack of respect and consideration.

Nothing in the Health Center deserved any claim to being for the Diné. It was plain to him that the people working in the hospital had been employed because they were removed from their own culture, rather than being knowledgeable and identified with it.

Mr Tsosie may have shared his critique with ‘traditional’ elders. For younger generations it is conceivable that they were not particularly put out by the lack of deference to Navajo language and culture at the Yádootl'izh.

Some may have found the presentation of the Health Center and its staff as indicative of status and quality.

At the Hózhóní for instance it happened from time to time that a patient asked to be referred to an Anglo counsellor, because “they know what they are doing”. Receptionists usually did not

challenge these requests, but would refer to Mr Essel, the Anglo clinical psychologist, or to Bella, an MHS who was of mixed Anglo and Navajo heritage.

* * *

“A chronicler who recites events without distinguishing between major and minor ones acts in accordance with the following truth; nothing that has ever happened should be regarded as lost for history.”²⁶¹

Historical effects on social and cultural attitudes and relations are like icebergs, the greater part of whose volume remains submerged below surface and out of perception.

So it was an assessment with a patient that alerted me to a phenomenon that reflected somewhat disquieting attitudes towards self and system.

I call what follows a phenomenon, because I was told that it is not an isolated incident but a particular way of ‘acting-out’ for some young people.

In the course of the Intake Interview the patient, now in his thirties, told a story of how a week before his 18th birthday he had decided to steal a car and then let himself, deliberately, be apprehended by the police.

His account, though impassively delivered, was very entertaining. He had stolen a car, driven it to a gas station, and was ‘hanging out’ in front of the gas-station’s window, when a police-car drew up.

A policeman got out and inspected the stolen car, whose theft had apparently already been reported. The policeman then approached the young thief who was casually leaning against the gas-station shop’s window and asked him whether he had seen the driver of the car.

“Yes, I have” answered the young man. “Where?” asked the officer, urgently.

“There” said the thief, pointing to his own reflection in the window.

²⁶¹ Benjamin; 1968: 254

In the manner of all good slap-stick comedy, it took the officer a few sprinting rounds through the gas-station, and another approach to clarify where the suspect had been seen, for ‘the penny to drop’ finally and the officer to arrest his criminal, who had remained at his spot, displaying not the nervousness of a guilty conscience, but the detached curiosity of a citizen assessing the police-force’s competence.²⁶²

He had not stolen the car to joyride, or to have a car in his possession or because he otherwise had a use for it: As he told it, he stole the car, purely with the intention to be caught, one week to the day before his 18th birthday.

He would so be tried as an adolescent. Thereby he would have beaten the system.

To me this presented an odd, almost touching blend of calculation and naivety- cutting off one’s nose to spite one’s face sprang to mind. When I made enquiries among my colleagues and youth-workers, on whether this was to be taken as the patient’s eccentricity, or whether this attitude had some resonance in the wider community, a youth-worker who was fond of alluding to having ‘a past’ launched into a staggering litany of heinous acts and brutalities committed by youngsters with just the same appreciation of the machinations of the jurisdictional system, who sought to “get one in, before it (the system) gets them (as an adult)”.

I am not sure if this outlook is one particular to tribal youth or perhaps shared across the Nation by adolescents, but it certainly gives a new meaning to beating the system by its own rules.

It does seem that the interweaving of attacking the system, and simultaneously harming oneself, the getting away with something and yet being caught, the celebration of a transition by a somewhat lonesome rite of passage, have a deeper symbolic significance:

At the very least these ‘juvie-acts’ manifest as the powerless both testing and submitting to the system’s power.

²⁶² If the story is not true, then it is well invented.

This strategy, where the main control the perpetrator exercises, is over the criminal act's timing, seems quite different from the often ineptly committed crimes, where young delinquents get caught through their haplessness. Rather this seems to be taunting the system:

"I did it. There's very little you can do about it, because I'm still a juvenile."

It is the appreciation of and reliance on bureaucratic process by which degrees of culpability are established by birth-date, paired with perhaps a fatalistic perception that these young delinquents seem to have of their future and the inevitable role that crime and punishment will play in it.

Theories have been advanced that the proliferation of gangs on the Reservation harks back to a tribal past where young men were occupied as warriors and raiders.²⁶³

Viewed in this way the balancing of mindfulness and wantonness manifested in the strategic subversion of the jurisdictional system can be interpreted as a 'raid' on the system- "The Man".

It is certainly a peculiar kind of staging resentment in that it is simultaneously subversive and submissive. Punishment here is seen as inevitable: The triumph over the system consists in the fact that the amount of punishment is limited by the system's mechanistic conceptualisation of culpability.

The perceived achievement rests on the idea that the culprit possesses full faculty of culpability, but the system does not recognize this and does not administrate the punishment due. The act of damaging society by hurting oneself however is often viewed as a strategy particular to adolescents who resort to it precisely because their 'self' is the only thing they have power over. Perhaps then this acting-out or these acts of resistance are a symptom of disenfranchisement and sub-alternity?

Similar patterns are evident in drunken behaviour, particularly in societies that have been subjected to colonial vicissitudes, where defiance of the system and its normative dictate is symbiotically connected with detrimental effects on the self.

²⁶³ Kunitz & Levy;2000

Systemic discontent is difficult to evaluate from within the systems that generate it, as it remains in the domain of subversive and thereby hidden activity that may be unconscious.

The phenomenon described above reflects a deep-seated, historically rooted, systemic discontent. In its fatalistic- or perhaps even masochistic- way of courting punishment it reflects above all the powerlessness of the perpetrator.

This particular variation of juvenile criminality may serve as a metaphor for the colonial legacy and how the system it generated is perceived and inhabited by its subjects.

The system presents as an omnipotent, inflexible colossus, reflecting Weber's "living machine", a host to the "congealed spirit", a system whose intricate organisation ensures the perpetual future enslavement of its subjects.

So it is the system's rigidity that is its Achilles' heel that may be exploited: The system is subjugated by its own machinations and mechanistic perpetuations that require no master, only serfs to keep it going. It is up to the ingenuity of its subjects to find the fault-lines within.

The way clinicians interact with the diagnostic process, the 'cunning reason' of the CYA, the manipulation of protocol so may be conceived as 'official' and legal variants of the juvenile delinquency in that they are all responses to a system that cannot be engaged with dialogically, but must be defied through strategies of obedience.

The Hózhóní's staff is beholden to administrative process and bureaucratic protocol.

The system they work for is reminiscent of the 'Iron Cage', a metaphor that is somewhat erroneously held to represent Weber's concept of bureaucracy.

Iron, an inflexible natural substance welded into a cage whose main purpose is confinement, so has come to present a synonym for the restrictive impact of bureaucracy and officialdom.

The term Weber originally used is however “stahlhartes Gehäuse”. ‘Stahlhart’ is hard as steel, and ‘Gehäuse’²⁶⁴ may be translated as shell, casing or housing.

A snail for instance has a ‘Gehäuse’; the workings of a watch are housed in a ‘Gehäuse’.

Steel is man-made, in contrast to iron.

But perhaps this is not relevant as Weber does not speak of a ‘stählernes Gehäuse’ – a shell or housing made of steel, but of a ‘stahlhartes Gehäuse’ a shell, housing or casing hard as steel.

Gehäuse entirely lacks the association of cage, which speaks of imprisonment and involuntary confinement.

Gehäuse in contrast evokes containment, sheltering, withdrawal, protection. A snail will withdraw into its Gehäuse, when it feels threatened. The clockwork’s intricate mechanism is protected by a Gehäuse. And while a Gehäuse is also confining, it is primarily containing.

Its interior life is invisible and inaccessible from the outside. To know what is going on in it, you would have to break it, much like bureaucratic systems which, according to Weber, may not even be halted by a revolution.²⁶⁵

Like the translation of Freud’s ‘Unbehagen...’ into ‘Discontent...’, rendering ‘stahlhartes Gehäuse’ into ‘Iron Cage’ has effectively changed the implications carried by the German original.

There can be little ambiguity about an ‘iron cage’: To be in one is surely a bad thing (unless you happen to be swimming with sharks).

But what of being in a Gehäuse? A Gehäuse seems to principally serve the ones that it accommodates. It is those outside it who are disadvantaged.

²⁶⁴ *Ge’häu-se* (n.13) (meist am Inhalt befestigte) feste, nicht biegsame Hülle (Blech~, Holz~, Orgel~, Uhr ~); Kernhaus des Apfels u. der Birne (Kern~) [< spätmhd. gehiuse “ Hütte, Verschlag”; Kollektiv zu Haus]; in: Wahrig Deutsches Wörterbuch; Bertelsmann; 1986

²⁶⁵ “Even in the case of revolution by force or of occupation by an enemy, the bureaucratic machinery will normally continue to function just as it has for the previous legal government”
Weber; 1978:143

And indeed, contemplating the situation of Hózhóní staff, it seems that Gehäuse here is more apt than cage: For while the system constrains and restricts, it also offers the possibility of containment and withdrawal.

Without bureaucratic protocol it is conceivable that clinicians would feel confronted with an infinite volume of unmanageable human suffering. The guilt and feelings of inadequacy that representatives of public services beset by insufficient resources and high demands suffer is alleviated by the system's obscure machinations that deflect and absorb blame. Bureaucratic process provides an opportunity for 'time out', a haven from clinical work. Processing 'paper-work' converts real-life human misery into manageable medical data, and thereby offers a way of debriefing and purging the oppressive components of the work. Weber's original phrase 'stahlhartes Gehäuse' so seems more evocative than 'Iron Cage' of the ambiguous realities of clinical practice, where bureaucracy presents both stricture and salvation.

* * *

In Brief Solution Focused Therapy intervention revolves around the 'Miracle Question': "If your problem vanished overnight while you were sleeping, how would you notice in the morning what has happened?" the therapist asks the client. The client is then instructed to consider step-by-step changes that would be noticed in the immediate context of daily life. This shifts change from wish and fantasy to concrete and tangible reality.

In a variation of the miracle question, I could have asked myself: "If you had been tele-transported and found yourself without previous reference or information at the Hózhóní Clinic, how would you know it is a Navajo service?"

The present-day inconspicuous role of culture in the IHS Health Center should be contemplated against the remarkable history of bicultural negotiations around healthcare between Navajo and the US Public Health service.²⁶⁶

The Navajo-Cornell Field Health Research Project, a joint enterprise between the Navajo tribe, Cornell University's Medical College and the US Public Health Service was considered a pioneering project in cross-cultural medicine. Running from 1955 -1960 it was a comprehensive attempt to proactively bridge conceptual differences between Navajo healing and Western biomedical healthcare with the aim of establishing a healthcare model that truly served the needs of the Navajo people. The Navajo-Cornell Project was an extended consultation project with the Navajo, and an occasion of successful intercultural collaboration. Members of the community, traditional diagnosticians and medicine-men were extensively consulted in its inception.

Prominent clinicians like Annie Wauneka rose out of the community and became its voice. The project was on its way to establishing itself as an exemplary model of integrated healthcare.

Conceptual differences between Navajo and Western healing models are considerable: The most basic may be understood to be 'structural' in the concrete sense: Navajo traditions operate on a strict prohibition of contact with the dead, who are seen as contaminating, destructive entities. In fact, in the Navajo universalist view, where everything is perceived as interconnected and reciprocal, any contact with illness, aberration or taboo has possible consequences against which one must be protected. Purification ceremonies and smudging here are restorative ceremonial activities enacted in the case of lesser incidents, while contact with the deceased would typically require a longer ceremony.

²⁶⁶ Adair; 1972. Davies;2001

Establishments like the Yádootl'izh Health Center are, in the traditional conception, problematic, as it accommodates a hospital where people die. In the early days of the Navajo IHS there would have been purification ceremonies after a death. Not now, however.

Traditional Navajo assume that the Hózhóní Clinic must be an unhappy and imbalanced place to work in, as so many unhappy and damaged people pass through its premises without any ceremonial restorative redress.

In the traditional mode illnesses and complaints are held to arise- very generally speaking- from contagion through transgressive events and behaviour. These can be inadvertent occurrences, like being struck by lightning, walking on a grave-site, crossing the path of a coyote, coming into contact with owl-feathers; or else actively committed transgressions: returning veterans for instance need a ceremony, as do those who live outside the Reservation or those who are married to non-Navajo. The Navajo traditional world is riddled with 'bahadzid', actions that are taboo, or dangerous to do and that will have serious consequences. Also nothing is ever unambiguous here: So a surfeit of strength (seen as mostly positive in Western culture), may lead to wantonness and dissipation. The Mountain Way for instance, a Sing often performed to bring hunters luck, if too successful, may lead to greed, gambling-vice and reckless risk-taking.

In Navajo, as opposed to Western culture, there can be too much of a good thing. Calabrese²⁶⁷ contrasts areas in which Western and Native-American therapeutic interventions clash paradigmatically. Applied to the context of counselling conducted at the Hózhóní, the Western psychotherapeutic model is individualised, conducted in a rationalised rather than emotional-cathartic manner, is time-restricted and most importantly the patients' community are absent during the healing. Even if the intricacies and specificities of Navajo healing systems are disregarded, as I do here, the most rudimentary appreciation of Navajo traditions should lead to the realisation that there are significant conceptual differences, not to say contradictions.

²⁶⁷ Calabrese;2008

The reason why in the course of this chapter no specificities concerning Navajo culture and traditions have been mentioned, is because in daily clinical routine at the Hózhóní, Navajo culture did not feature at all.

To answer the rhetorical tele-transportation question: Without previous information it is likely that the tele-transported observer of Hózhóní clinical process would fail to recognize the culture it is purportedly dedicated to.

It may be assumed that the Westernized, Navajo de-cultured protocol evident in the Yádootl'izh and the Hózhóní are simply a reflection of a contemporary distancing from traditional practices, whereby traditional approaches now in the modern age of the Navajo Nation have become redundant. This however would not be accurate.

The Native American Church (NAC) enjoys growing membership and is viewed as being highly efficacious in the treatment of alcohol-misuse. The 'Navajo Healing Project'²⁶⁸, attests to a buoyant 'ecumenical' healing scene on the Navajo Nation. The professionalization of medicine men is underway and there are several registered associations for those involved in traditional healing. While Navajo healing may be transforming and changing in structure, it is not on the wane so far.

Contemplated against the background of so much historical initiative and achievement in Navajo bi-cultural healthcare, the unquestioned precedence of the Western biomedical model as manifest at the Hózhóní is perplexing.

A social-worker in a neighbouring department commented, on the occasion when relations between Hózhóní staff had disintegrated spectacularly, that this was no wonder, as in her opinion everyone at the Clinic suffered from untreated afflictions incurred through the careless exposure to all manners of transgressions and contaminative conditions.

The present-day Hózhóní Clinic was, from this viewpoint, a place not *for* the ill, but *of* the ill.

²⁶⁸ Csordas et al; 2000

CHAPTER FOUR

WITCHCRAFT AND STRIFE

ABSTRACT

If energy expended on fulfilling official employment duties were to be measured against energy used on conflict and relational tensions in the workplace, the energy spent in the 'unofficial' pursuit of strife may well win out by a large margin as prime consumer of employees' energy. Often it is not the officially appointed duties, nor the circumstances these tasks are supposed to be performed in that 'stress out' the work-force, but the perpetual swelter of contentious relations plaguing organisations. Maladjusted colleagues; ill will stoked by trivial causes; partisan management; Machiavellian machinations; the vengefulness of long institutional memories and a communal dedication to taking offence are what really make the 'quality' of the working environment.

Mental health services in particular more often resemble cauldrons of institutional madness than being paragons of contained sanity.

The concept of 'parallel process' emerged out of psychoanalysis. It concerns a phenomenon first observed in supervision and linked to 'countertransference' where therapists were seen to unconsciously 'act out' towards supervisors unprocessed aspects of their patients' behaviour. This 'acting out' was taken as reflecting essential aspects of the therapeutic relationship beyond the grasp of rational analysis and so became important part of the supervisory analytic process.²⁶⁹

The concept of parallel process contributes to the understanding of organisational dynamics where "destructive processes occur within and between organizations that mirror or "parallel" the processes for which clients seek help. (...) the result for providers of service is a collective maladjustment as the organizations (...), cease fulfilling a fundamental social role, that of containing anxiety"²⁷⁰

At the Hózhóni Clinic administrative process and bureaucratic protocol functioned like an organisational groove along which clinical tasks ran smoothly. Bureaucracy offered a

²⁶⁹ Searle; 1955. Gediman and Wolkenfeld; 1980. Baudry; 1993.

²⁷⁰ Bloom and Farragher; 2010

'stahlhartes Gehäuse' (rather than being an 'Iron Cage), that provided asylum and containment to harried clinicians, and helped them to cope with the challenging work.

Team relations in the clinic however apparently had the opposite effect- or function- to bureaucratic protocol.

During my study ever-escalating contentiousness eventually reached a spectacularly disruptive climax. Structurally trouble amongst staff arose out of a history of conflict amongst clinical managers who had sought to cement their positions by shoring up support from clinicians; a (colonial-paternalistic?), management-style that seemed to favour a 'divide-and-rule' approach; and 'crab-barrel' mechanisms of habitual mutual sabotage among clinicians.

But dysfunctional dynamics should not be read exclusively as strategies of resistance and mechanisms of defence. They also serve to address and redress power-inequities, interpersonal conflicts and systemic inconsistencies. If bureaucratic protocol is the 'groove' then 'dysfunction' is the lubricant that oils the entire system.

Like envy, adversarial dynamics are relational and intimate, and whether they are perceived as negative or positive; destructive or constructive: conflict and adversarial relations are integral to systems. How agents bond is, systemically speaking, less relevant than that they bond at all, albeit through 'acting out' dysfunctionally- or acting out dysfunctionality....

* * *

PART I
INSTITUTIONAL FEUDS

Hózhóní Clinic staff, as mentioned, was subject to considerable stresses, strictures and impositions: there was the clinical workload, the gravity of clients' problems, the scarcity of time, the 'unreason' of bureaucratic process, and the entrenched socio-cultural hegemonies that the institution perpetuated.

Yet clinicians expressed very little discontent regarding the conditions they worked under. They did not complain about their caseloads; they did not seem to dwell on the frustrations that their work-day brought; they were silent on the subject of managerial faults and failures.

The Hózhóní Clinic however scored impressively on the issue of contentiousness. It had a history of relational disturbances that extended far into the past.

According to my interpretation of 'collated' institutional narratives the conflict's core aggregated around the approval or disapproval by consultants, past and present.

Consultants, it seemed, rarely were impartial, but were in the majority patriarchal in attitude with partisan preferences towards staff. They were, in a word, biased and therefore unjust in their management of staff.

The frequent turnover of Anglo consultants meant that at one time or another longer-serving Hózhóní clinicians had been in- or out- of favour with management. When there had been bad blood between predecessor and following incumbent (which was apparently common), there would be a 'shuffling' of entourage: those previously in favour would be demoted and replaced by colleagues whose relationship with the parting consultant had been problematic.

Older clinicians at the Hózhóní Clinic accepted this with detached stoicism. Experience had taught them that tides turn inevitably and that today's triumph precedes tomorrow's fall. They had also learnt that it was unwise to pin hopes or expectations on consultants. Not only were consultants more fallible than their professional credentials would lead one to assume, they also

in the majority did not make it for very long in the IHS. The competent ones eventually left for greener pastures, the less skilled were soon worn down by the system and withdrew to their private practices.

Attitudes towards authority seemed in some way linked to a clinician's age, life-cycle and position in the hierarchy. Experience and increasing confidence had taught older clinicians how to work around consultants. They had little expectations towards psychiatrists other than hoping they would not be obstructing their work. They did their clinical work, referred patients for prescriptions and otherwise 'kept their heads down and got on with it'.

For younger and freshly qualified staff getting acknowledged by the clinical management was more important. They would seek out consultants for advice, mediation or affirmation. They longed for positive feedback from consultants. They would be buoyed by favourable reactions, and crushed by disapproval. To them consultants still presented the 'paterfamilias'.

In the Hózhóni's clinical routine there was little occasion for the whole team to mix and mingle. Although there was a weekly scheduled clinical meeting, it drew a very uneven attendance particularly from management.

As far as I recall I saw Dr Brownstone only once in a meeting; Dr Cardigan likewise attended only sporadically and Mr Essel dropped in from time to time.²⁷¹

The meeting seemed to be used primarily by clinicians to discuss cases and negotiate referrals with each other. Management on the whole also stayed away from the other communal hub, the staff-kitchen where a number of clinicians spent their lunch-break. It was here that some staff ate, relaxed, and chatted. Locum psychiatrists who habitually spent their lunchtimes with clinicians as

²⁷¹ I once witnessed a scene that lingers in my memory as truly bizarre: The meeting was about to begin and there were perhaps two or three of us already in the meeting-room when Dr Brownstone came in and sat down. Out of his pocket he produced a file and began filing his nails. A few moments later Mr Essel came into the room, took a seat one removed from Dr Brownstone, took a file out of his pocket and began filing his nails. A couple of minutes later, Daphne, one of Mr Essel's 'entourage' came in, sat down and began filing her nails.

The phrase "sharpening one's claws" sprang to mind.

a consequence were much more integrated into the clinical team and seemed much more liked by staff.

There was a general impression of management and clinicians working in separate spheres, alongside each-other rather than with each-other.

* * *

Quite soon after I started to volunteer at the Hózhóní I heard it mentioned that there was 'history' between Mr Essel, the clinical psychologist and ex-Acting Director; Dr Cardigan, current Acting Director; and Dr Brownstone; who had conspired with Dr Cardigan and another Anglo clinician since departed, to demote Mr Essel.

I heard this not from Hózhóní staff but from an Anglo working in another department. The present situation at the Hózhóní was somewhat unusual, in that Mr Essel had not left the Clinic, but had continued to work alongside Dr Cardigan.

Mr Essel was charismatic, mercurial and intemperate, while Dr Cardigan gave an impression of being introverted and mild-mannered. In time when I had had opportunity to witness Mr Essel's outbursts, it began to seem quite plausible that his temperament would make him enemies.

But Hózhóní clinicians by and large appeared unperturbed by Mr Essel's behaviour. It had been his Anglo colleagues that had been his downfall. Some clinicians were unimpressed by Dr Cardigan who was perceived as unassertive, which was apparently a greater failing than being overly aggressive. That is: in Anglos. In a Navajo a similar degree of choleric behaviour would have found swift retribution. Cultural relativism ruled large, and what was an Anglo's food could be a Navajo's poison.

The relationship between Mssrs Cardigan and Essel now seemed cordial enough: it is lonely at the top and one needs all the friends one can keep.

Mr Essel had been employed in various Navajo services for almost two decades. When he first moved into the area and began to work at the Yádootl'izh Health Center, he had for some years lived in a hogan he rented on Alice's, the administrative manager, family camp on the Reservation. Mr Essel had some knowledge of Navajo language and in this distinguished himself from a majority of Yádootl'izh Anglos who seemed resistant to picking up even rudimentary phrases.

Dr Cardigan lived in Appleton, the bordertown. He held a permanent position in the Hózhóní, yet appeared somewhat detached from its cultural context. Dr Cardigan was unusual in that he exhibited little of the assertive, patriarchal, forcedly jovial behaviour that I came to consider as Anglo-defensiveness. He was quiet, unassuming, and appeared somewhat shy. His involvement in Mr Essel's ousting was said to have been due to his malleability rather than maliciousness. Perhaps this was why Essel and Cardigan still managed to cooperate.

But is also possible that Dr Cardigan and Mr Essel were able to keep on civil terms with each-other because they had projected their sublimated rancour outwards- literally- as far as it would go to the borderlines, the margins of the Clinic, namely into the reception office.

* * *

The dynamics of parallel process make it plausible that receptionists are particularly prone to ‘act out’ conflicts that concern the whole organisation.

Particularly in mental health services receptionists are the public face of the institution, and the ‘buffer-zone’ between patients and clinicians. Unlike clinicians, receptionists are not shielded by schedule and privacy from patients’ raw distress and need. They are perpetually confronted with mental suffering in its most undiluted form. Unlike clinicians they have no control over clinical decisions, schedules or treatment.

It is their duty to welcome and contain patients, to appease them when they get angry, to calm them when they are anxious, until they can be ‘handed over’ to clinicians.

Receptionists are sandwiched between managers’, clinicians’, and patients’ demands all of which they are expected to meet with equanimity, politeness and efficiency.

A good receptionist’s value to an organisation is, in my experience, ‘above rubies’ yet receptionists’ contributions are rarely acknowledged, their hierarchical position relatively humble, their salaries modest. Receptionists are commonly the first to blame when something does not go as smoothly as it should. The challenges and stresses they are subjected to may explain why levels of conflict may be particularly high amongst receptionist-teams.

The Front Office was occupied by Alice the administrative manager and Erica and Gaby, the unit’s receptionists. Alice’s work-space was to the back of the reception office, shielded from the patient waiting-area by filing-cabinets.

Erica, who divided her time between the Day Treatment Center and the Hózhóní, and Gaby who was the full-time receptionist, shared the reception counter. Gaby was the youngest, at the time of field-work in her late thirties, Alice was in her fifties and Erica was approaching sixty.

Alice had a long-standing connection with Mr Essel- her family had ‘adopted’ him when he lived in a hogan he rented on their camp. Erica, who seemed prone to pronounced mood-swings, friendly one day and thunderously terse the next, mostly kept to herself. Between Alice and Gaby

things were said to be tense. For an outsider it was difficult to understand exactly what was going on, except sensing that there was ‘an atmosphere’.

Shortly after my arrival I had been ‘primed’ by Mr Essel, who had given me a detailed- and to me rather confusing- account of staff-relations. I gained the impression that there were many things that irked him. One should bear in mind that Mr Essel had very recently lost his position as Acting Clinical Director and in all likelihood was still smarting from the situation.

Although much of Mr Essel’s account was difficult for me to follow because I could not yet put names to faces, it seemed quite clear that he was not at all positively inclined towards Gaby, and particularly provoked by Gaby’s relationship with Manuel, a trainee social-worker from Day Treatment. Manuel too was not in Mr Essel’s good books. Listening to Mr Essel it seemed that the animosity he felt towards Gaby and Miguel was personal rather than professional, and somewhat puzzling in its intensity. I liked Gaby. From what I had witnessed she was always helpful and polite to patients. She took time to explain procedures and was very patient with me. In time I heard that both Alice and Gaby had suffered very recent crises. While Alice’s crisis had remedied however, Gaby had suffered a series of devastating bereavements. I was astonished that Mr Essel had made no mention of Gaby’s catastrophic loss at all. In his catalogue of complaints against Gaby he had not mentioned the tragedies she had suffered so recently.

It is possible that the markedly strained relations between Alice and Gaby were exacerbated by Alice’s ‘survivor’s guilt’, the unbearability perhaps of contemplating that what had happened to Gaby could have happened to her. Maybe having Gaby in their midst was an excruciating reminder of life’s precarious cruelty.

Whatever the case, relations between the women were strained and were aggravated by Mr Essel, who quite obviously sought to undermine Gaby whenever an opportunity presented itself.²⁷²

²⁷² In one of the Navajo language classes I attended at the Community College, I met a young woman who had one summer a few years ago worked in the Hózhóní at reception. I asked her how atmosphere and relations there had been and she said that she felt that Gaby had been bullied. So it seemed that troubles at reception had been ongoing for some years.

Mr Essel was, as I saw later, prone to taking violent, quasi-persecutory dislikes to people.

It is conceivable that Gaby had had an especially hard time during Mr Essel's short-lived Acting Directorship.

Now that Dr Cardigan had taken over the role, it was up to him to manage staff. This included dealing with complaints, grievances, and write-ups.

'Write-ups' were when staff reported a complaint against a colleague to management, as in:

"Noleen got me written up for being late."

Staff conflict fomented around reciprocating write-ups the 'processing' of which required considerable management attention.

Considered in terms of organisational efficacy, the 'habit' of write-ups should have been discouraged if not banished by the clinical managers. This however was not the case.

Quite on the contrary.

PART II

WRITE-UPS: HOW TO KEEP TROUBLE ABREWIN'...

Write-ups were one of those quirks I had assumed to be context-specific and rooted in post-colonial power-structures, until I found out that they were a ubiquitous part of staff-management strategies in the wider region.

At that time write-ups seemed to revolve around courtesy: Gaby was written up by Erica for being terse, Gaby wrote-up Erica for being unhelpful. Dr Kinsky was briefly recruited by Alice to complain about Gaby who allegedly had messed up his schedule. Daphne wrote up Gaby for ignoring her and failing to greet her in the morning. Gaby wrote up Dr Kinsky for missing an appointment. As tensions in the team accelerated, write-ups increased incrementally and Dr Cardigan certainly was kept as busy addressing write-ups as he was writing prescriptions.

Some clinicians felt that Dr Cardigan was in Mr Essel's pocket and dealt with matters in the way that the latter wished him to. Certainly an unfair bias against Gaby was noted by many staff, albeit without them showing much surprise or outrage. Dr Cardigan was regarded as largely inoffensive but malleable, and not particularly effective. He certainly did not have the mettle of a 'paterfamilias' unlike previous 'old school' consultants who he was unfavourably compared to by some clinicians. Perhaps his lacking authority was why his victimisation of Gaby by Mr Essel's dictate was not taken particularly seriously. It is also conceivable that clinicians didn't much mind what was going on elsewhere, as long as it did not spill over and started 'bothering' them. From what I had gathered these types of problems had always been part of the Clinic's history; those who took sides would get into trouble; strategically speaking it was better to be on the side of power; but best of all was to keep out of such matters completely.

Hierarchical status amongst clinicians was in inverse proportion to how involved individuals got in organisational trouble: The elders at the top, Josephine and John, usually did not get drawn into

conflict but took a position as mediators. Daphne and Boris were younger than Josephine and John, with somewhat lesser qualifications. Apart from Alice, Daphne was Mr Essel's strongest ally. Her brother-in-law was a medicine man whom Mr Essel often consulted. Daphne so was quite proactive in Mr Essel's camp. Boris usually allied himself with John, but organisationally was on shakier grounds, as Mr Essel did not seem to particularly respect him as a clinician. Boris did from time to time consult with Dr Cardigan when he wanted advice, something that the majority of other clinicians did not do. Then there was Bella, who was half bílagáana, half Navajo, the youngest member of the team, freshly qualified and regarded as a 'rising star'. Bella had unusually strong diplomatic skills for someone so young and was expert in 'keeping out of things'. The newest in terms of qualification was Glenda, who had worked in Navajo health services for decades until she had decided to get a social-work qualification. Glenda was not yet licensed and therefore in a more precarious position than her colleagues. Apart from John, Glenda was the member of the team most knowledgeable about Navajo culture and traditions. So far, conflict had remained focused on the front-office, with occasional input from Daphne and perpetuated by Mr Essel's omnipresent irritation with Gaby. There was no reason for clinicians to get involved, as their sphere remained, largely, unaffected.

To me as an outsider however, the situation was perturbing. Perhaps it was because I liked Gaby, and now knew something of her history; perhaps it was that I had had confirmation of Mr Essel's strong dislike of Gaby from himself; perhaps because my impression that Gaby was being victimised had been corroborated by the young woman who had worked at the Clinic years ago: to me it seemed that Dr Cardigan and Mr Essel were not only negligent but callous in their 'managing' of staff-conflict. Gaby's recent tragic loss did not seem to generate enough consideration or compassion in management to cease to persecute her for quite frankly spurious reasons.

A more mindful management would perhaps have tried to explore the operative dynamics underlying the conflict between reception-staff, but this seemed not to have occurred to Dr Cardigan. His facilitating the persecution of Gaby at the bidding of his demoted predecessor seemed to have one principal motive: patching up things with Mr Essel. Viewed in terms of structural power, it was clear that staff welfare could be discounted. What was essential, according to these opportunistic machinations, was speaking ‘power to power’ in a dialogue of the hierarchically elevated, from which the peons were excluded.

The main way in which clinicians got involved in a ‘dialogue’ with management was through ‘write-ups’. A ‘write-up’ is a peculiar strategy of organisational peer-control, where the workforce ‘alerts’ managers of minor misdemeanours committed by their colleagues.

Write-ups are commonly less an indication of staff behaviour than they are of staff relations.

Understandably few would ‘write-up’ a well-liked colleague for returning five minutes late from lunch, whereas one may happily anticipate a foe’s tardy return with stop-watch in hand.

‘Write-ups’ are a somewhat unproductive way of ascertaining organisational efficiency, as they are prone to incrementally accelerate rather than appease, conflict.

Until a friend working in an Anglo-dominated department of Appleton’s municipal services told me about being written up for entering the building *two minutes late*, I had seen Hózhóni write-ups as a culture-specific, historically embedded phenomenon, possibly arising out of experiences with, and dependence on, malevolent authority, acquired in residential schools, where students had been conditioned to being bullied by the impositions of unreasonable authorities.

My friend’s account, substantiated subsequently by other people who reported similar experiences in a range of work-places, confirmed that writing-up and similarly petty strategies of intra-team policing abound, and should therefore perhaps be considered as arising from a particular, quasi-feudal conceptualisation of the entitlements of authority.

Managerially, write-ups are curiously ambiguous strategies: They are not particularly effective as they tend to accelerate paranoia and discontent in staff, but do little to buoy work-ethos. Write-

ups consume undue amounts of managers' time. Their volume increases incrementally, as write-ups follow the retaliatory pattern of blood-feuds, where every complaint will in due time be reciprocated with a counter-complaint.

Write-ups are a declaration of discontent, a preliminary staking of ground before an escalation into all-out hostility. Depending on which course things take, they provide a modest safety valve that postpones dramatic cathartic events.

This hypothesis is supported by the tendency of 'write-ups' to be targeting people whose position in the hierarchy is relatively humble. Complaints and grievances, which are procedurally speaking a 'step up' from write-ups, are reserved for more serious matters and the higher echelons.

Write-ups also provide opportunity for a tête-à-tête with management: They offer a chance for contact outside clinical work.

At the Hózhóní write-ups provided a forum for the staging of ritual encounters convening paternalistic authority and dependency that historically have been glossed as both the essence and the bane of White-Indian relations.

The member of staff 'writing-up' a colleague would usually approach the clinical director to present their complaint. At some later point the person 'written-up' would be summoned to the consultant's office for a meeting. Consultants customarily met separately with accused and accuser.

This strategy appeared to stoke rather than calm persecutory tensions: each party could now give themselves over to conjecture to what had happened in the meeting they had been excluded from, and also it was left to them to represent their respective meetings how they saw fit. These meetings so commonly had the effect of perpetuating feuds between staff.

It is possible that like so many other aspects of clinical routine, consultants simply accepted that this was how things are done and followed what they perceived as an organisational tradition. It is

also conceivable that the inherent approach of dividing and ruling suited clinical managers, and made them feel in control of a staff-group that they otherwise found alien and impenetrable. Certainly during my time at the Hózhóní it seemed that management encouraged the culture of write-ups. Had they held joint meetings between the aggrieved parties it is possible that in time 'write-ups' would have eventually lost their appeal. Joint meetings would at least have attempted a dialogue between staff.

The degree to which staff engaged in a dialogue with each other would however decrease the degree to which a consultant's interventions were sought.

'Write-ups' gave consultants the rare opportunity to meet with their staff; to feel 'needed', to feel the authority that their position bestowed. Consultants asserted their authority by way of write-ups issued by their staff.

The esteem and gratitude consultants gained by one party was however lost to the other.

The moratorium of write-up meetings simultaneously provided a platform for the deconstruction of paternalistic authority. In write-up vernacular it was inevitable that one party would always emerge as the disgruntled one who would, supported by allies, proceed to disseminate their discontent by fomenting virulent, often quite undermining, criticism against the management.

The ultimate effect of write-up adjudications as performed here so often was that anger towards a colleague was now re-directed against the management, in what may be seen as a homeostatic distribution of tension that extended to and enveloped all members of staff.

Conflicts and crises were experienced like forces of nature, tsunamis that washed over the team and left it confused and disoriented.

In common with my experiences of other mental health organisations there was much less 'mindful' processing than one would have expected from a group of people whose profession it was to help others to understand themselves. There was rarely attention given to the wider context in which the crises took place, instead the team-members lustily abandoned themselves to the pursuit of mutual scapegoating: someone needed to 'take the blame'.

PART III

PARELLEL PROCESS

It is conceivable that subliminal discontent with roots in the wider social and historical context, wrapped itself around a scaffold provided by the conflict between Gaby and Mr Essel, who in personality and culture presented opposing dichotomies:

Gaby had grown up on the Reservation. She and her siblings had had to look after themselves from a very young age, as their mother had been of poor health for most of their childhoods.

Gaby was a fluent Navajo speaker and like many in that particular part of the Reservation that had been settled by Mormons, she belonged to the Church of the Latter Day Saints.

She and Manuel had started farming Manuel's family's land and grew corn, squash, melons. In the autumn they made the traditional steam-corn- corn steamed in a sealed adobe-oven- a traditionally prized foodstuff amongst Navajo, which they sold on markets and fairs.

Gaby took her culture as a given, in contrast to some who had grown up away from the reservation or in border-towns, had returned to 'their roots', and were prone to making affirmative comments regarding Navajo culture as if to reassure themselves that they 'belonged'.

Gaby was rarely demonstrative about her cultural identity, but she was always be able to translate an expression, describe a custom or explain a belief.

Mr Essel originally came from the American South and had a rather privileged background.

After so many years in the region Mr Essel seemed to perceive himself as closer to Navajo than to Anglo. He had internalised a somewhat parochial attitude- otherwise glossed as 'the narcissism of small differences'²⁷³ - whereby he seemed to regard the Navajo as a special group above all others.

²⁷³ Volkan/Freud; 1986

Mr Essel was prone to ‘splitting’: people were either great or monstrous; delights or irritants; friends or foes. In this Mr Essel seemed to be the conduit for the intemperance that rules ‘mad’ institutions; he was the agent through whom parallel process manifested itself.

When I speak of parallel process it is unclear whether the institution spoke through Mr Essel or whether Mr Essel spoke through the institution. That the more disturbing dynamics were- uncannily- mobilised through Mr Essel seemed evident. ‘Uncanny’ here references Freud’s definition as a:

“factor of involuntary repetition which surrounds what would otherwise be innocent enough with an uncanny atmosphere, and forces upon us the idea of something fateful and inescapable when otherwise we should have spoken only of ‘chance’”²⁷⁴

The possibility that one person may be the conduit or catalyst through which particular processes manifest or are generated should exonerate Mr Essel, who in some ways in the course of this chapter emerges as the villain, by personality as much as by colonial association.

As we shall see, it is Mr Essel’s Anglo cultural provenance, an aspect he prefers to disregard, that furnishes the exalted position and the ‘fool’s cap’ that render certain behaviour otherwise perceived as unacceptable, as tolerable albeit not altogether commendable.

The concept of ‘parallel process’ is usually applied to a phenomenon observed in psychoanalytic supervision where supervisees unconsciously replicate or act out what seem to be permutations of their patients’ presentation:

“Therapists manifest major psychic events in supervision, including complex behavior patterns, affects, and conflicts with parallel processes that are prominent in their interactions with their patients in the treatment situation. Furthermore, the therapist does not seem to be aware that he is

²⁷⁴ Freud; 1919:237

conveying that impression to the supervisor. The phenomenon of which we speak partakes, in a word, of the "uncanny."²⁷⁵

‘Parallel process’ is less frequently applied to large-group dynamics, although it is useful not just in explaining certain organisational phenomena, but primarily because it offers a relational perspective on the invisible reciprocal bonds between patients’ and clinicians’ psychic states.

In parallel process the boundaries between external and internal worlds are temporarily dissolved; parallel process is to use Winnicott’s terms a “third space” or a “transitional space”²⁷⁶ where staff-, patient- and organisational concerns conflate in a collective ‘nos’²⁷⁷.

Dynamics characteristic of parallel process, as for instance the destructive compulsions alive in some groups and the rhizome of unconscious connections that nurture them, are ‘uncanny’ in the sense that they defy rational approach

The notorious ‘dysfunction’ characteristic of many mental health services is plausibly explained by parallel process. The absence of a capacity to rationalise this process makes sense if we consider that what emerges in this ‘mirroring’ or ‘countertransference’, the phenomenon glossed as parallel process, are those aspects of the work that are in the realm of the- collective- unconscious.

It would have been reassuring if there had been at any given point an indication of recognition that perhaps all this madness made sense, that this scapegoating and acting out served the collective, and that the collective would overcome.

But alas, this did not happen.

* * *

²⁷⁵ Gediman & Wolkenfeld; 1980: 234-255.

²⁷⁶ Winnicott; 1971

²⁷⁷ Ormay; 2012

Once Mr Essel had taken against a person he would pursue his ire with a marked lack of restraint. When Dr Kinsky, a new locum psychiatrist joined the team it became obvious very soon that Mr Essel did not like him. What Dr Kinsky had done to deserve this was less clear: He was a middle-aged psychiatrist who in fact seemed engaged and interested in both his patients and their culture. Dr Kinsky was jovial in manner, and perhaps it was this that first displeased Mr Essel, no shrinking violet himself. Maybe Mr Essel felt that Dr Kinsky appeared altogether too comfortable rather too quickly. Mr Essel thus took it upon himself to instruct, or more accurately, to reprimand Dr Kinsky publicly regarding perceived cultural transgressions.

“In Navajo culture we do NOT interrupt” Mr Essel interjected, eyes flashing, when Dr Kinsky attempted to ask a question during his- unusually well attended- first case-staffing, while clinicians gazed inscrutably at their paperwork.

The incident was perturbing, as not only was Mr Essel’s cultural instruction delivered in a somewhat untimely manner- he had interrupted Dr Kinsky in order to reprimand him- but it was also distinguished by a barely disguised hostility.

During the next case-staffing, Mr Essel made his attitude towards Dr Kinsky more obvious still. Again subjectively²⁷⁸ Mr Essel, in what seemed an entirely unprovoked display of fury, bellowed at Dr Kinsky, who was beginning to speak about a case: “Don’t you realize that we are all pissed at you?”

This time the shock that ran through the assembled team was quite obvious: Everyone remained silent looking down at the table for what seemed a very long time. Finally Josephine said in a casually reassuring tone: “I’m not pissed at you”. A number of clinicians nodded and mumbled affirmation, and the meeting continued with no further addressing of the subject.

An informal poll conducted amongst MHS revealed four in favour of Dr Kinsky, two neutral and one against him. Dr Kinsky’s main detractors other than Mr Essel seemed to be Alice and Erica from the reception office.

²⁷⁸ that is according to my immediate reaction during that incident and my recollections

Mr Essel's three reliable allies were Daphne (relative of Mr Grey-eyes, Mr Essel's medicine man), Alice and Erica, who in turn was a loyal ally to Alice rather than to Mr Essel. These three, who also joined Mr Essel's crusade against Gaby, expressed support for Mr Essel's treatment of Dr Kinsky.

Some hinted that the incident reflected more on Mr Essel's anger-management problems than having anything to do with Dr Kinsky. Mr Essel was known to have a temper and was rumoured to have once thrown a book- literally- at someone during a meeting at another- tribal - organisation. This was one of the reasons he was said not to have lasted there. Tribal services, it was implied, had no great tolerance for aberrant Anglo behaviour.²⁷⁹

Once the Kinsky incident was over, not much thought seemed to be given to it. Although the collective shock had been palpable, witnesses to Mr Essel's attack on Dr Kinsky now seemed to regard this as so much water under the bridge. There was an impression that staff must have endured similar scenes repeatedly, so that they were able to dismiss the event quickly from their minds. Mr Essel had shown his anger, in his accustomed unconsidered manner, people had been shocked, now it was over, Kinsky was still alive, and life went on.

When Dr Kinsky, a couple of months later, wanted to extend his contract however, this was declined by Dr Cardigan who informed him that as he did not "gel with the team" it was inadvisable for him to stay on any longer. A number of Hózhóní clinicians, Josephine, John and Boris amongst them took the initiative to arrange a farewell lunch at the Yádootl'izh Chinese buffet for Dr Kinsky, a rare instance of honouring a departing locum psychiatrist and a clear demonstration, that they at least did not share Dr Cardigan's feedback.

²⁷⁹ There was an implied juxtaposition here of attitudes towards Anglos in tribal services versus the Indian Health Service.

PART IV

A (BE-WITCHED) DOG'S TALE

Mr Essel had recently acquired a rescue dog 'Diablo' from a shelter to join his old, somewhat frail dog, 'Ginger'. He was revelling in the new addition to his household, and updated us frequently on how Diablo was settling in.

A couple of months passed. One day Mr Essel happened to mention that he had taken Diablo back to the shelter, where he had come from. Ginger had of late sported bite-marks on her neck, and while it was first believed that she had been attacked by feral cats, it had turned out that Diablo was the culprit.

Mr Essel had consulted with an animal healer, who diagnosed and analysed animals remotely by talking to their owners on the phone, and he had consulted the medicine man, Daphne's brother-in-law. The animal healer had determined that Diablo had suffered some trauma in the past, which had impacted on her personality, and Mr Grey-eyes had diagnosed that "some witchcraft is involved". Diablo had undergone the requisite interventions, but had not reformed.

Mr Essel frequently consulted Mr Grey-eyes, seeking protection prayers for himself or friends before journeys, and to determine causes when things went wrong.

About the latter reasons Mr Essel was not as forthcoming, understandably, as he believed that the team harboured a number of foes who were intent on damaging him in any way they could. Mr Essel had not advertised the dog-witching diagnosis, which had emerged out of a throwaway comment in the course of a conversation.

Essel's dog-witching suspicions to me were puzzling, as in practice it seemed unlikely that a member of the Hózhóní team was 'witching' Mr Essel or his dog.

At the Clinic Mr Essel and his allies Alice and Daphne were the only members of staff who may have had any interest or involvement in 'witchcraft', although it is doubtful that they would initiate anything rather than in self-protection or retaliation. As for the clinicians, they

collectively seemed too far removed from the trajectory of traditional practices, particularly if these involved the domain of the occult and ‘negative’ practices.

Attending healing ceremonies and engaging in witchcraft are very different things.²⁸⁰

If Mr Essel really believed that he was the target of ‘witching’, it seemed that he nurtured a misconception regarding the cultural and socio-economic milieu of the Clinic.

The majority of staff regarded ‘witchcraft’ as a cultural malfunction and a neurotic aberration.

After all they had other, scientifically validated, tools to deal with anxiety and anger.

To initiate ‘witchcraft’ for this specific demographic would have presented regression. There is a significant difference too between instigating ‘witchcraft’ and engaging in protective and retaliatory practices. That is to say: while I found it unlikely that anyone in the team would have started a ‘witching campaign’ against Mr Essel, it is conceivable that some would have resorted to protection ceremonies or attempted to ‘counter-witch’ if they thought that Mr Essel was trying to damage them by witchcraft.

It emerged via another comment from someone else that the individual suspected of witching Mr Essel, was not a current member of the Hózhóní team, but ex-employee Elinor, who had been transferred by Mr Essel against her will to another organisation. When this gossip reached Gaby, who was still in contact with Elinor (‘My enemy’s enemy is my friend’), she was incredulous: “Elinor?! She wouldn’t witch anybody! She is a Christian lady!”

Judging from Gaby’s spontaneous reaction it seemed that Mr Essel had over-estimated the prevalence of ‘traditional cultural practices’ amongst staff.

* * *

²⁸⁰ See Appendix: Notes on Witchcraft

Witching commonly is not a subject that is openly discussed among Navajo, where there is a lingering belief that the mere mention of negative things will evoke them. Dark subject-matters are so best avoided. Outsiders are well advised not to take the initiative in broaching the subject.

“My understanding is that they have their own world – they have to make a sacrifice, they can do bad....My grandfather used to say it is at the tip of your tongue – anyone can say it.”²⁸¹

In the tribal DBHS witching-attempts and -accusations seemed quite rampant among certain staff. There was an impression that staff did not just suffer persecutory anxiety regarding being witched, but actively resorted to witchcraft as an available alternative to dealing with colleagues. According to my experience there was however a great difference between the Hózhóní Clinic and the DBHS.

Hózhóní clinicians prided themselves on being mental health specialists and may therefore have felt too self-conscious to engage in the traditional mode of dealing with anxiety that witchcraft presents. Witchcraft is not a culturally sanctioned activity: Although it seems to proliferate in certain milieus, it is largely considered as a negative and destructive way that taints those that indulge in it, as much as it damages those that it attacks.

The import of the idea of witchcraft into a workplace itself is disturbing.

The accusation of witchcraft in the workplace is as powerful as the act of sorcery itself. A witchcraft accusation is like introjecting a damaging object into the community.²⁸²

²⁸¹ Medicine Man lecturing on Navajo Traditional Diagnosis in answer to a question about witchcraft. The implication here seems twofold: Firstly that anyone may be capable of it, when they muster enough ill-will. Secondly that once ‘it has been said’ (and if by this is meant, as I have taken it, to pronounce an alliance with witchcraft or ‘witching’), one moves into a separate world of sacrifices and evil-doing. The Medicine Man during this lecture seemed at pains to avoid terms pertaining to witchcraft and sorcery, as indicated by the circumspect way he formulates his answer. The emic term ‘witchcraft’ has here been used for sympathetic magic it alludes to and which in anthropology would be glossed as sorcery.

²⁸² This does not imply that Mr Essel deliberately sought to damage the organisation by his witchcraft accusation. We are speaking here of unconscious processes: Mr Essel himself had been wounded-poisoned- by his colleagues previous machinations against him. I took Mr Essel’s witching concerns as a projection (or more accurately: introjection) of his wounded-ness into the system.

The suspicion stays in its ‘flesh’; it cannot be expelled and acts like slow poison on the body politic. At least this may have been the effect if a similar accusation had been made by Navajo staff.

Paradoxically Mr Essel, the bilagáana, was here the one most actively engaged with the idea of witchcraft. It may have represented to him potency, exoticism and enchantment.

Mr Essel’s preoccupation with the darker side of Navajo tradition did in this context present an aberration that perhaps was only tolerated because Mr Essel was bilagáana. That fact robbed the malevolence of his accusation of ‘its teeth’, as it did with all the peculiar behaviour perpetrated by Anglos, that was ignored or at least not taken too seriously by a majority of clinicians, quite possibly because it was associated with the imbalanced ‘conduct-disorder’ characteristic of the colonial mentality.

It was the position of privilege that being bilagáana bestowed on Mr Essel that made this behaviour acceptable. It is also possible that he benefited from a certain permissive cultural relativism that rendered transgressions into perplexing albeit irrelevant spleens.

The ‘litmus-test’ here however is simple: How would the clinical team have reacted if Mr Essel had been Navajo?

* * *

PART V

JHON'S SYNDROME OR: THE CRAB BARREL

Once during a discussion about hierarchy and culture in the IHS, John, the elder Hózhóní clinician, spoke about why he felt that it was a good thing that clinical managerial posts were held by Anglos. He understood this not as manifesting the status quo of the dominant society asserting itself in the Indian Health Service, but as a device that saved Indians from themselves- or each other.

Navajo at the head of the Hózhóní Clinic, according to John, would not 'survive'.

Staff would watch them 'like hawks', they would be hounded relentlessly for any perceived error or wrongdoing. They would draw complaints like magnets drew metal.

In short: "we would annihilate them completely. We would make sure to destroy their position"

- But why?

Here John told me about Jhon's Syndrome.²⁸³ In the old days 'John' was a name bilagáanas addressed Indians by. This may simply have been because 'John' here could be used as a generic first name, or as the cynical John thought, because it was a derogatory reference to the vernacular for 'outhouse' = John.

Jhon nowadays is the term applied to a Reservation Indian- a Native version on the country yokel or hillbilly. The spelling 'Jhon' prevails in contemporary usage, possibly to indicate by misspelling the extent of the lack of sophistication of a Reservation Indian.

John saw 'Jhon's Syndrome' as a state endemic amongst the Navajo, who could not bear any of their own having more than they had. Jhon's syndrome entailed that 'Jhons' would do anything to prevent a fellow Indian advancing before them. Jhon's Syndrome seemed very similar to the 'Crab Antics' described by Wilson in his Caribbean case-study:

²⁸³ It should be noted here that when 'John' chose the pseudonym 'John' for himself for the purpose of a taped interview for this study, he linked this to an explanation of the derogatory provenance of John/ Jhon. I understood this as an acerbic comment on the reality of race-relations, delivered wryly and subtly.

“Crabs being placed in a barrel, all try to climb out. But as one nears the top, the one below pulls him down in his own effort to climb. Only a particularly strong crab ever climbs out – the rest in the long run, remain in the same place.” (...)

Crab antics manifest themselves in two attitudes: covetousness and contentiousness”²⁸⁴

The hiring of bílagáana by John is interpreted as a strategy to prevent intra-cultural strife. One may ask why bílagáana, a group whose advancement has been reaped on the backs of other peoples, are exempt from envy and why their privileged position is not the subject of subaltern fury?

How come that intra-group envy is more injurious to community-relations than inter-group rancour? Why is status and power enjoyed by an Anglo more palatable than authority inhabited by a Navajo? We shall- crabwise- return to this point shortly.

Regarding the indisputable inequity in social and organisational power-relations, and inequality of opportunity still experienced by North American minority groups vis-à-vis the dominant society, John’s hypothesis that Anglos are employed as managers to protect Navajo covetousness, seems to let Anglo managers ‘off the hook’.

However Anglos behave, they still fulfil their primary function to serve as buffers between ‘The People’ and so help to keep the community harmonious.

But it seems likely that in a similar strategy to his adopting the pseudonym, ‘John’ here performs a masterly conceptual inversion which turns slight into advantage by assimilating it into his particular rationale. Here it is not bílagáana’s exalted competence (as they themselves are prone to believe), that holds them in superior positions, it is that they are the unwitting instruments promoting a noble tradition of tribal egalitarianism. This is why Anglos in management positions

²⁸⁴ Wilson; 1973:58

can get away with so much: whatever they do they are serving their purpose of protecting Native people from the colonially imported evil of envy against each other.

The subtle stealthy and oblique critiquing by playing on nuances may be considered as strategies of resistance. John is of the generation whose encounter with Anglo rule was problematic. He grew up in times when Navajo knew that opposition to or defiance of the system was futile and detrimental.

John had been deployed in the Vietnam War and once said something to me that recalled Cassius Clay's (the later Mohammed Ali's) much publicised objection to the Vietnam War that he saw little sense in a 'brown person killing other brown persons'. "You know," said John apropos the Vietnamese; "we kind of looked the same. This is what I noticed."

John was no opportunist. In team meetings he sometimes would disconcert consultants with his discursive ruminations that they suspected harboured concealed criticism, but that they often appeared not to fully follow. Some Anglos working on the reservation were prone to dismiss the Navajo discursive practice as 'people never getting to the point' and as evidence of a general inefficiency that prevented people making decisions and getting 'things done'.²⁸⁵ But John's interventions were in fact in-depth critiques presented as circumspect lessons, which left conclusions to the beholder. John's method of discourse fundamentally differed from the Anglo tendency of concise pronouncements and swift decision-making.

John so occasionally succeeded in importing into the Clinic what otherwise was ignored: alterity; that brought with it associations of the depth of another culture, a culture that the Indian Health Service purportedly is dedicated to, but that was given consideration rarely enough.

And so another dichotomy presents itself here between the way John comports himself and how Mr Essel behaves: The strategic circumspection, self-control, sanguinity of one here contrasts with the impulsivity, recklessness and irritability of the other.

²⁸⁵ This at least seemed to be a common complaint shared by Anglos I had met.

Here it is Mr Essel who exhibits ‘Dionysian’ characteristics- whose position allows him that Dionysian behaviour- and there John who may have been taught by culture and adversity to set caution and self-control over the impulse to act.

When we speak of ‘mentalities’, these may be acquired in various ways: culture is not the only source. Unlike Mr Essel, whose privileged background may early on have equipped him with ideas of entitlement and ‘a voice that made itself heard’, people of John’s generation and culture had their voice systematically and deliberately stifled.

While one may have grown up accustomed to receiving attention and consideration, the other may have experienced the opposite- as for instance Larry King reports- having taken away one’s identity, one’s hair, one’s language, even one’s name being converted into a number.

So there is certain piquancy to this situation at the Hózhóní Clinic, where the privileged may exercise their right to scream and shout, but where subjects may exercise their right not to listen. That Mr Essel does not seem to be taken all that seriously so perhaps presents a step in a process of emancipation, whereby the privileges of entitlement are implicitly dismissed as undeserved and therefore negatable.

The machinations of ‘Jhon’s Syndrome’ in a roundabout way help to make sense of how Mr. Essel’s comportment is perceived in context. In short, his behaviour is regarded as fairly irrelevant, as Mr Essel the Anglo is not seen to ‘inhabit the same barrel’ as the clinicians and so his ‘antics’ are not registered, much as his position, status or professional credentials are not subject to envious attacks.

Mr Essel regardless of how much he may feel himself to be one of The People, is not, and therefore may behave in ways that would make him an outcast, were he Navajo.

Perhaps, to extend this reasoning, race-relations will be equal only then when Anglos arouse the same degree of envy that fellow-Natives do.

And to return to the phenomena of Crab Antics and ‘Jhon’s Syndrome’, that is envy against one’s own- we may refer back to Joffe’s theory quoted in a previous chapter- linking envy to intimacy and identification.

In order to feel envy there must be relationship. Where there is envy, there must be identification or (grudging) regard.

Envy in Joffe’s view is aspirational. The prerequisite of relationship for envy to occur helps to explain why envy in such intensity arises in intra- rather than in inter-group relations (unless groups have a common identity within a greater context as ethnic minorities vis-à-vis the dominant society). Comprehending envy as relational and aspirational offers another perspective on ‘crab antics’: crab antics are less the product of colonial adversity and the erosion of autonomy, disenfranchisement and conditioning through power-relations than signifiers of conflicted intimacy. Crab antics are integral to the dynamics of processing communal experiences.²⁸⁶

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²⁸⁶ In the Appendix Chapter: ‘Trouble in Cyberspace’ the theme of ‘adversarial intimacy’ will be explored in another context

PART VI

PAPER WARS OR: HOW TO USE ‘THE MAN’ TO HARM ADVERSARIES

Receptionist write-ups, the bullying of Dr Kinsky and ‘dog-witching’ accusations turned out to be only a prelude to an incident that finally managed to openly polarise staff and drive the Clinic to crisis-point: This was an AWOL²⁸⁷ accusation against Manuel, newly qualified member of staff, partner of Gaby the receptionist and another object of Mr Essel’s ire.²⁸⁸

Manuel was dismissed one day without notice because it was alleged that he and Gaby had not been present at lunch during a staff-outing.²⁸⁹

While Gaby was ‘written up’, Manuel was fired with immediate effect. Finally here was an event that galvanised a number of staff, amongst them senior clinicians Josephine and John, mentors to Manuel whom they had recruited to co-facilitate the behavioural group-programme.

Manuel’s dismissal was, staff surmised, due to another of Mr Essel’s machinations, a retaliatory move in response to Manuel previously vetoing plans to hold the outing at Mr Essel’s ranch that in itself was preceded by Mr Essel’s beginning to include Manuel in his machinations against Gaby.

Manuel packed and left, deeply distraught. In the staff meeting on the next day, Josephine, usually so calm and contained, began to cry. Dr Cardigan and Mr Essel sat by looking inscrutable. There was no further discussion. That a member of staff could be dismissed for not attending a staff-luncheon, which anyway had not been all that communal, as staff had dispersed, different fractions obviously intent on avoiding each other, was bad enough. Worse however was that the accusation was blatantly false- I knew this as I had the evidence to prove it.

²⁸⁷ AWOL: Absent Without Leave

²⁸⁸ Perhaps through his association with Gaby

²⁸⁹ This was apparently possible due to Manuel’s newly qualified status

During the outing I had taken photos that were date- and time-imprinted with my new digital camera. I had spent some time with Gaby, Manuel and Bella and had photos that proved that during lunch Manuel had, contrary to accusations, been present.

Dr Cardigan whom I sought out in his office, camera in hand, did not seem perturbed. He shrugged when I asked him whether it was true that Manuel had been dismissed. Such cases could not be commented on, he said. Was it true that Manuel had been dismissed because of AWOL during lunch? Dr Cardigan could not comment. But what if there was evidence to the contrary? Dr Cardigan informed me that once someone had been dismissed this could be neither reviewed nor reversed. But what of the falseness of the accusation? Dr Cardigan shrugged with finality. I informed Dr Cardigan that in view of his (lack of) reaction I would take my evidence to the Human Resource Department.

HR staff was more interested in the matter than Dr Cardigan. Someone inferred that the Hózhóní had a track-record of complaints about the management's untoward dealings.

The ball had been set rolling and the ensuing process took months. A delegation travelled in from Window Rock to conduct an internal enquiry. Every member of staff was interviewed and required to submit written statements. Finally Manuel was compensated and re-instated.

Team-relations during the enquiry steadily deteriorated.

Manuel had been dismissed with the help of supporting statements by Daphne, Erica and Alice all of whom had in writing attested to his absence during the staff-outing. One may assume that being caught out making false statements in order to victimise a colleague would be regarded as a serious misdemeanour, but moral aspects seemed not to trouble the team. Everyone seemed to accept that 'all's fair ... etc' and that a body had to do what a body had to do.

Battle-lines had been drawn however, and Manuel, in the aftermath of his victory became pugnacious and combative.

The case had gone public on the Reservation and the intervention by Window Rock officials had served to politicize the discourse. While in the IHS Anglo-views usually dominated, the involvement of officials from Window Rock inverted this and turned the tables.

Now it was the Navajo perspective that ruled, and when the situation was reduced to its raw bones, here were two bilagáana managers who had victimised a Navajo.

Mr Essel had worked long enough on the Reservation to know that he was being put on notice. It was clear that henceforth he could not indulge in campaigns that targeted Manuel as an individual.

Mr Essel, according to some interpretations, so took the long view and began to advocate for budget-reasons the closing-down of Manuel's workplace, the Day Center for people with chronic mental illness, a satellite of the Hózhóní Clinic that Mr Essel himself had helped to establish some years ago.

Day Center staff was notified a month before the proposed closure date, which however was foiled because of Manuel and his colleagues' ceaseless agitation and campaigning.

In the ensuing ping-pong of retaliatory moves Mr Essel reaped his come-uppance when he received a complaint aimed squarely at his Achilles heel.

Mr Essel, as mentioned, saw himself as a friend and admirer of the Navajo. He engaged with traditions, attended sweat-lodges, consulted medicine men and subscribed to a somewhat New-Age belief-system. In his spare time Mr Essel conducted alternative healing group-sessions at his ranch. One day he organised one of his spiritual healing-sessions for the Day Treatment Center's patients at his ranch.

Mr Essel concluded the session blessing patients with an eagle feather. Had Mr Essel not been the identified source of previous machinations against staff, and had he been surrounded by allies, this activity may have passed unremarked. But in the jaundiced eyes of irked Day Treatment Center staff Mr Essel undertaking blessings with an eagle feather was duly noted as both an illegal act, and an insult to Native traditions.

The use of eagle feathers and bones for ceremonial purposes is in fact, under the American Indian Religious Freedom Act, only allowed to Native Americans, as eagles are a protected species.

The witnessing staff, guided by Manuel, swiftly moved into action, and filed their complaints with an entity above the Clinic's management.

Addressing their complaint to Window Rock they cited cultural violation, illegal possession and use of eagle feathers and also forwarded a copy of the complaint to the professional State Licensing Board under which Mr Essel was licensed.

This, in contrast to the petty grievances mentioned above, was a complaint that 'meant business', calculated to professionally damage Mr Essel. In addition it was an attack on something that Mr Essel held dear: his understanding, connection and respect for Native American traditions and spirituality.

It seemed not without irony, that Mr Essel, who was so fond of instructing and reprimanding incomers and Anglos regarding Navajo cultural mores and their faux-pas and transgressions against these, was now being taken to task by incensed Natives who claimed cultural violation. A bílagáana conducting an indeterminately referenced blessing-ceremony with an eagle feather, may well arouse a certain amount of consternation, alienation, bemusement and discomfort amongst attendees.

Had attitudes been favourable towards Mr Essel in advance of the ceremony, it is unlikely that his conduct would have led to an official complaint. Amongst people well disposed towards him his behaviour would have probably been attributed to his eccentricity and his wish to be accepted as spiritually Native- as so many bílagáanas do.

Outrages against Native American traditions are committed every day, some are deliberately damaging or provocative, some committed out of ignorance, many are insulting in their simplistic or commercial take on complex concepts.

Part of being Native American ²⁹⁰ in contemporary America is to develop an immunity or tough skin to these slights, and to learn to evaluate when offence is intended, when it is committed out of ignorance, or as an ill-advised attempt of delivering a cultural tribute.

On this occasion Mr Essel's failing could be categorized as the latter, an act which- amongst friends- would have probably been ignored. Tolerance, and conversely ill-will are not static, dogmatically reactive attitudes, but they are flexibly responsive according to context.

This may be a reason why it appears to be so difficult to mediate the concept of inter-personal and inter-cultural respect and tolerance through a 'policy and procedures' approach.

Rigid prohibitions and dogmatic mindfulness of the perceived customs and rules of other social or cultural groups do not necessarily equate to respect and understanding.

Mr Essel's admonishment of Dr Kinsky not to interrupt on Navajo-land for example, reflected a rather narrow understanding of culture-appropriate comportment. It insinuated that Navajo staff was unable to differentiate between rudeness and eagerness, arrogance and engagement, disrespect and geniality, as if mired in a 'state of doxa' concerning traditional orthodoxy.

And while no-one at that time contested Mr Essel's availing himself of the role of cultural defender of the Navajo, his attempt to channel ceremonial healing in the presence of adversaries was a venture too far.

But while there is- procedurally speaking- no obvious way in which to address Mr Essel's 'speaking for the Navajo people', policy guidelines offered available avenues to challenging Mr Essel's qualification as Native healer.

Policy here was used to the word, to the letter, ostensibly in the service of protecting tradition from misuse and protecting an endangered species.

Considering previous events it however seems more plausible that the prime reason policy was invoked was to deftly and strategically subdue Mr Essel. The use in this instance of bureaucracy as tool for revenge presents as a variation on the dictum that the mills of history grind slowly but

²⁹⁰ Or a member of any so-called minority ethnic group

thoroughly: It is now the turn of the colonised to beat the colonisers with tools of their own design. Weber's 'shell of future obedience' is perhaps not only that, but a container hosting fomenting resistance.²⁹¹

* * *

²⁹¹ Mr Essel was not dismissed, but Manuel thought that he must have been issued a stern warning and had been put on notice by the various authorities that had received complaints about him. Shortly after, Mr Essel retired for reasons of poor health, but has since begun working for a tribal facility at another location – according to rumours.

PART VII

FUNCTION AND DYSFUNCTION: NOTES ON ORGANISATIONAL PSYCHOSES

This and the foregoing chapter are intended to present ‘function’ and ‘dysfunction’ in Hózhóní Clinic dynamics. Procedural efficacy, bureaucratic doctrine and the use of adherence to protocol as strategy of containment contrast with the chaos and dysfunction in intra-organisational relations.

If ‘official’ protocol and ‘unofficial’ process, energy expended in authorized tasks and unsanctioned activities are considered systemically, as elements enmeshed in reciprocal dynamics, then one may consider a flow of movement between bureaucracy and dysfunction, where dysfunction offers respite from bureaucratic stricture, and bureaucracy offers refuge from unruly dysfunction.

Both aspects are sustaining and fundamental to the system. Bureaucracy can be endured because its shackles are temporarily loosened in the catharsis of dysfunction and disorder.

Dysfunction and disorder can be borne because there is the ‘Stahlharte Gehäuse’ of clinical protocol and bureaucratic policy to withdraw into.

At the beginning of this thesis I argued that in organisational processes may be reflected agents’ earlier formative experiences which in turn contribute to the shaping of relational patterns and eventually organisational structures.

The psychoanalyst Michael Balint’s posited an interesting theory of ‘embodiment’ that binds together the impact of early developmental experiences to how subjects relate and respond to their environment.

In his concepts of the ‘ocnophil’ and the ‘philobat’ Balint draws on topographic and geological references. Balint’s theories embed individual psychodynamics in landscapes and spaces.

“The nature of their object relations distinguishes two types of patients: the 'ocnophil' sees the world as consisting of objects separated by horrid empty spaces, while the 'philobat' sees the reverse, friendly expanses (spaces) broken up by or dotted with dangerous objects. The ocnophil finds his security in clinging to objects, the philobat in avoiding them. With considerable success the ocnophil tries to cling in a primitive way to any object that might possibly play a maternal role; while the philobat develops skill in handling and sometimes mastering objects, keeping them at a distance from himself and sublimating successfully. Both groups have the same aim: to re-establish the harmony that existed before awareness of the separateness of objects.”²⁹²

Balint intuitively in the strategies and impulses by which individuals relate to their environment the processing of primary symbiotic drives. The defence against separateness- and separation- from the object is conceived by Balint as following two different paths:

Where the ocnophil attempts to re-connect to the primary object through relations with objects, the philobat avoids attachment to objects and seeks comfort in avoidance.

The philobat seeks empty spaces because they do not bear reminders of that early loss incurred by separation; there are no objects to awaken the yearning for that original profound connection.

Balint's perspective offers a complex and inclusive variation on the theme of intimacy and distance, separation and invasion.

Space and the environment here are animated by Man's projection of emotional relations onto it and offer opportunities for sublimation, restitution or repetition. Whatever the traditions that buoy particular attitudes and practices- what lies at their core is, essentially, relationship. Whether seeking it or fleeing from it, structuring it or destroying it, organisational and 'cultural' phenomena all connect on that fundamental level.

²⁹² Balint; 1955:227ff.

The Hózhóní team's reliance on hierarchy and bureaucracy here emerges as centrist and ocnophil in orientation. It is seeking the comfort of objects and seeks to escape 'horrid empty spaces'.

Witchcraft is the opposite. It takes place in 'friendly expanses' and 'breaks them up with dangerous objects'. Bureaucracy and witchcraft in this organisational framework are conduits for defensive inter- and intra-cultural processes.

The significance of how individuals process their relationship to space and thereby to others is not as acknowledged as it deserves to be.

When applied to the Navajo Balint's theory of space-as symbolic-object ignites the idea of a people emerging from a formerly nomadic tradition, now entrapped in and having to reconcile themselves to the confines of an organisational 'Gehäuse'.

The conflicted discourse amongst Hózhóní staff may so be seen as generated by a state of mourning for the collaborative communality across the 'friendly expanses' that once were the history of Navajo.

But where there is 'Intergenerational Trauma' there may also be 'Restorative Collective Memory.' If adverse experiences can travel through generations, then it is conceivable that their opposite, the sustaining 'nos' of collective identity continues to reside in individuals and their communities. And again: within supposed 'dysfunction' we may find 'function'.

* * *

Mr Essel's role as agitator of conflict at the clinic is prominent. It is notable that Essel, the bílagáana, is the one person who references Navajo culture and tradition as independent constructs and authorities. One mode of interpreting this is to focus on Mr Essel's position as non-Navajo and member of the dominant society; a subject outside the crab-barrel and beyond the envy and desire of those within it. Mr Essel is attacked only when he attempts to immerse himself

in the crab-barrel and ‘goes native’ by means of eagle-feather-blessings. Had he stayed ‘outside’ it is likely that he would have continued to escape critique and repercussions.

That Mr Essel is usually outside of the crab barrel however does not mean that he himself is immune to covetous desire. For Mr Essel the crab barrel in which ‘his’ staff crawl and claw may symbolize an enviable state of containment. Mr Essel, this is to say, may be desirous of the belonging to a community no matter how ‘dysfunctional’.

Girard speaks of ‘mimetic desire’ which he sees as linked to violence.²⁹³

Mr Essel’s witchcraft accusations evoke a ‘tantrum of desire’. They may be an attempt to insinuate himself into, and become a part of that what he is excluded from, the implicit community of people who share a culture. By being witched Mr Essel invokes and introjects Navajo culture, and becomes Navajo by contagion.²⁹⁴

Brodwin quotes Bourdieu on the “hysteresis effect,” a term the latter borrowed from physics and which “refers to the retention of the values of physical materials as their environment changes” when actual properties lag behind expected properties:

“Bourdieu discerns a sociological analogue of the hysteresis effect when people's current categories of judgment and types of strategic action remain calibrated to a prior state of the world. When social structures change, the beliefs and practical strategies of an entire cohort can become anachronistic.”²⁹⁵

²⁹³ Girard; 1965

Desire is triadic – Oedipal (?) – in nature and circuits around subject, object and mediator. Attitudes change and intensify according to shifting positions and increased or decreased distance between participating entities. That view, reminiscent of Hegel’s ‘Master and Slave’ presents a consideration of power-relations in terms of enmeshment rather than as merely structural inequity.

²⁹⁴ Psychoanalytic theories of introjection resonate with Navajo contagion-beliefs. Both posit that the self is invaded and lastingly affected by certain experiences. Lacan’s ‘*amare conspectus*’ the *bitter look* mentioned elsewhere, for instance evokes the self-destructive power of pure envy. The object of desire is desired simply because it is *of the other*, not because it is of any use. Envy and desire may thus be conceived as defensive modes of mourning the separation from *the other*.

²⁹⁵ Brodwin; 2011: 189–208

It is conceivable that the hysteresis-effect ‘befalls’ post-colonial societies, who consequently have to defend against the vacuum created by the difference between *actual* and *expected* properties promised as part of the colonial trade-off.

Mr Essel’s IHS-based witchcraft accusations can also be understood in terms of a disjoint between his expectations that are ‘calibrated to a prior state’ of imagined traditional culture, and the reality of a people who themselves are beholden to the hysteresis effect regarding their hopes which are calibrated towards the expected advantages of ‘progress’ according to the dominant society.

But aspects of Mr Essel’s behaviour may also be read as a cathartic resistance against a stifling protocol, a wanton transgression against prescribed professional comportment.

In the cauldron of conflicted relations that is the Hózhóní, Mr Essel is the only one who invokes culture in an a-cultural space the making of which is in the widest sense the responsibility of his ancestors. In Essel’s invocation, his somewhat dissonant siren-song, we find the only clear and unequivocal reference to Navajo culture.

Witchcraft dynamics oppose the staidness of prescribed protocol and bureaucratic process.

The practices of (sympathetic) witchcraft most definitely contravene health- and safety regulations: they often involve body-matter and body-fluids; they arise out of unclassified ague; and if we believe them to be effective, they wreak chaos on the afflicted adversary’s life by strategies of malignant intimacy.²⁹⁶

Contrasted with bureaucracy and organisational stricture witchcraft is a dystopian sandbox, full of creative and dirty possibilities. It offers enchantment, where officialdom re-produces congealed spirit. And: witchcraft’s effects do not fall under the remit of evidence-based practice- they offer the evaluation-free indulgence of suspense.

²⁹⁶ Witchcraft in this way is similar to rape, a perverse constellation of invasive power, desire, desecration and possession.

Considering the social-worker's diagnosis of the Hózhóní Clinic as an 'ill place', Mr Essel here becomes representative and conduit for the entire Clinic.

All are contaminated, all are compromised. It is just that Mr Essel is the only one who takes the position to admit to it.

* * *

The group-analyst Wilfred Bion compared the characteristics of group processes to Freud's Ego functions.

Groups, so Bion, operate according to either of three 'basic assumptions': the basic assumption of dependence; the basic assumption of pairing; the basic assumption of fight and flight.

The operative basic assumption of a group is represented by or projected into its leader. But basic assumption leadership "need not be identified with any individual in the group. The identification may in each case be with an inanimate object or with an idea. It may also be identified with the history of the group."²⁹⁷

But what history and whose history?²⁹⁸

In the case of the Hózhóní Clinic there are two historically distinctly opposed groups: the managers who occupy the dominant stratum of established hierarchies; and clinicians, erstwhile colonial subjects and contemporary subalterns.

Basic assumptions, according to Bion, are neither task-oriented, nor are they rational constructs:

Group-processes serve to consolidate the onslaught of reality on "internal objects, projective

²⁹⁷ Bion; 1952:237

²⁹⁸ For Bion a group's history is always endogenic and does not extend beyond its boundaries. Freud in his discussion of the substitution of libido in 'artificial groups' however considers the group-mind as shaped by endogenic as well as exogenic influences.

identification, and failure in symbol formation”. A group is ‘other than’ the sum of its parts, just as ego-function is ‘other than’ the sum of individual experiences.

In groups basic assumptions represent the collective’s projected internal life.

According to Bion it is futile to attempt to interpret group processes structurally and rationally:

“... words, if they are to elucidate basic assumption group phenomena, must not be interpreted in the light of their value as symbols (...) but as sounds having pre-verbal significance. Their manifest content must be ignored and an attempt made to view them as identical, in their basic assumption function, with the bizarre verbalizations of the psychotic. Their rational content must be ignored as accidental”²⁹⁹

Group communications then are an amalgam of primitive drives- dependency, pairing or fight/flight- projected as communal or schismatic attitudes. Purported shared tasks, ethos or doctrinal belief may be seen as a retro-actively assumed cloak of rationality.

That interpretation of group processes as fundamentally primitive, irrational, even psychotic provides a theory that transcends utilitarian, functional or structural approaches.

To view group-processes as essentially psychotic, as does Bion, offers a more plausible explanation of phenomena which, when approached with expectations of rationality, defy reason.

The inevitable Hydra-like occurrence and re-occurrence of crises, quasi-psychotic ‘acting-out’, apparently detrimental, counterproductive activities observed in organisational dynamics confirms Bion’s understanding of ‘basic assumption’ groups regressing into primitive states.

Conventional organisational theories that approach group-dynamics as remediable dysfunctionality disregard the important function of dysfunction for the collective.

At the crescent of the crisis, dynamics at the Hózhóni Clinic, aided by Mr Essel’s witchcraft accusations certainly veered towards the psychotic rather than the neurotic spectrum, in that the crises had moved beyond the efficacy of conventional tools applied in such instances. Psychosis is clearest understood as a state of isolation; a stigma; a state of mental contagion; the end of the

²⁹⁹ *ibid*; 246

road, so to speak. A psychotic episode demands, whether practically or symbolically, a collective purging that often leads to a cycle of destruction and resurrection, the obliteration of old relations and a forging of the new.

In the Hózhóní's cyclical trajectory of crises, the collective could only 'move on' through the sacrifice of one of its members.

The Clinic's history was littered with the annihilated and departed: sometimes that sacrifice would be minor, like the treatment of Dr Kinsky, whose dismissal in retrospect should have been understood as a starting-shot for the crisis to come.

Sometimes in the case of more 'significant' crises, more ostentatious sacrifices were necessary. In the end the incident of Manuel's dismissal claimed Mr Essel and Dr Cardigan, although by processes of *longue durée*. It is an irony- is it irony?- that a crisis instigated by Mr Essel and supported by Dr Cardigan ultimately resulted in their own annihilation.

Had Mr Essel erred in the way that some Navajo traditionalists said: that by invoking evil you will turn it upon yourself? Was Dr Cardigan's serious neurological illness due to his ill-doing at the Clinic- as Manuel speculated?

The only thing that can be stated with certainty is that Anglo staff left, and Navajo staff stayed. Although discontent had affected all strata and relationships in the Clinic and had indeed been especially virulent amongst reception staff and some clinicians, in the end none of them left and in fact remain there still, excepting those who left due to retirement or promotion, at the Hózhóní. And perhaps this is not coincidental.

Pádraig, who was the Clinical Supervisor at the DBHS rehabilitation programme at the time when I did my fieldwork there, recently resigned from his position - as he announced in his round-robin email- to work in private practice and 'concentrate on other projects'.

Pádraig's management style had drawn on systemic theory and so differed significantly from Hózhóní management. Instead of a 'top-down' approach, Pádraig's supervision was communal, egalitarian and discursive. To me it had felt much more suited and sympathetic to Navajo culture.

It was a surprise therefore that Pádraig was leaving the DBHS. Although he did not leave in the context of a grand crisis, Pádraig left somewhat bruised by his experience. After a ‘good run’, during which services had been left to their own devices, external management had begun to increasingly interfere. Internal rivalries between administrative and programme managers had escalated and he had found himself in the midst of an unsettled team and warring factions.

He was heartened however, when one of the Substance Abuse counsellors, a veteran of many years at the DBHS, said this as a farewell:

“Usually we get Anglos and they don’t know when to leave. They stay on. You came, you did what you had to do, you showed us what you know and now you are leaving. That is good. It is for us to get on with things.”

And this reminds me of a joke told by Bert, a client at DBHS:

‘A bílagáana couple travel through the Rez and lose their way. They drive around for a while and pass a hogan. There is this old man sitting out in front.

“Let’s ask that old Indian over there for directions” says the bílagáana lady.

The two bílagáana drive up to the hogan and call out to the old man:

“Hey Chief, can you tell us where the road goes?”

The old Indian sits in silence and thinks it over for a while.

Finally he answers:

“Road stay. You go.”

* * *

CHAPTER FIVE

NOTES ON THE HISTORY OF ALCOHOL IN A 'NEW WORLD'

ABSTRACT

Alcohol, the main focus of the final chapters of this thesis, is presented as an antidote to the strictures and structures explored in previous chapters.

Alcohol is a mutable substance and a projective screen: in changing attitudes to drinking wider historical, social and cultural paradigmatic shifts are reflected. Alcohol as a shared concern, sociable spirit, desired object and irrepressible pathogen bridges individual and collective histories and preoccupations.

Along with alcohol, colonialists imported their complex attitudes towards drinking to the New World. Since the early settlers' arrival in North America stances towards alcohol waxed and waned, reflecting operative social, economic and moral paradigms. From rare commodity, to essential trading mainstay, to routine leisure pursuit and forbidden transgression alcohol has covered all.

Contemporary attitudes to alcohol are increasingly impacted by biomedicine, giving rise to a perceivable trend towards 'neo-temperance' in public health policies. Attitudes towards alcohol consumption reflect class-relationship: Social habitus defines whether an individual's or group's drinking is commended, condoned or condemned. Dissipation by the lower orders was always regarded ambivalently at best by the ruling classes: alcohol both brings profit and foments disorder. To regulate drinking without necessarily curbing it, therefore is the mark of successful policy.

Attitudes towards Indian drinking have not been subject to significant revision. Indian drinking has consistently remained pathologized. The attitudes with which the 'pathology' of Indian drinking has been perceived, however, have been subject to paradigmatic shifts: Erstwhile colonial revulsion at primitive dissipation and wantonness gradually made way for paternalistic concern, a shift commensurate with the progress of the colonial project and European assertion over northern America's indigenous population. What once presented challenge and danger now could be considered more compassionately. Federal policies sought to protect Indians from drinking and thus from themselves.

PROLOGUE

"If when you say whiskey you mean the devil's brew, the poison scourge, the bloody monster, that defiles innocence, dethrones reason, destroys the home, creates misery and poverty, yea, literally takes the bread from the mouths of little children; if you mean the evil drink that topples the Christian man and woman from the pinnacle of righteous, gracious living into the bottomless pit of degradation, and despair, and shame and helplessness, and hopelessness, then certainly I am against it.

But.....

If when you say whiskey you mean the oil of conversation, the philosophic wine, the ale that is consumed when good fellows get together, that puts a song in their hearts and laughter on their lips, and the warm glow of contentment in their eyes; if you mean Christmas cheer; if you mean the stimulating drink that puts the spring in the old gentleman's step on a frosty, crispy morning; if you mean the drink which enables a man to magnify his joy, and his happiness, and to forget, if only for a little while, life's great tragedies, and heartaches, and sorrows; if you mean that drink, the sale of which pours into our treasuries untold millions of dollars, which are used to provide tender care for our little crippled children, our blind, our deaf, our dumb, our pitiful aged and infirm; to build highways and hospitals and schools, then certainly I am for it."

"This is my stand. I will not retreat from it. I will not compromise."³⁰⁰

* * *

The Center for Disease Control's analysis of available data 2001 – 2005:

"...indicated that AADs accounted for 11.7% of all AI/AN deaths, that the age-adjusted AAD rate for AI/ANs was approximately twice that of the U.S. general population, and that AI/ANs lose 6.4 more years of potential life per AAD compared with persons in the U.S. general population (36.3 versus 29.9 years)."³⁰¹

³⁰⁰ Judge Noah Sweat; 1952 Speech at Mississippi State Legislature debate on Prohibition repeal.

³⁰¹ Alcohol-Attributable Deaths and Years of Potential Life Lost Among American Indians and Alaska Natives" Center for Disease Control; Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report; CDC- MMWR- Weekly; August 29, 2008/ 57(34); 938-941
(Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report, Center for Disease Control and Prevention

PART I
THEORIES ON INDIAN DRINKING

“There is a curious division in the accounts about alcohol” writes McKnight in the introduction to his ethnography on Mornington Islanders’ drinking, unambiguously subtitled “The Devastating Effects of Alcohol on an Australian Aboriginal Community”.³⁰²

McKnight points to a conceptual gap between the quantitative focus on the effects of drinking favoured by epidemiologists, and the qualitative exploration of the uses of alcohol preferred by social scientists. While epidemiological studies deliver ample evidence regarding the detrimental effects of drinking, their broadly generalised data tend to disregard that “...social problems, like alcoholism, are always contextually localized;”³⁰³ quantitative research struggles to deliver insight into the specificities of drinking.

Writing about ‘Native’, ‘Aboriginal’ or ‘First Nation’ drinking presents social scientists with something of a (post-) colonial conundrum, one that forces alignment with either one or the other of two essentially polarized perspectives. Ethnographers, according to McKnight, due to their generally permissive attitudes tend to deflate the problem of drinking, while epidemiologists, much like erstwhile colonial chroniclers, stand firm in their condemnation of Native American drinking.

There is little scope for arguing with the US Center for Disease Control’s ‘sobering’ analysis of data on Alcohol Attributable Deaths (AAD) amongst American Indians and Alaska Natives. In these numbers some see irrefutable evidence of the colonial enterprise’s deadly legacy to Native peoples.

* * *

³⁰² McKnight;2002:10

³⁰³ *ibid*:11

Rum, distilled from sugar-cane residue grown in New World plantations combined those virtues most prized by the Empire's merchant soul: cheap to produce, it yielded great profit-margins. The new territories offered an incumbent and steadily expanding 'consumer-base' diligently cultivated by pioneering colonial traders. The distilling of rum transcended mere utilitarian manufacture of desirable goods. Alcoholic spirit arguably symbolised the spirit that propelled the Empire: the cunning thrift of the merchant; the audacious vision of the entrepreneur; and the ruthlessness of the war-faring man.

In due course alcohol proved the effective, stealthy agent of the colonial enterprise. It lubricated negotiations; it persuaded the reluctant; it helped deliver goods to Europeans whose value far surpassed that of the barrels of rum they offered in exchange for them.

* * *

Even today Indian drinking is an emotive issue and one that seems to divide opinions. Alcohol in itself is a suitable object for projections. Consumed 'wisely' it puts "songs on lips, a spring in the step (...) and enables a man to magnify his joy". To the immoderate the "devil's brew (...) defiles innocence, dethrones reason, destroys the home, creates misery..." One man's 'dram' truly is another man's poison.

Whether Indian drinking is attributed to genetics, evolution, revolution, resistance or resignation; to historical or contemporary, sociological or biological causes; on the whole accounts on Indian drinking are often difficult to separate from the bias of their authors.

The prevalent and popular consensus is that alcohol historically and contemporarily has a detrimental effect on Native Americans.

In an apparent cultural turn towards ‘puritanical values’, colonial historical views on Indian drinking are experiencing a renaissance.³⁰⁴ There is general agreement that the introduction of alcohol to Indians was a BAD THING.

Findings on Native American alcohol consumption are however not consistent. Ethno-historical re-examinations of colonial accounts of Indian drinking concluded that Indian intoxication was not uniformly judged as problematic and quasi-pathological by colonists. The uses, manner of consumption and effects of alcohol they report seems to have varied considerably according to context.³⁰⁵

Many North American tribes were unfamiliar with intoxicating substances. On these peoples the novel experience of the intoxicated state could have had a particularly dramatic impact. Some argue that the unexpected effects of alcohol were interpreted by Indians as transformative and therefore sacred states, ergo they drank in a manner to achieve this state as quickly and fully as possible. In short: For these people it was not the drinking; it was the drunkenness they were after.

The intentional pursuit of extreme intoxication as a pathway to transformative, sacred states provides a plausible alternative explanation of ‘Indian drinking behaviour’ which contrasts with a majority of hypotheses that pinpoint a lack of control or pathological self-abandonment as the cause of Indian drinking. It is one of the few hypotheses on modes of native drinking that credits Indians with agency and purpose. Some scholars have gone further and argued that Indian drinking is a complex, subversive social enterprise that reflects on and inverts White attitudes towards Indians.³⁰⁶

³⁰⁴ These views are subscribed to by Anglo- and Native -Americans.

³⁰⁵ MacAndrew & Edgerton; 2003 [1969]

³⁰⁶ Lurie;1971: 311-332

The much scarcer available historical Indian commentary on alcohol likewise is much more ambiguous than is generally conceded.³⁰⁷ There are accounts of tribes whose first experiences of intoxication were so horrific that they thought they had been poisoned to death by Europeans and then resurrected (when their hang-over had passed). Others had arguably more enjoyable experiences. While some tribes early on decided that the effects of alcohol were, on the whole, undesirable others perceived alcohol as a sacred substance.³⁰⁸

More radical perspectives propose that alcohol was employed knowingly by colonial powers as an agent of genocide. Alcohol was used deliberately to subdue and control tribes, to make them unfit for negotiation or resistance, and, in fact, to push them towards extinction.

An enduringly popular hypothesis among epidemiologists references particularities in the alcohol dehydrogenase gene cluster ADH which may inhibit the effective metabolizing of alcohol. This hypothesis supposes a genetic predisposition of North American Indians to low ethanol tolerance. In a slight variation on this theory it has been argued that as environmental and social factors continuously impact on genetics, Native Americans having been exposed to alcohol for a relatively short time compared to Europeans may, bio-historically speaking, exhibit an appropriately evolved (in-)tolerance to alcohol.³⁰⁹

The popular contemporary perception of Indian drinking has not moved on much from colonial judgement; only now advancing multi-cultural sensibilities gloss Native alcoholism as a culture-specific problem with impulse control rather than due to weakly dispositions.

Capacity for self-restraint and control of appetites continues to be seen as one of the achievements of civilisation. The pursuit of instant gratification is still seen as the domain of the

³⁰⁷ Trenk; 2001

³⁰⁸ MacAndrew & Edgerton; *ibid.*

³⁰⁹ *Western Journal of Medicine*, Volume 176; Genetic Polymorphism and American Indian Health; May 2002; p.203-205; <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1071720/pdf/wjm17600203.pdf>

underclass, the marginalised, underprivileged, and uneducated. Most problems of diagnosed over-consumption arousing social consternation (obesity, alcohol, drugs) are the province of the underclass. Deferred consumption is a discipline cultivated by those who do not want for lack of resources. While frugality may be a state enforced by conditions of scarcity, self-restraint in the face of plenitude is the domain of the affluent.

The way drinking is perceived and judged reflects not just intercultural attitudes but also class-relations. It is commonly the educated elite that diagnose problems in the 'lower orders'.

Epidemiological data on poverty and its related effects so may be understood alternatively as class-war transcribed into statistics.³¹⁰

* * *

³¹⁰ In a process not dissimilar to the ADHD diagnosis discussed in Chapter Three.

PART II
COLONIAL ATTITUDES TOWARDS INDIAN DRINKING

In his autobiography Benjamin Franklin describes a treaty meeting with the Indians of Carlisle, Ohio in 1753 as follows:

“As those people are extremely apt to get drunk, and, when so, are very quarrelsome and disorderly, we strictly forbade the selling any liquor to them; and when they complained of this restriction, we told them that if they would continue sober during the treaty, we would give them plenty of rum when business was over.”³¹¹

After negotiations are concluded, the Indians appear at the agents’ headquarters to ‘claim’ their rum and federal agents honour their promise without further ado.

Then Franklin continues:

In the evening, hearing a great noise among them, the commissioners walked out to see what was the matter. We found they had made a great bonfire in the middle of the square; they were all drunk, men and women, quarreling and fighting. Their dark-colored bodies, half naked, seen only by the gloomy light of the bonfire, running after and beating one another with firebrands, accompanied by their horrid yellings, formed a scene the most resembling our ideas of hell that could well be imagined; there was no appeasing the tumult...”³¹²

Now Franklin finds the Indians’ drunken comportment difficult to tolerate. It is not just the noise and rowdiness that disconcert him; “their dark-colored bodies (...) their horrid yellings...” to Franklin resemble a vision of hell.

The day after the celebration the Indians make an appearance, as Franklin perceives it, to apologize. They offer the following explanation for their behaviour:

"The Great Spirit, who made all things, made everything for some use, and whatever use he designed anything for, that use it should always be Put to. Now, when he made rum, he said, ' Let this be for the Indians to get drunk with,' and it must be so."³¹³

³¹¹ Franklin, Benjamin; The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin; Electronic version; p.57

<http://www.ushistory.org/franklin/autobiography/>

³¹² *ibid.*

³¹³ *ibid.*

According to Franklin's understanding this statement is an apology. As this is all he tells us of the encounter, it is difficult to know if anything else was said supporting his interpretation. In the quote Franklin provides remorse is not particularly evident.

"Let this be for the Indians to get drunk with" and "it must be so" is only an apology if it is understood as signifying nothing more than an abdication of responsibility which in terms of enlightened individualism is of course a moral failure.

This is how Franklin seems to have interpreted it: 'We cannot help ourselves... if there is rum, we must get drunk on it...'

But the Indians' pronouncement may be just as well understood as a demand for further rum-supplies. If they are taken literally, they suggest that rum has been made especially for Indians. It is a substance particularly created for their consumption. Ergo the White Man is withholding from Indians what is owed to them, not by colonial decree but by a Power transcending them all: The Great Spirit.

Franklin gives scant consideration to what the Indians are actually saying, which is that they regard drink not as a leisure pursuit and drunkenness not as an affliction, but that in drinking they fulfil a spiritual quest.

Franklin ignores the Indians declaration about the Great Spirit's purpose of creating rum. Perhaps to him it is an unconvincing apology- low cunning disguised as piety.

Having witnessed the true terror of Indian drinking, his attitude turns belligerent. By their hellish comportment Indians have forfeited their right to exist:

"And, indeed, if it be the design of Providence to extirpate these savages in order to make room for cultivators of the earth, it seems not improbable that rum may be the appointed means."³¹⁴

Is Franklin's "Providence" the same 'Great Spirit' that has made alcohol for Indians to get drunk with, now working as the Christian God to the advantage of the "cultivators of the earth" by sending them a convenient "means for extirpation" of "these savages"?³¹⁵

³¹⁴ *ibid.*

The construction of the European idea of the Native was a longitudinal venture, and one of the colonial project's most enduring legacies:

“For in the New World the Englishman might search in vain for microcosms within the macrocosm, for men whose lives reproduced in little the order of the universe. In America, he might see clearly what he himself would become did he not live according to his highest nature. The Indian became important for the English mind, not for what he was in and of himself, but rather for what he showed civilized men they were not and must not be.”³¹⁶

Colonial policies and strategies transposed European social hierarchies and sensibilities to the New World. Here, in the unknown it was especially important to Europeans to assert themselves as superior to the territories' original inhabitants.

Evidence of 'savagism', disturbing as it was, also was opportune manifestation of dysfunctional alterity. In the Indians' undisciplined lust for alcohol and their wanton dissipation colonists found confirmed the necessity of subjugating and civilising Native Americans. In the European image of the Native there are echoes of the image of the old world's 'lower orders', albeit on a different developmental scale: While the working-class had been 'domesticated' and inhabited a place made secure by the mutual interdependency of the social orders, the Indians were yet to be 'accommodated' in the wider colonial scheme.

Franklin was by no means a lone example of contradictory colonial attitudes. Many colonial accounts managed to convey both a pragmatic attitude towards dispensing alcohol to Indians, and when goals had been achieved a stance of revulsion and condemnation of Native drunkenness.

What observers of Indian bacchanalia seemed to find most distressing was Indians' physicality and uninhibited sensuality.

³¹⁵ “...all Franklin's moral attitudes are coloured with utilitarianism. Honesty is useful, because it assures credit, so are punctuality, industry, frugality, and that is the reason they are virtues. A logical deduction from this would be that where, for instance, the appearance of honesty serves the same purpose, that would suffice, and an unnecessary surplus of this virtue would evidently appear to Franklin's eyes as unproductive waste.” Weber; 2001 [1930]:17

³¹⁶ Pearce; 1965:.5

Chroniclers note that Indians make no attempt at rationing the rum that is available, regardless of how plentiful its supply. Instead they prefer to indulge in drinking-binges of Dionysian proportions that frequently culminate in what is reported as ‘savagery’: public disturbances, brawling and libidinous debauchery. The phenomenon of drunken ‘orgies’ is much commented on by European observers:

“ ...for in these frolics both sexes take such liberties with each other and act, without constraint or shame, such scenes as they would abhor when sober or in their senses; and would endanger their ears and even their lives...”³¹⁷

Examples of drunken promiscuity are frequently cited in detail. Some witness people copulating in public like ‘wild beasts’; others note men and women disappearing into bushes to take their pleasure; among some groups women are reported to sexually engage with other men, their partners lying beside them in drunken stupor.

These accounts may either be read as inventories of apocalyptic ‘visions sauvages’- catalogues of behaviours most shocking to European sensibilities- or as factual accounts routinely documented for posterity. If these accounts are factual they are an indication that Indian sexual behavioural codes may have differed fundamentally from European morals, and that sexual relations may not have been confined, as Europeans presumed they must be, to static binary relationships. And this would cast a different light on those reported attempts by Indians to trade ‘their woman’ for rum.

* * *

Unlike Europeans, who were in the habit of casual drinking for American Indians alcohol use marked feasts, celebrations, ceremonies and times of abundance. It is conceivable that to Indians

³¹⁷ William Bartram; 1791; in: Mancall; 1995: 88

alcohol presented a revered substance with transcendental, transformative properties, and that the altered state entered when drunk was perceived as sacred.

What was alcohol for, if not to get drunk with? If the 'Great Spirit' had indeed created alcohol, would it not be a duty to ingest it in ways that encouraged the full scope of its divine properties?

It is possible that to Indians European's 'restrained' consumption of alcohol signified a neglect of the divine properties that made alcohol sacred.

In what is essentially a conceptual turn Trenk³¹⁸ proposes to take the historically transmitted pronouncements by Indians on alcohol at face value, rather than dismissing them as opportunistic statements made to procure alcohol for purposes of profane debauchery.

Trenk draws attention to the rather intriguing term used for brandy by Indians of the Great Lakes. They called it "White Father's Milk".

This expression, Trenk notes, has aroused comparatively little interest. And yet, as Trenk argues, it is hardly plausible that 'milk' is used in a derogatory sense. Milk, as one knows, is a universal, essential life-staff. The use of the metaphor of milk is therefore unlikely to indicate that the Great Lake tribes held alcohol to be a problematic or negative substance in any way. What then of the paradoxical 'Father's Milk'?

In 1636 the Jesuit missionary Jean de Brébeuf remarks in a report on his encounter with the Hurons that 'these people' are particularly prone to talking in metaphors and that one is well advised to familiarize oneself with their metaphors, unless one is resigned to grasping nothing of what they say.³¹⁹ That 'milk' is used in conjunction with 'father' should therefore not be dismissed as an arbitrary phrasing.

If in fact brandy has been created by the Great Spirit for Indians, is it not conceivable that Whites have been chosen by the Great Spirits as the couriers delivering the sacred substance to Indians?

³¹⁸ Trenk; 2002

³¹⁹ Trenk; 2002: 11

Trenk's book is an erudite discourse on ethnocentric bias. Colonists are unable to veer from their habits, customs and prescriptions of how things should be properly done. According to their routines the daily ingestion of alcohol at prescribed occasions in recurring intervals is sanctioned, while the episodic voracious consumption of drink is not.

But Trenk argues that the deliberate pursuit of drunkenness, phenomenologically speaking, is a more appropriate response as it fully honours the properties of alcohol. Alcohol's effects when consumed in moderation are unimpressive in terms of impact. Why not experience the full scope of the effect that alcohol is capable of delivering? If alcohol is seen as possessing transformative properties then it surely makes more sense to imbibe to capacity, than to curb its potential by exercising prudence. Viewed in this way Indian 'Dionysian' drinking appears more plausible than European moderation.

Certainly there is considerable historical material pointing to differences between Indian and European ways of perceiving alcohol.

Indians' deliberate pursuit of extreme intoxication, so disconcerting to Europeans, may have in fact presented an inversion of a normative code of moderation. What Europeans perceived as the cohesive symptoms of dysfunctionality so may have been quite the opposite, habitual frugality inverted in the context of ceremonial celebration.

The introduction of alcohol to American Indian tribes came to pass in conjunction with so many other changes and upheavals that it is difficult to evaluate how each one contributed to the 'decline' of Native populations and cultures.

It is certain that Europeans early on became aware of what they interpreted as Indians' weakness for rum, and deliberately sought to employ this 'weakness' strategically to their advantage.

Had Indians been left to their own devices, barring occasional trade-encounters supplying rum and other goods, perhaps Native communities would have incorporated alcohol into feasts and ceremonies, without experiencing trouble and ill effects.

It has been argued that “some tribes learned to drink from the wrong whites”³²⁰ and that therefore what is now regarded as intrinsic cultural pathology is in fact learned behaviour. The very first experiences Indians had with alcohol were not instigated by settlers or colonial powers who later usurped the alcohol trade, but by itinerant trappers, traders and adventurers. These were hardened men whose mode of life and drinking patterns were similarly shunned by those living in socially more normative communities. It is conceivable that they displayed little restraint and decorum when drinking, and that they were given to brawling and aggressive and generally undignified behaviour during drinking-bouts. There were in fact considerable differences between the disparate groups of Europeans arriving on the American continent.

After European expansionist aspirations had been achieved, colonists swiftly moved to establish their rights in law.

By the late 18th Century Congress had passed a series of statutes pertaining to legislature regarding the sale and purchase of Indian lands.³²¹ The Indian Intercourse Act established the inalienable right of aboriginal title, prohibited all land-sales between private agents and made all Indian land-trade subject to treaty negotiations. An 1802 amendment to the Intercourse Act authorized the president “to prevent or restrain the sale of liquor among the Indians”. Alcohol as a treaty-tool was now redundant.

Legislative powers regarding the control of alcohol on Indian territories were further extended in 1822, when Indian Agents, superintendents and military officers were given licence to search stores and confiscate alcohol if found. In 1832 Congress decreed that “No ardent spirits shall be hereafter introduced under any pretence into the Indian country.”³²²

* * *

³²⁰ Lender and Martin; 1982: 23

³²¹ Statutes were passed in 1790, 1793, 1796, 1799, 1802, 1834 and concerned the regulation of commercial relations between tribes and colonists

³²² 4 US Stat. 564 in: H.N.A.I.; 4; 1988

PART III

MIGRATION, CLASS AND TEMPERANCE: CHANGING ATTITUDES TOWARDS 'WHITE DRINKING'

Alcohol for early voyagers and settlers was not only cultural heritage, staple and everyday item of consumption, but indeed a vital element in their diet. According to Old World habit, alcohol accompanied every meal of the day; it was an integral part of all feasts and occasions. To minimise health-risks from water, small ale was the common drink amongst the British, consumed by all ages.

But gradually the perception of 'problematic drinking' in the New World remained no longer confined to American Indians.

The perceived trouble with Indian alcohol consumption had led swiftly to the implementation of federal interventions.

Meanwhile (White) "Americans between 1790 and 1830 drank more alcoholic beverages per capita than ever before or since."³²³ While this caused concern particularly amongst religious groups it took considerably longer for mainstream drinking to be made a target for interventionist policies.

But while among Whites 'being drunk' was socially sanctioned and acceptable, drunkenness- an individual's habitual consumption to incapacitating or asocial effect- however was not.

Drunkenness was by definition a moral failure and so it fell to local churches to admonish the drunkards of the community.³²⁴

* * *

³²³ Rorabaugh; 1979: ix

³²⁴ Schneider; 1978

16th Century English colonists had had to suffer a multitude of disillusionments in the New World. Their hopes that the North American territory England had laid claim to harboured Mediterranean bounties were disappointed.³²⁵

Instead of mild climate and fertile lands they found harsh weather and unpredictable seasons, unyielding soil, malarial swamps and a resistant and uncooperative native population. There was much work and hardship and little, it may be assumed, in terms of relief and distraction. The arrival of ships bearing supplies from England, in particular wine and beer therefore was always anticipated eagerly.

The eventual import of molasses from the West-Indies made the production of rum cheap and convenient. The rum distilled in North American territories though of a lower quality than the rum of the West Indies, was more affordable. Rum became a currency employed by slave-traders in West-Africa³²⁶ and so helped to expand plantation economy.

Hard liquor became available to North American consumers throughout the social spectrum, including Virginia slaves whose substantial alcohol rations were supplied by their 'owners'. Slaves also bartered for alcohol with home-grown vegetables and produce. Eventually the proliferation of 'drunken negroes' on the streets on Sundays was perceived as such a public nuisance that in the early 19th Century a series of restrictions were introduced to curb drinking amongst slaves. It proved difficult however to separate the slaves' drinking habits from that of their 'masters'.

Plantation owners, farmers, city-dwellers and frontiers-men all took pride in imbibing copiously. Women and even children were not barred from consuming alcohol, although they drank to a somewhat lesser degree. Toddlers would be pacified and lulled into sleep with the help of a jigger of rum. An early exposure to drink- 'controlled habituation'- was thought to prevent children

³²⁵ The new territories were located at similar latitude. The English aspired to cultivating 'Mediterranean' crops that would help reduce English dependence on Continental imports. Standage; 2005

³²⁶ For this specific purpose particularly strong rum was distilled.

from becoming drunkards in adult life. The ability to ingest large quantities of alcohol without showing ill-effects was held proof of successful drinking. Drinking was an acquired skill. It demonstrated civilised man's capacity for resilience, self-discipline and self-control. And like the communal breaking of bread, proffering and consuming alcohol together established companionability and proved benign intentions. "Stranger, will you drink or fight?" Frederick Marryat a British officer travelling the United States in 1830s reports a local greeting.³²⁷

The first 200 years of European colonialism established- or re-established- ingrained habits of alcohol production and consumption. These however varied from territory to territory, from urban contexts to rural settlements, from culture to class. The elite for instance preferred their liquor diluted and in the form of grog or punch in early versions of 'cocktails', served with a degree of social pomp and ritual. The 'lower orders' preferred their drink neat and consumed it in a rather more urgent manner than the leisurely pace at which the wealthy were able to indulge themselves. For a labourer, "a day's wages would buy a week's inebriation"³²⁸, to the concern of the ruling classes who began to perceive a link between delinquent behaviour and drunkenness in the proletariat.

The Puritan preacher Cotton Mather, whose father Increase Mather had pronounced alcohol 'a creature of God' (before reconsidering this pronouncement and making himself an advocate of moderation), was much concerned about inebriation as a path to a lawless and Godless society. He implored the elite to act as good and righteous examples to the masses:

" Let Persons of the Best Sort, be Exemplary for this piece of Abstinence and then (..), Let the Lowest of the People, be in that point (...), as Good as the Best."³²⁹

³²⁷ Lender & Martin; 1982:54

³²⁸ Rorabaugh; 1979: 29

³²⁹ Cotton Mather, 1708; in: Rorabaugh; 1979: 31

When in the 17th Century Puritan clergy implored the privileged to be mindful of their responsibility to act as role models to the masses and to curb their liquor consumption accordingly, they had already begun to draw a distinction between the appetites of the elite and the lower orders. Class apparently was not insignificant even in early American social organisation.

The 18th Century English gin craze, another malady perceived to have afflicted primarily the urban working-class indicates an exportation of class concerns to the New World.³³⁰

The diagnosis of delinquent drinking- at a later point in history to be pathologized and reframed as the 'disease of alcoholism'- manifested as de haut en bas verdict.

The preacher's appeal to 'society's superior element' may have been paradoxical insofar as that many of the elite had come to wealth via profit from the alcohol trade.

Moderation and temperance may have presented advantages in terms of social decorum, but had distinct disadvantages in terms of their political impact on economic interests.

Anti-alcohol campaigners eventually gained support, although it was some time until temperance advocates succeeded with the 18th Amendment in 1919 which imposed restrictive laws on the entire population.

* * *

³³⁰ That the manufacture of spirits and their wider distribution had been stimulated by a political initiative based on the economic interest of expanding the demand for grain may be seen as yet another parallel in terms of economic interests creating conditions to which principally the 'lower orders' were seen to fall prey, and which were then condemned as detrimental by the same social contingent that had previously participated in lobbying for them.

PART IV

PARADIGMATIC SHIFTS IN THEORIES AND PERCEPTIONS OF DRINKING EFFECTS

In 1774 a prominent critic of drinking and slavery, the Philadelphia Quaker Anthony Benezet, published a pamphlet “The Mighty Destroyer Displayed” in which he catalogues medical evidence of the health-hazards of alcohol:

“The eminent physician Dr Hoffman expressly cautions against the use of distilled spirituous liquors (...) “they are , above all things most unwholesome (...) bring on many fatal diseases, such as hectick fevers, jaundices, dropsies &c. whereby multitudes are yearly and daily destroyed” (...) Dr Cheyne, in his essay of health and long life, says “ All people, who have any regard to their health and lives, ought to tremble at the first cravings for such poisonous liquors” (...) Doctor Allen, in his Synopsis Medici, A. 1633 “the plentiful devouring of those spirits has killed as many thousands of men as there are stars in the sky. (...) Dr Lind in his treatise on the scurvy, says “He observed most destructive distempers to be much increased, even to mortality, by distilled spirituous liquors...”³³¹

In Benezet’s work alcohol equally damages all cultures. His book is an early example of a notably even-handed cross-cultural exploration of the damages of drinking. Here he quotes Captain Ellis’ witnessing the effects of alcohol during a voyage to Hudson’s Bay:

“the natives on the very cold coast, of that Bay, to whom the French are kinder than to sell distilled spirituous liquors, are tall, hardy, robust and active, whereas those of them that are supplied with drams from the English, are a meagre, dwarfish, indolent people³³², hardly equal to the severity of the country, and subject to many disorders.” And as to the pernicious effects of spirituous liquors in very hot climates (as on the coast of Guinea) it is observed that the French and Portugese, who do not indulge in distilled spirits, are healthy compared with the English; who, drinking freely of spirits, &c. die fast”³³³

Benezet’s pamphlet is notable in its lack of ethnocentric judgement: He is concerned with behaviours and habits, but makes no assumptions regarding inherent ‘ethnic’ dispositions.

English drinkers on the Guinean coast are as much victims of the destructive consequences of distilled spirits, as are the Natives of Hudson’s Bay. The Peoples of the Mediterranean, whose

³³¹ Benezet; 1774: 4 ff

³³² Whether alcohol’s pernicious effects in fact could have so swiftly wreaked such a marked physical degeneration on a people who – as the implication here seems to be- would have remained ‘robust’ and ‘hardy’ had they not been plied with alcohol, may be debatable, but it certainly makes for a dramatic case in point.

³³³ Ibid; 7 ff

drinking habits are more moderate, are healthful and unaffected. Benezet was part of an early canon that explored the medical effects of heavy drinking.

Ten years later in 1784, Benjamin Rush, a prominent physician and politician published “An Inquiry of the Effects of Ardent Spirits Upon the Human Body and Mind”, a work that is cited as one of the earliest studies making a connection between drink and the qualities of the drinker.

Rush is credited as a pioneering proponent of the ‘addiction model’, which conceptualises deviant drinking as a “disease of the will” that develops gradually, progressively and manifests as a loss of control. Rush established a conceptual turning-point and presented:

“a case example of the medicalization of deviance and social control (...) wherein a form of non-normative behavior is labelled first a “sin”, then a “crime” and finally a “sickness.”³³⁴

Rush’s theory of pathological drinking spearheaded changes to prevalent attitudes towards deviant drunkenness, that so far had concurred with the “traditional morality of the church”³³⁵ which condemned excessive liquor consumption as sin or treated it as demonic possession.

Rush’s treatise helped to transpose the issue of habitual drunkenness into the medical realm.

The idea of a ‘disease of the will’ posited an interesting dilemma to post-Enlightenment sensibilities: How could the Enlightenment’s ideation of free will as humanity’s distinguishing mark be reconciled with the manifest irrationality of addictive behaviour? Here the medical paradigm came to the rescue: conceptualising alcoholism as ‘pathology’ shifted personal responsibility individual control. In the medical model free choice was compromised by the ‘natural force’ that constituted disease.³³⁶

³³⁴ Schneider; 1978: 361

³³⁵ *ibid*: 363

³³⁶ Presumably exposing ‘patients’ to an accelerated civilising – or re-civilising – process (or more contemporarily: rehabilitation) would help them to eventually conquer these base and brutish urges. Another serviceable hypothesis may conceive of Enlightenment values (rationalism as ideology; rationalisation as industrial imperative) and drunkenness as implicitly linked: ‘Irrational’ behaviour and excesses as the characteristic consequences of drunkenness represent the inversion of Enlightenment ideal and industrial aesthetic. This inversion gives currency to theories that conceptualise deviant behaviours in terms of resistance, rebellion and ‘acting out’. That a surfeit of rationalistic and economic imperative may have helped to provoke behaviour unfit for these values is testimony perhaps to a self-correcting balance.

The 'medicalization' of alcohol-abuse boosted the temperance movement's quest. If drunkenness was a disease, if the consumption of liquor had such destructive effects on otherwise sane individuals, then the prophylactic prescription of teetotalism across society would help to prevent unforeseeable ruin for a multitude. It was hoped that prohibition would help to restore a morally bankrupt society given to compromised morality, feckless hedonism and corruption.

Churches, clergy and women were the most determined advocates of prohibition. The temperance movement had emerged at a time of significant changes in American society and had allied itself with social reform movements, particularly the abolitionist movement.

The American Temperance Society was founded in 1826 and within a decade had amassed 1.5 million members who took its pledge and joined its campaign against the production, distribution and consumption of alcohol.³³⁷

It took almost a century from the Society's inception for its goal of a complete ban on alcohol to be finally achieved in 1919. With hindsight the temperance discourse appears like a battle for the very 'soul' of America in which all social and cultural forces were implicated. It was a battle of grand priorities; a battle that pitched paternalism against liberalism, control versus liberty, indulgence against frugality, hedonism against self-discipline. The discourse and struggle around temperance could only have taken place in 'a young society', a society with as yet uncertain boundaries and hierarchies and a society that relied on 'new blood' that perhaps it feared as much as it needed it.

The Gestalt of the revolutionary (mythical?) founding spirit was now being increasingly obscured by wave upon wave of new migrants. These newcomers imported their hopes and skills, but also their languages, values, habits and their alien customs.

³³⁷ Note that the laws on the complete ban on liquor for Indians occurred at approximately the same time that the American Temperance Society was founded.

Despite the reassurance of economic and social hierarchies and boundaries drawn according to geographic and cultural provenance, Americans were being exposed to an accelerated speed of immigration at a volume and diversity hitherto unknown in history.³³⁸

It is possible that Othering (or xenophobia), the fear of wanton and uncontrollable strangers, contributed to the eventual success of the temperance movement. As a social movement it was conceived as an alliance mainly between clergy and working-class women, who were loath seeing their men-folk drinking away their wages in saloons.

The main opponents of the temperance movement had not been alcohol consumers, but those with economic interests linked to the alcohol trade, and a laborious legislature influenced by a powerful pro-alcohol lobby.

Ironically it was Prohibition that offered new business opportunities in a now illicit alcohol trade to entrepreneurs. Bootleggers and speakeasy owners joined- and displaced- those who had made a legal profit from alcohol and whose businesses were often too large, too prominent and too complex to be shifted from legality to illegality as swiftly and flexibly as the new market demanded. The federal alcohol prohibition lasted from 1919 to 1933.

Prohibition however represented an ideal- (advocated by the American Temperance Society and temperance alliances), rather than a successfully enforced -law:

“Congressmen and state legislators praised the prohibition laws but quietly withheld the funds necessary for their effective enforcement.”³³⁹

Although prohibition was not a success, it had for its duration curbed public drinking amongst the working-class and the poor, who could not afford the rise in the price of illegal liquor that was the immediate consequence of the prohibition laws. They had to make do with low quality alcohol that often was hazardous to health.

³³⁸ Pegram; 1998

³³⁹ *ibid.*: 153

Illegal 'speakeasies' and drinking-clubs were the domains of the affluent, who once again could imbibe amongst themselves, without being inconvenienced by the lower orders.

In 1933 Prohibition ended much as it had begun, in a quagmire of conflicting interests, confusion between state and federal legislative bodies, endemic corruption amongst Prohibition Bureau agents and the practically unmanageable task of national enforcement.

In its inception and trajectory, its' muddling of ideal, ideology and profiteering; noble intentions; pragmatic strategies and lowly opportunism; is glimpsed a microcosm of wider North-American history.

* * *

The post-repeal emergence of an 'alcoholism industry' dealing with the treatment of alcoholics was buoyed by a progressively advancing interest in and commitment to scientific research.

Benjamin Rush's inquiry into the causes of chronic inebriation had helped to shift the discourse on alcohol from the moral to the medical domain.

In the 1930s a series of research initiatives began to focus on the causes of alcoholism:

“These developments provided the moral and political foundation for the subsequent rise of the more than two hundred million dollar federal bureaucracy, the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA), and an "alcoholism industry" (Trice and Roman, 1972:11-12) of professional and other workers devoted to treating this disease. “³⁴⁰

³⁴⁰ Schneider; 1978: 364

At the Yale Center for Alcohol Studies, H.M. Jellinek advanced the “disease concept of alcoholism”.

Jellinek’s theories of the progression of alcohol addiction in five phases and his four categories of alcoholism still are used by clinicians and in treatment programmes.

Alcoholics Anonymous, founded in the 1930s, drew on theories of alcoholism as ‘physical sensitivity’ or ‘allergy’ to alcohol, and believed that ‘addiction’ was a progressive loss of control. It is this idea in particular that is an integral part of AA’s 12-Step treatment programme, during which the ‘diseased’ declare their powerlessness over alcohol and acknowledge a ‘higher power’. The AA promotes alcohol avoidance maintained through internal and external support structures as path to recovery.

According to the AA’s perspective alcoholics can never be cured; they must try to maintain sobriety from one day to the next. This state of ‘recovery’ may endure through a life-time.

Moderate alcohol consumption has no place in the AA’s model.

Whether by recovery is meant recovering the state of sobriety, the self, relationship or functionality remains a matter of personal interpretation.

Support movements that appeal to prospective members through their inclusivity tend to leave plenty of scope for individual connection and projection; for discovery of the particular in the universal; for damascene revelation in bland general address.

Alcoholics Anonymous and similar support groups can be seen as analogous representations of the phenomenology of alcohol as infinitely pliable substance and responsive spirit. This is reflected in the principle of accessible mentorship, a prominent part of AA’s support-structure, where assigned ‘sponsors’, themselves in advanced recovery, can be called upon whenever there is need for support.

This all-availability is reminiscent of the liquor-bottle that the alcoholic keeps always in reach: in the sponsor AA establishes an analogue object. It sets up a contesting field operating through the

choice between bottle and sponsor. This choice has to be negotiated afresh each time temptation visits, it is never fait accompli.

In this apparent fatalism AA's philosophy stands in contrast to the dominant Western ideation that tends to give precedent to an ideology favouring free will and control.³⁴¹

Since its inception AA has gained a global fellowship (barring countries where alcohol is legally prohibited), and its principles seem cross-culturally applicable. Communities and groups interpret and assimilate AA's philosophy to their particular mores.

The respective orientation of AA depends on the 'status' and perception of alcoholism in each society. Whereas alcoholism in some groups is perceived as a stigma and the domain of the marginalised, in others it may count as a status accoutrement- the insignia of determined middle-class aspirational activity whose pursuit has imparted enough stress to its agents to make them seek compensatory solace in alcohol and so makes alcoholism the achiever's badge of honour.³⁴²

Depending on social context AA meetings present as exclusive gentlemen's clubs where the successful engage in conspicuous socio-metric assessment under the guise of communally combating alcohol problems, or as 'skid-row' refuges for the destitute and disadvantaged.

The fact that AA continues to promote one particular model of 'alcohol as disease' that emerged out of a particular development and context is perhaps of less significance than the adaptability and flexibility of its structure, and that except for a place where members can gather, there is little else that is needed to hold a meeting. AA meetings so harbour a certain tribal inclusivity, an egalitarian approach to communality that may make it universally appealing because of its inherent accessibility.

* * *

³⁴¹ It is conceivable that AA and other similar support movements represent – beyond the official remit of recovery- a refuge for those battered and bruised by the demands wider society places on individuals to 'practice autonomy'.

³⁴² R. Littlewood; personal communication

To this day drinking and drunken Indians continue to be seen as being a danger primarily to themselves and to their own. Historic as much as contemporary accounts are imbued with notions of victimhood and self-injury, a lasting legacy perhaps of early colonial attitudes:

“Fortescue Cuming told in 1810 of a farmer on the Ohio, who, when asked if a small tribe of Miamis camped near him were any trouble “replied with much sang froid ‘We never permit them to be troublesome, for if any of them displease us, we take them out of doors and kick them a little. For they are like dogs, and so will love you the better for it’.” The farmer followed this with an account of a favourite pastime, getting Indians drunk and setting them to fight among themselves.”³⁴³

The farmer’s account indicates that settlers fear little harm from Indians, whom they discipline like dogs for perceived transgressions. Even when these Indians are drunk, they pose no particular danger to the White settlers, but obligingly aggress against each other to the amusement of spectating Anglos.

In Cuming’s farmer there are echoes of Benjamin Franklin witnessing the ‘hellish’ spectacle of the Indians’ debauchery after they have become drunk on the rum he has given them.

While all the wealth of testimonies and interpretations does not deliver absolute truths or objective perspectives, it is the dynamics of discourse and their pervasive ambiguity that are relevant.

The subject of alcohol especially lends itself to contentious debate, its ‘spirit’ a suitable screen for the projection of a multitude of attitudes.

In this vein Mac Andrew and Edgerton, whose approach at that time ³⁴⁴ stood in contrast to the prevalent academic opinion of a particular, historically manifest problem between alcohol and Indians, re-examined historical testimony of Indian drinking and found that:

“The Indians’ initial usage of liquor did not typically result in an insatiable craving for more. Where no preconceptions were operating, neither was its ingestion initially accompanied by

³⁴³ Pearce; 1965:59

³⁴⁴ ...and perhaps even more so if they were writing today, considering the puritanical-interventionist turn that seems underway, regarding alcohol consumption and related matters

marked changes-for-the-worse. All of this came later, for the history of alcohol usage among the North American Indians, the early days were the *good* old days.” (sic) ³⁴⁵

Mac Andrew and Edgerton find a certain balance in these accounts on Indian drinking. For each narrative focusing on the terrors and disgrace of Native debauchery another attests to the general sobriety and modest comportment of Native Americans.

Against the belief that Indian drinking inevitably leads to a loss of control, they point out that White witnesses of Indian drinking binges were rarely attacked. That White observers could be safe amidst Indian drunkenness indicates a certain level of containment and self-control in the midst of the purported self-abandoned debauchery.³⁴⁶

There were certain tribes that never took to drink, others who drank ceremonially, and others yet again who distinguished ceremonial from celebratory drinking. Some drank with what Europeans would have described as ‘decorum’, others indulged in an excessive manner.

Mac Andrew and Edgerton contest theories that diagnose Indian drunken behaviour as a cathartic acting out of a people whose aggressive impulse is socially repressed in sobriety:

“evidence points to the fact that *when the North American Indians’ initial experience with alcohol was untutored by expectations to the contrary, the result was neither the development of an all-consuming craving nor an epic of drunken mayhem and debauchery.* But if alcohol did not instantaneously become a desired elixir, we must look elsewhere than to the substance itself for an understanding of how it eventually came to be so regarded. The villain, if we choose to see this transformation along the lines of a morality play, was the fur trade.” (sic)³⁴⁷

Mac Andrew and Edgerton set out to establish “the supremacy of social factors over physiological ones” as pertain to drinking.³⁴⁸

³⁴⁵ Mac Andrew and Edgerton; 1969: 115

³⁴⁶ That aggression should have been acted out intra-communally is of course a matter for concern and enquiry

³⁴⁷ Mac Andrew and Edgerton; 1969:114

³⁴⁸ *ibid*; 166

One suspects that nowadays they would be given short shrift in this regard. Alcohol theory and research seem exceptionally responsive to paradigmatic shifts in scientific focus, as becomes evident when perusing the titles of articles published in peer-reviewed academic journals on alcohol, substances and addiction during the past four decades.

Where the field once was dominated by sociological enquiry, now all is *genomics*, *neurochemistry* and *addiction severity indexes*.

Enquiry into the social aspects of drinking and drinking behaviour seem to have largely been banished. While decoding the neuro-physiological effects of drinking may indeed present a more stringently evidence-based approach, the bio-sciences offer scant methodology to cast light on the more ephemeral phenomena of drinking.

But these, however intriguing and complex they might be, may no longer be seen as relevant, as a general consensus seems to have been established that alcohol is above all harmful and that even moderate drinking carries risk, which according to the hegemonic position that public health policies now occupy, must therefore be banished.

Researcher and clinician Stanton Peele diagnoses an uncontested ‘temperance mentality’ now reigning over contemporary alcohol research “Strong cultural values are attached to alcohol”³⁴⁹.

Gone are the days when wanton drugs and alcohol use by the middle-classes at least were lauded as the domain of the creative.

If we are indeed in the grip of neo-temperance, one advantage may be a certain democratising effect, in that what may now await the ‘mainstream’, has been applied to Indian tribes for the past 200 years: a paternalistically imposed drinking prohibition.

History may yet prove to be the great leveller, albeit working inversely to what may have been expected:

³⁴⁹ Peele; 2010: 380

Instead of Indian tribes, as is normally anticipated by those equating free-dom with free market economy, catching up with dominant society's bounty and adding liquor stores to Indian reservations' conveniences, liquor stores will perhaps disappear everywhere.

Current tendencies in European and U.S. alcohol- research and policy seem to indicate that none of us should drink. Rather than pinpointing a particular section of society, be it the labouring classes or Indians as the main locus of drinking problems, it now turns out that the inability to imbibe unharmed and unaffected is a weakness we all share.

A scenario in which the entire North American population shares being deprived of alcohol could be viewed as a step for social equality and intercultural justice, and as a significant cultural turn.

In an as yet hypothetical case of a federal prohibition change would be- again- about taking things away from the general public, rather than adding them, as during the egalitarianism-through-consumption incentives of the boom-years.

A general prohibition then could be viewed as progressive in terms of public health and regressive in terms of economic imperative for growth. Then again, perhaps this mirrors the conundrum of whether economic crises benefit from austerity rather than stimulus measures.³⁵⁰

Those who still have not been disabused of radical hopes for social change may hence be tempted to add conglomerate defeat to the temperance bonus-list, were it not for the fact that the pharmaceutical industry seems set to fill any gap left by the declining alcohol industry.³⁵¹

* * *

³⁵⁰ Until a general prohibition is envisaged it may be some time. Meanwhile the Navajo Nation continues an ongoing debate whether to allow the sale of alcohol within Reservation boundaries, albeit highly taxed. Liquor outlets, casinos and artificial snow pistes on sacred mountains all are part of an endeavour by a contingent of the tribal government to bring the Navajo Nation into the 21st Century by boosting its budget.

³⁵¹ Mis-use and addiction to prescription medication, obtained legally or on the 'black market' is considered an emerging and endemic problem in the U.S. generally, and on many reservations.

There is a tendency to approach ‘Indian Drinking’ as a phenomenon quite distinct and apart from ‘White’ drinking. ‘Indian Drinking’ persists to be viewed as particularly problematic, and as somehow not fitting into the symptomatology of ‘mainstream’ dysfunctional drinking.

Although prevalent views place American Indians outside or beyond mainstream social dynamics, their representation as a people helplessly and haplessly suffering the epitome of drink-disorder establishes a benchmark of dysfunction against which the larger society may measure and exonerate itself.

The image of the drunken, out-of-control and destitute Indian bestrides the popular imagination, drinking to ‘drown his sorrows’, to suppress the injury felt by having been made a colonial victim, and to deal with the inevitability of a hopeless future.

That these views are substantiated by public health statistics and academic enquiry does not make them less controversial, however.

Statistically Indian drunkenness may present as more problematic than drunkenness in the general population,³⁵² but it is the assumptions arising out of these numbers that merit examination.

Assumptions dominating the ‘field’ seem to have little changed since Benjamin Franklin’s opinion on the subject: Indians have an intrinsic problem with alcohol. But perhaps though, alcohol, which we shall take here to symbolise the collective mores of Western hegemony, has a problem with Indians?

* * *

³⁵² See Center of Disease Control’s statistics quoted at the beginning of this chapter.

But then there are the Center for Disease Control's disturbing statistics on American Indian alcohol-related deaths, the high levels of homicide and suicide.

And what to make of Cuming's report on the White farmer setting drunk Indians against each other?

For me the tableau of drunken Indians fighting each other while colonists look on invites an association with the Ghost Dance (which came much later).

A Lakota (Sioux) tribal member once told me in obvious sorrow that the Ghost Dance's prophet "...betrayed us. He promised us that all we had to do was dance the Ghost Dance and the Whites would disappear, and they believed him and danced. Because they believed him they did not defend themselves and our warriors were killed".

But could it not be, I asked, that what came to the prophet as a vision in his dream- his people dancing the Ghost Dance, not stopping for anything, dancing until all disturbance disappeared, everything adverse ceased to matter- was symbolic in that there remained nothing to do, nothing that could be done, but dance? And that the Ghost Dance may have presented resignation and capitulation as much as it demonstrated a negation of the colonists' hostile intrusion?

If the Ghost Dance is, as it has been called, 'a religion' then it is one of resignation and defeat.

The Ghost Dance is an inversion of a warrior-tribe's tradition of 'battling it out'; it is an aesthetic rendition of submitting to the inevitable; it is the heroic acceptance of their end by a people.

It is easy to imagine the brave and futile, surreal spectacle of warriors dancing, turning away from the cocked guns of US army troops.

And one may further argue that the massacre of Ghost Dancers demonstrated a colonial mentality that had abandoned all basic fairness and morality. Had these fundamental humane tenets been operative, it is conceivable that the soldiers on beholding the dancing warriors must have realized that while the dance may have been a form of resistance, the main incentive for strategic attack, namely danger posed by opponents, here did not apply.

And it is possible that the soldiers themselves knew that this was not a battle, but that by killing the Ghost Dancers they were eradicating that which lay beyond their understanding.

Perhaps it is rather a stretch to imagine drunken Natives setting upon each other as an act of introjected aggression acted out internally because it could not be vented via its catalysts- the Whites³⁵³.

But in the 'drunken Indian' stumbling along the street in a border-town, or sleeping off a drunk in the park; helpless, obvious in his helplessness amongst ill-disposed strangers, I think there are echoes of the Ghost Dance, a dance for the end-times, a dance that is the only thing that is left to be done, because nothing more can be done.

While Whites look on.

³⁵³ This explanation falls into the category of Euro-centric interpretations, which inevitably make Whites the pivotal agents who are the instigators of everything and around whom everything revolves. All others are reduced to mere reaction. But then the colonial project demanded momentum and pro-activism from its agents.

CHAPTER SIX

'THE WORLD AS WILL AND REPRESENTATION' ALCOHOL-IC ETHNOGRAPHIES

PROLOGUE

"The following case was sent by a reader of the *Anthropology Newsletter*:"³⁵⁴

"The dilemma I write about is that of alcohol abuse and culturally sanctioned intoxication. (...) While working in the Southwest I have always refused under all circumstances to make liquor runs for Native Americans, and I have never brought liquor into an area in which we were in close contact. While visiting friends in one of the Pueblo villages, however, I frequently saw bootleg deals, drinking, and consumption of substances that are against the laws of the United States. I am certain that such situations must be experienced even more frequently by trained ethnographers.(...) Most would strongly discourage the consumption of substances that are foreign to the biological and cultural systems of a people, as alcohol is to the Native Americans".

Comment: JERROLD LEVY, University of Arizona:

"(...) As Indians are citizens and do not comprise isolated societies with their own pristine cultures, it seems best not to dwell on what might have been done with Indians during the colonial period but rather to extend to them the same rights, privileges, and ethical considerations that are due to all of us."

Comment: VINE DELORIA Jr., University of Arizona:

"...my sympathy is wholly aroused. Native Americans have a similar ethical dilemma when confronted with non-Indians who desire to know "what's in that pipe" or who demand that Indians take them to certain ceremonies or assist them in obtaining buttons of peyote which, as everyone knows, are illegal substances for non-Indians who do not practice the religion of the Native Americans. (...) Prior to the repeal of the liquor prohibitions by federal law in 1954, the pressure on non-Indian scholars must have been intense. Since that time, however, they must have moderated since most of the Indians I know would only ask a scholar to make a liquor run if they themselves had insufficient funds to make the purchase, not because they were prohibited by law from obtaining the substance. I am further worried about the tendency of non-Indian scholars to force alcoholic beverages on Indians only to satisfy their longing for a sense of fellowship or belongingness with Indians. I seldom drink to excess but I do serve on a board with a former president of the American Anthropological Association. He quite frequently asks me to have a drink with him after these board meetings. He is usually very hurt if I refuse, so I find myself in dingy New York bars downing drink after drink with him. I can't tell whether he believes he can pry longstanding tribal secrets out of me after he has plied me with alcohol or whether he is truly lonely and simply wants a drinking companion to chat with before he takes the train back to Washington, D.C. There are just no good guidelines to inform one of the proper behavior in such circumstances and I must often rely on my nativistic intuition before making a decision to drink with him".

³⁵⁴ Publication of the American Anthropological Association;
<http://www.aaanet.org/publications/pubs/bottlepipe.cfm>

ABSTRACT

According to USC 18 USC Sec. 1154 'Intoxicants Dispensed in Indian Country'; as per NNC³⁵⁵ § 410 'Possession of Liquor'; and § 411 'Manufacture or Delivery of Liquor', the production, distribution, possession and consumption of liquor on the Navajo Nation remains prohibited.

The law here has many letters, but despite its legal prohibition there are countless ways to obtain liquor on the Reservation.

Alcohol can be privately imported from border-areas, it can be obtained from bootleggers, it can be extracted from items available from stores like mouthwash for instance, or aerosol cans.

The ban on alcohol consumption is indifferently enforced, because the tribal police does not have enough officers to implement the policy stringently. Attitudes towards the ban are divided according to age and cultural provenance: Elders and 'traditionals' tend to support prohibition. They argue that liquor is not and should not be part of Navajo culture. 'Moderns' advocate for economic viability: the Diné's goal should be to 'catch up' with mainstream society. Pragmatists argue that as alcohol gets into the reservation anyway, the law is not much more than pretence. Legalising alcohol would be safer they say, because then at least people would stay at home to drink.

Similarly 'split' attitudes are found in the narratives of drinkers and reformed drinkers; in b́ilagáana attitudes towards Indian drinking, and American Indian views on Indian drinking; on the effects of alcohol; and on the causes for Indian drinking.

The tradition of received attitudes about Indian drinking glosses it as unambiguously problematic and dysfunctional. Its causes are seen in the vicissitudes of subalternity sustained since the colonial invasion. In practice however Indian drinking presents as a similarly complex amalgam of indulgence, sociability, economic impetus, libidinous catharsis and pathology as it does for other population-groups

Indian drinking is however distinguished by an apparent readiness to self-pathologize. It is in this self-pathologizing that complex and ambiguous relational attitudes towards self- and dominant other emerge.³⁵⁶

³⁵⁵ Navajo Nation Code

³⁵⁶ US code + Title 18 + Section 1154

“(a) Whoever sells, gives away, disposes of, exchanges, or barter any malt, spirituous, or vinous liquor, including beer, ale, and wine, or any ardent or other intoxicating liquor of any kind whatsoever, except for scientific, sacramental, medicinal or mechanical purposes, or any essence, extract, bitters, preparation, compound, composition, or any article whatsoever, under any name, label, or brand, which produces

PART I
IDENTITY CONFLICTS AND CONFLICTED IDENTITIES:
A DRINKING NARRATIVE

Norman, now in his sixties when in his forties amassed nine DWI³⁵⁷ convictions, for which he eventually spent a year in jail.

For years Norman was a ‘revolving-door client’ of rehabilitation services that, he felt, had by and large done little for him. All the ‘talking’ and ‘counselling’, the ‘thinking about the causes’ of his drinking had not been effective. What ultimately had changed things for Norman had been a traditional diagnosis and an NAC³⁵⁸ ceremony arranged for him by the DBHS services. In fact, Norman said, the ceremony had been a life-changing experience.

Norman, Navajo by birth, raised in a Navajo family, is not Navajo by upbringing.

Norman did not go to boarding-school. The neglect of Navajo culture in his family was intentional and strategic. Norman’s father converted to Christianity to woo his wife, a Navajo from a staunchly Baptist family. She had agreed to the marriage only under the condition that their children would be raised as Christians.

intoxication, to any Indian to whom an allotment of land has been made while the title to the same shall be held in trust by the Government, or to any Indian who is a ward of the Government under charge of any Indian superintendent, or to any Indian, including mixed bloods, over whom the Government, through its departments, exercises guardianship, and whoever introduces or attempts to introduce any malt, spirituous, or vinous liquor, including beer, ale, and wine, or any ardent or intoxicating liquor of any kind whatsoever into the Indian country, shall, for the first offense, be fined under this title or imprisoned not more than one year, or both; and, for each subsequent offense, be fined under this title or imprisoned not more than five years, or both.

(b) It shall be a sufficient defense to any charge of introducing or attempting to introduce ardent spirits, ale, beer, wine, or intoxicating liquors into the Indian country that the acts charged were done under authority, in writing, from the Department of the Army or any officer duly authorized thereunto by the Department of the Army, but this subsection shall not bar the prosecution of any officer, soldier, sutler or storekeeper, attache, or employee of the Army of the United States who barter, donate, or furnishes in any manner whatsoever liquors, beer, or any intoxicating beverage whatsoever to any Indian.

(c) The term "Indian country" as used in this section does not include fee-patented lands in non-Indian communities or rights-of-way through Indian reservations, and this section does not apply to such lands or rights-of-way in the absence of a treaty or statute extending the Indian liquor laws thereto.”

<http://law.onecle.com/uscode/18/1154.html>

³⁵⁷ DWI = Driving While Intoxicated; DUI: Driving Under the Influence; Used interchangeably in the text, as they were by informants

³⁵⁸ NAC= Native American Church; ‘Peyote Church’

Norman describes his mother as virulently, punitively Christian, with a deep-seated disdain for all things Navajo. Their mother kept Norman and his siblings deliberately at a distance from Navajo culture. The children did not speak the language, they did not learn their clans, they did not know their relatives. The family was well off materially. Norman felt that it had been his mother's aspiration that her children should be as un-Navajo as possible. He thought his mother must have really hated what she came from and wondered what had happened to her that made her dislike her own 'roots' so much.

Out of high-school Norman married an Anglo girl, who was also a devout Christian. Norman and his wife were 'Church-going people' and arranged much of their social life around faith-based activities- services, Sunday school, bible study meetings.

In the meantime Norman's father was experiencing a renewed interest in Navajo traditions and pan-Indian culture, awakened through the Powwow movement gathering momentum in the 1960s. Norman's father travelled to Powwows where he met members of the Native American Church and eventually began to attend NAC ceremonies, much to his wife's chagrin.

Norman was drafted during the Vietnam War and only a lucky coincidence prevented him from being flown out to Vietnam.

During the basic training period he gained some experience of drugs: 'Dope' and 'speed' "those of us who had taken some were always running way in front", but for Norman drugs seemed to have been confined to his time in the military.

Norman returned to his wife, raised a family and then they got divorced. For a year after the divorce "I lived like a recluse". He barely left the house, saw few people, made little contact with friends or family. "One day this friend came by and said: Come on you need to get out, Norman" The friend took him to the 'Hot Step' an 'Indian bar' in Appleton, the nearby border town. The Hot Step is one of only a couple of 'Indian bars' in Appleton.³⁵⁹ The bar draws custom by putting

³⁵⁹ I heard that the Hot Step recently was shut down, apparently because of licensing infractions.

on live Country & Western bands, beloved in the region. The Hot Step has a largish dance-floor which is put to good use, particularly at the week-ends.

The Hot Step is an all-purpose bar. People go there to have a beer with their partners, lonely drinkers prop up the bar or sit in front of fruit-machines, groups mingle in the pursuit of a good time.

To Norman, as he described it years later, the Hot Step was a miraculous new world. On his first visit to the Hot Step he had a few beers and all of a sudden felt carefree, jovial, and happy. He liked the music. He liked the ladies. He did not know how to dance. He began to go to the Hot Step often. He learnt how to C&W dance: "I became real good at it."

The ladies appreciated his smooth moves. How he tells it Norman indulged in happy drinking and enjoyed carefree promiscuity. In his drinking circle this was not frowned upon, it was ok. It was the good times.

Norman describes a milieu that encouraged 'open relationships'. No particular demands on commitment were made, although some 'hook-ups' lasted longer and some were only casual one-offs. Norman's memories sounded remarkably like the 1960s high times of communality and free love.³⁶⁰

Except that Norman began to collect DUI convictions. From the way Norman told his story it was not altogether clear whether he himself felt that he had a drinking-problem or whether he merely thought being caught while driving under the influence was a bit of a nuisance. To me he sounded nostalgic rather than regretful.

By the time Norman went to jail on his 9th DUI, he had young children conceived with Taliah, a woman he had met at the Hot Step. One day, out in the jail-compound in his orange-coloured prisoners' jump-suit, Taliah came to visit him. She had brought along their three children.

³⁶⁰ Except these were the '90s.

Norman described seeing them standing there, “little”, lined up at the other side of the fence “looking at me in my orange jumpsuit through that fence”.³⁶¹

That was the moment he resolved to do right by his family. That night he wrote a letter to Taliah, proposing marriage.

Remorse led to Norman’s epiphany. His was an altruistic conversion. As he remembers it, Norman changed for the sake of his children. After his release Norman had to attend court-mandated treatment at the Outpatient Treatment Unit.

The bulk of the programme did not impress him: As a ‘revolving-door’ offender he had been in and out of various programmes and had seen it all: “All that talking did not do things for me. I did not see how it can help me.” He once got into trouble for berating the man who ran the sweat-lodge for trying to indoctrinate clients into Christianity³⁶² during ‘sweat’, and was somewhat resistant to the therapeutic groups.

His case-worker felt that it was time for Norman to learn about his own culture and arranged for a traditional diagnostic ceremony. The diagnosis was to determine the cause for Norman’s problem-behaviour. At the ceremony the medicine man diagnosed that the cause of Norman’s problems were transgressive actions.

As a child Norman had been given the task of drowning unwanted litters of puppies.³⁶³ On a couple of occasions he had killed rattle-snakes. In the ceremony Norman was told that by killing animals which were not needed for food he had broken a taboo. Norman was instructed to state his regrets and to apologize to the creatures whose lives he had taken.

An NAC ceremony was held for him. “Never in my life had I felt so much love, as the love of my relatives in that ceremony” Norman recalled. When he came out of the ceremony everything was changed. His problems had gone away: “I didn’t have that monkey on my back anymore”

³⁶¹ Regulation jail-uniform is a bright orange overall.

³⁶² After separating from his wife, Norman turned away from Christianity.

³⁶³ This is quite usual even today. Animal rescue services now run free-of-charge spaying programmes to curb the killing of puppy and kitten litters.

Norman started walking the Peyote Way. He became an NAC member. He pursued an active interest in Navajo culture and politics. In particular he got interested in issues and difficulties Navajo face living off-reservation.

”The love of my relatives in that ceremony,” plays a pivotal role in Norman’s reformation. These relatives were fellow-clients of the treatment centre. Though some were possibly ‘clan-relatives’, I think that Norman used ‘relatives’ in the sense that all Navajo are related as members of one tribe.

The DBHS’ cultural instruction had taught Norman to identify his clans, to understand some of the traditions and had held a ceremony for him. These were all experiences that his parents had deliberately withheld from him.

Norman’s bitterness and regret regarding his mother’s sabotage of his cultural identity still endures. Norman like so many lives with the Gestalt of an alternative past in which he had been raised as an authentic, proud Native, and where his life would have taken a different course.

Norman now lives on his family’s old plot off-reservation, in a small town whose ‘American Indian and Alaska Native population’ according to 2010 US census data stands at 12 %.

Norman became something of a community advocate. He succeeded in recruiting a considerable number of people to his advocacy cause and achieved some local prominence. There was a problem however in that the people supporting Norman were in the majority Anglos.³⁶⁴

The ‘real Indians’ whom Norman needed to lend authenticity to his cause, were both slow to come forward and reluctant to get involved.

This subject is not easy to write about, because it is so sensitive. It is about the fragility in identity, the vulnerability that wanting to belong- or not belonging- confers.

There is a term, rather derogatory, usually applied to non-Natives wanting to be or emulating Indians. There are plenty of Anglos ‘hanging out’ in Indian country, sporting braids and Native

³⁶⁴ The reasons for this are complex enough to merit a thesis in themselves.

jewellery, engaging in 'spiritual practices' and claiming to have been adopted into clans. These people are 'Wannabes'; they 'wannabe' Indian.

Norman clearly is Indian, at least to Anglos he is. If Norman had not become a political activist, he would be an Indian whose parents like those of so many others had neglected to impart to him his native culture.

It is Norman's political activity that puts him in the path of projection; that places him in the crab-barrel; and puts him at peril of resentment generated by Jhon's Syndrome.

By making himself prominent Norman has made himself a point of community attention.

Norman is Anglo-aculturated enough to make his Anglo supporters feel at ease with him. It is precisely Norman's Anglo upbringing that makes it possible for Anglos to accept him as a political activist. Norman offers minimal occasion for cultural alienation, yet he is visibly Indian. (The minutiae of intercultural interaction are intricate).

By some Natives Norman's quest is perceived as more problematic. Someone commented to me that Norman trod a narrow path between "fighting for a just cause" and "stirring things up." "You know, sometimes it is better to let sleeping dogs lie" she said.

According to her perspective Norman's cause had the potential to create trouble for Indians.

But in this concern there is a disquieting acceptance that there are 'sleeping dogs' or undercurrent troubles in the community that could erupt if one does not tread carefully.

No-one speaking to me accused Norman of making things up (although some thought that he dramatised situations somewhat).

People knew that there was 'a cause for Norman's cause.' Things were not right for Indians. They never had been. But they were much, much better than they had been in the past. And now Indians were earning money they had the power of the "Red Dollar" that business people increasingly counted on. That, believed many, was the way to go: through Indian economic power.

Dramatising or politicising Indian concerns was seen as akin to crying ‘wolf’ too often. That there are ‘wolves’ in the community seemed a fact no-one concerned tried to deny, though Natives usually tended to be more circumspect in voicing this than the liberal Anglos who could afford to be outspoken in the condemnation of their own community’s misdeeds.

Political activism, assertion and outspokenness by Natives were perceived as quintessentially ‘Anglo-traits’. That type of confidence was usually honed by a sense of entitlement and the spirit of imperious colonialism. It was a trait that not only wasn’t shared; it was opposed by Navajo cultural values.

Norman’s sins seemed to be: 1) his optimism- or delusion- in thinking change was possible despite 500 years of colonial history pointing to the contrary; 2) his failure to realise that he was an Indian and therefore did not have the power to change anything, as shown by the 500 years; 3) his foolhardiness in potentially compromising Natives’ safety by kicking rather than tiptoeing around the colonial beast, as he should have learnt after those 500 years.

Moreover Norman’s assumption that he could change anything itself was a result of having been raised outside of the tradition. It was the type of pro-active, self-aggrandising behaviour that was the domain of Anglos. And it was this fact that diminished Norman’s kudos as a community spokesman for Native concerns.

Norman was seen as volunteering as political advocate not because he was Native, but because he was not Native enough. A ‘traditional’ Native would not have attempted to do what Norman did.

In Norman’s narrative drinking at the Hot Step and attending a healing ceremony essentially have the same effect: They make him feel part of a community that accepted and appreciated him, even loved him.

Ceremony and drinking milieu both have a liberating, cathartic effect. This is primarily because Norman feels that he is among ‘his people’. The activities engaged in, whether drinking or healing, are secondary to the ‘oceanic feeling’ “of an indissoluble bond; of being one with the

external world as a whole”³⁶⁵; the rapturous feeling of communality these occasions generate in Norman. Ceremony and drinking create a liminal space: Norman’s *communitas*.³⁶⁶

I found Norman’s narrative unusual insofar as it is devoid of the varnish of moralizing that is obligatory in so many tales of personal reform. Drinking and healing here appear as structural equals. Both are effective and have given Norman happiness.

Had Norman come across his traditions earlier, then perhaps drinking might not have seemed quite as miraculous and cathartic to him, because he would have had similar ‘spiritual’ experiences to compare it to.

But had Norman grown up in the NAC tradition, its ceremonies maybe would not have affected him as potently as they did at a later point, after he had endured ‘identity-deprivation’ for most of his life.

We may say that all of Norman’s life revolves around a quest for ‘Indianness’: his drinking, his walking the Peyote Way, and his political work. His life’s course is one of being compromised. Having found his way into belonging to a sub-culture, he adheres to its condoned behaviour, over the mores of wider society.

In his community and political work, Norman is compromised by the intricate web of identity etiquette, the politics of which again eerily reflect the properties of stricture that we find in bureaucracy: The radius of flexibility that a committed identity affords is limited and evokes-again!- ‘das Stahlharte Gehäuse’.

An Indian cannot be politically active in a White community, without compromising his identity this way or another. The more Norman advocates for Indian causes, the less Indian he is regarded by other Indians.

³⁶⁵ Freud; 1930: 57-146 Freud himself was somewhat skeptic regarding oceanic feelings, a friend had presented him with the idea: “I cannot discover this ‘oceanic’ feeling in myself.” he wrote.

³⁶⁶ Turner; 1969

If Norman were to succumb to drinking again and incur DUI charges, how would each section of the communities he is involved in perceive him?

Would he then become another type of Indian in his liberal Anglo associates' eyes: An *Indian* who once showed promise, but messed it up?

Would he become more or less acceptable to other Indians- depending on where they stood?

Considering the surfeit of caveats and dogmas that potentially ensnare Norman, drinking seems not only a comparatively straightforward alternative, but the more appealing one.

Identity conflicts and conflicted identities here emerge as the ineffable and unavoidable products of historical process conspiring to envelop its hostages like a miasma.

So viewed alcohol is an antidote to society's toxic machinations: While it is in effect, it is an equalizing substance, one that strips confusing reality of its complexity. Alcohol has great levelling potential.

This is not to say that any part of this speculation represents Norman's own thoughts and feelings on the matter. It is doubtful that it would.³⁶⁷

But it is what occurred to me when pondering on Norman's narrative in which alcohol presents as the most unambiguous aspect.

* * *

³⁶⁷ But this has been written by one who grew up between various cultural worlds; understanding something about each one and belonging to none. And in this sense I identified with Norman; and I admired his tenacity and envied his determined quest for identity.

PART II

PUSHING LIQUOR: THE BUSINESS OF ALCOHOL

Travelling along the borders of the reservation there is evidence that the prohibition of alcohol has afforded many business opportunities: In rural areas, where the reservation border is far from the next town, you may, driving along straight roads towards the horizon under vast skies and a timeless, barren landscape, of a sudden come across a single-wide trailer with a lop-sided neon-sign reading: "Package Liquors".

In the middle of nowhere this must be an optimistic entrepreneur indeed, the uninitiated think, until they see a silhouette stumbling across the plain, and here and there spy a person lying prone in the sage-brush, sleeping off a drunk. One of the 'licensed' gas-stations in the borderlands is said to have the highest turnover in liquor-sales in the entire United States.

South of Ridgeback, so called because of the ridged sandstone promontories, there is the barred-up building that housed the now closed Vegas Bar.³⁶⁸

In its time the Vegas Bar was a notorious watering-hole located in what entrepreneurs would consider the first opportune location across the reservation-border. The bar, which operated as a drinking saloon for several decades, evidently was opened here, on the location of a former trading post, with a view to 'catch' reservation-trade.

During the past forty years or more that the Vegas Bar existed, car ownership and mobility amongst the reservation population increased exponentially, but despite this the bar managed to

³⁶⁸ All names have been changed. The 'Vegas Bar' closed in 2008 and sold to a new licensee who submitted a proposal to convert it into a package-liquor store. This plan met with some dismay from the local population many of whom felt that the area was well rid of "the death-trap" In an online forum one contributor has no doubt about the new owner's intentions: "hahaha,hehe, look at the color of the building, tells a lot about the new owners intentions. GREED!" (The new owner had painted the building bright yellow)

retain a customer-base that made it viable. Apart from the Vegas Bar the local gas-station and another local store also sell alcohol.³⁶⁹

The Vegas Bar was a Reservation bar, an ‘Indian bar’, notorious first for the staggeringly high number of street fatalities happening in its vicinity, as well as for its clientele’s purported rowdy behaviour, bar-fights, assaults, alleged rapes in the car-park and incidents of consensual public fornication by merry drinkers (or so I was told).

While I met people who had occasionally frequented the bar in times past- ‘when I was young and wild’, no-one I knew socially went there anymore. It was a “kind of edgy” place, perhaps not as dangerous as it was made out to be, but not especially welcoming to new-comers and outsiders, who could at the very least expect to be ‘hit on’ for beer-money.

What is particularly notable about the Vegas Bar is its position: Right at the foot of the dual carriageway passing Ridgeback, it posits an obvious risk to pedestrians, who will have to walk along a ‘shoulderless’ road that has no provisions at all for pedestrians, no lighting and no traffic lights at crucial points. To cross the road- four lanes altogether- one has to be brave, quick, foolhardy or drunk. Cars appear on top of the ‘blind crest’ and barrel down the hill, giving pedestrians scant time to assess whether it is safe to cross.

There have been many, many fatal accidents around the Vegas Bar. The majority happen when an inebriated pedestrian is walking home in the dark, and is hit by a car. This is not just due to carelessness and bad luck though: The road itself, its curves, blind corners, incline and narrowness seems to offer all the factors necessary to increase the risk of an accident.

In the 1970s, during a brief period of assertive resistance by the region’s Native population in the aftermath of the brutal murders of three Navajo men, people marched on the Vegas Bar, which

³⁶⁹ In an online forum debate around the proposed ‘Vegas’ package-liquor store a nostalgic ex-patron saw its location and proximity to the reservation boundary as a bonus for road-safety: **“ if they won't allow liquor on the rez at least it is being sold closer to home of those who live on the rez who want to buy and start drinking on the way home. They won't have as much time to drink before getting home therefore they won't be as drunk. I can't wait to buy the first 30-pack!! Great memories there! ”** (TOPIX online forum; 22/10/2008)

they targeted as an example of Non-Natives making immoral earnings by exploiting Indian vulnerability.

Considering its location it seems evident that the bar was a bastion of profit: No thought seems to have been given regarding the clientele's particular circumstances and safety, neither by the establishment itself nor by the municipality in whose domain of responsibility the safety of travellers would fall, one assumes. The Vegas Bar offered nothing but drink- and the solace of drunkenness and perhaps community- to its customers. It was an oasis, dispensing transformative libation on hostile terrain.

Around forty miles in a northerly direction, at the city limits of a small border-town, there is the Bear Paw, a package-liquor store, which too has achieved local notoriety, particularly amongst the Native population.

The road that leads past the Bear Paw has the reputation of being one of the deadliest highways in the United States with a shocking number of fatal accidents. It is said that for many people involved or perished in these accidents, the Bear Paw had been their last port of call.³⁷⁰ It has been alleged that some of these accident victims were already drunk when they went to the Bear Paw, and that an ethical store-keeper would have refused them service.

The Bear Paw has a similarly advantageous position to the Vegas Bar: It is the last liquor-store before the Navajo Nation reservation and is close to the Ute Mountain Ute reservation, so the majority of its clientele are Native. The store's name appears to have been chosen to appeal to a Native clientele especially and its location on the town's outer borders allows for inconspicuous liquor-purchasing excursions.

³⁷⁰ For a time I frequently drove that stretch and learnt to be especially alert when passing Bear Paw, as customers leaving its parking-area seemed especially prone to pull out into the Highway without indicating or waiting for an opportune gap in passing traffic during which to exit.

Both the Vegas Bar and the Bear Paw occupy locations at the margins that have been invested with a certain stigma. While leisure consumers ‘with standards’ prefer to frequent one of the liquor-stores in town, which apart from popular national beer brands and cheap fortified wine and spirits stock micro-brews, wines and a range of ‘up-market’ spirits; the Bear Paw and similar concerns are the domain of the furtive drinker.

Apropos the Bear Paw, a Ute man³⁷¹ who lives in the area and said he knew it well, told me the story of his ‘drinking-career’.

By his account he had indeed suffered from an alcohol-problem. He had taken every social gathering as an opportunity to indulge in binge-drinking, after which he would become troublesome and rowdy “I really liked to fight when I was drunk”.

He would do things that he could not remember when sober, and always felt physically wrecked after his binges. His friends came to learn that he was a nuisance when drunk, but they would still drink with him, and just leave “before I got really bad”.

Once he accompanied a friend on a journey which led them to Yellowstone National Park in Wyoming. And there, at the top of a hill at sunrise, the Ute had what struck him as a vision, or a mystic experience: “I looked around and I saw everything. I felt different. Something changed in me. I got down from that mountain and did not touch a drink again”

This experience had not made the Ute into a temperance zealot however: He regularly helped a friend make bootlegging tours where they purchased quantities of liquor at the Bear Paw and sold them on the Navajo Nation. “They sure pay well down there” the Ute said gleefully referring to the bootlegger’s steep mark-up (being a member of another tribe perhaps inhibited his concern for Navajo drinkers).

When I asked if he found this profiteering in any way morally problematic, he seemed in all sincerity not to see a problem in this: People chose to drink. They chose to buy over-priced

³⁷¹ I never got the man’s name so I am not giving him a pseudonym. It was a story ‘out of the blue’, a gift. Thank you, Ute man.

liquor. Nobody was forcing them. They would not stop drinking, just because there were fewer bootleggers around: “When I wanted a drink, nothing stopped me.” And, like him, they would, when the time was ripe, stop.

I could see a valid therapeutic principle to the Ute’s account: ‘Recovery’ cannot be forced, it is a matter of ‘being ready’ for it, without consciously planning or aiming for it.

And so what if colonial principles of profiteering had found their way into the rationale of this man? Why, he may have asked, let the White man reap all the profit?³⁷²

In the same vein a Navajo friend confided that in his miss-spent youth he and his buddy ran a racket whereby they extracted exorbitant fees ferrying drinkers who found themselves without a ride and desperate to get to a bar or liquor-store to their next watering-hole.

“Well, if they wanted it that bad, those gláaniís...”³⁷³ he said, not altogether remorsefully.

* * *

³⁷² Had the Ute been an Anglo making profit off the backs of Navajo drinkers it is conceivable that I would have found his attitude much more perturbing. Such are the nuances of intercultural perception.

³⁷³ Gláanií: Slang for ‘drunkard’ from Navajo: adláanii = drunk (noun)

PART III
SKETCHES OF MUTUAL PERCEPTION

“Twenty drunken Anglos and one sober Indian” commented a Navajo friend waspishly after attending a party given by her Anglo boss.

I read my friend’s observation as a gleeful inversion of the stereotype of the drunken Indian and historical accounts in which lone Whites witness the indignities of Native debauchery. Her remark highlights the persistent vigilance with which beleaguered minority groups take note of the hypocrisy of dominant groups.

In style it is representative of a genre of throwaway comments through which socially inadmissible or censored resentment is presented in a manner so underhand and furtive that it precludes further elaboration.

Here one finds echoes of Basso’s observations on the Western Apache³⁷⁴, where complex attitudes towards- or against- Anglo-Americans are expressed by linguistic word-play and humorous role-play in a style that is best described as impressionistic, and that is as stinging as it is ephemeral.

It is a good example of the efficiency of stereotypes used as abbreviated codes mediating concise information.

That curt reference to a sober, lone Indian amongst a pack of pissed-up Whites echoes across centuries to the accounts of White colonists disapproving of inebriated Indians. That inversion is ingenious because of its brevity, its lack of elaboration and its eloquence. Any more one feels would be less.

But “twenty drunken Anglos and one sober Indian” could just as well be taken as a factual observation and therein lies its potency.

³⁷⁴ Basso; 1979

It resonates with historical resentment, while establishing history's progress- or process: We now live in a time where it is possible for one sober Indian to observe twenty drunken Anglos- even if it may yet be some time until this observation mutates into a stereotype about drink-prone Whites. Once, sitting in a park in a border-town with the same friend, we observed a group of Natives drinking at the other end of the green. Most of the group seemed to be in a fairly advanced stage of inebriation, but not at all troublesome.

A woman with a rucksack repeatedly attempted to raise herself from the grass, but kept falling back, while her fellow-drinkers looked on.

"Seeing this" said my friend, shaking her head and looking profoundly unhappy, "it makes me so ashamed. It makes me ill to see my People behaving like this."

"Look, over there are some Anglo gláaniís too" I said, attempting to appease her ire.

"Those are none of my business" said my friend.

* * *

While living in rural Colorado I often used the small town's laundromat which shared a drive with the local liquor-store.

The laundromat's owner Pete and I often had interesting conversations, despite or perhaps because of our fundamentally different political positions.

Once Pete, whom I had spoken to of my study began to converse sympathetically on the plight of the Indians.

What a pity, he said, that they have such a problem with alcohol.

Opposite the laundromat, pick-ups were pulling up, disgorging Anglos who vanished inside the liquor-store, emerging with crates of beer and carriers laden with bottles. There was a brisk trade from pedestrians, residents of the local trailer-park.

“What about all these folks?” I asked Pete.

In the time we had talked there had been no Indian customer to the liquor-store.

“I’ll be darned” said Pete, contemplating the pick-ups raising dust in the parking-lot. And he began to count off the top of his head a number of individuals (all Anglos) whom he observed frequenting the liquor-store daily, on each occasion buying multi-packs, crates and boxes.

“That’s a lot of heavy drinkers for such a small place” said Pete after he had calculated the extent of liquor consumption this implied.

All these Anglo regulars whose daily visits to the liquor-store Pete observed had it seemed, not registered in his conscious, while the minority of Indian customers had been noted as specimens of Native alcoholism.

On a similar vein, most Natives of my acquaintance, if they drank at all, would appoint a designated driver who remained sober and who would drive everyone home, whilst Anglos seemed- if they drank- markedly more cavalier about drinking and driving.

It was once explained to me that in a rural community people have no other choice than to drink and drive.

“After all everyone needs to have fun, right?”

Whilst Indian drink-driving was seen as presenting a regional problem, Anglo drink-driving was rarely mentioned as a generic problem.

It seemed to rather establish a case of ‘a mote in one’s eye’.³⁷⁵

Perhaps an appropriate question here would be whether an Indian drunk behind the wheel poses more of a danger than an Anglo drunk behind a wheel?

Yes -if regional accounts of police stopping drivers by ethnic profile for ‘DWB’- ‘Driving While Brown’; or ‘DWI’ –‘Driving While Indian’ - are to be believed.

³⁷⁵ - similar perhaps to the UN’s support for some Nations enriching uranium, whilst others by Western consensus seemingly cannot be trusted with such lethal material.

PART IV
THE PROBLEM WITH SOBRIETY

Most rehabilitation approaches have a void at their centre in that they do not address, or rather deliberately avoid addressing the pleasures and the divine effects of alcohol. But avoiding mention of the positive aspects of drinking in fact is to deny the complex realities of the alcoholic experience.

“If his style of sobriety drives him to drink, then that style must contain error or pathology; and intoxication must provide some- at least subjective- correction of this error”³⁷⁶; states Bateson in contrast to received opinion that has it that it is the drunken, not the sober state, that is the problem. But Bateson’s simple inversion seems intuitively correct: why would someone drink to ‘pathological excess’ if their sobriety wasn’t a trouble to them?

In Bateson’s ‘theory of alcoholism’ acts of drinking calibrate individual relationship to self and the outside world. That relationship revolves around an intricate interplay between perpetually responsive, mutative ‘particles’ shifting with the evolution of the drinker’s relationship to his drinking.

Alcoholism is both resignation and resistance to the ‘insane reality’ that has created it in that the drinker experiences himself as an embodiment of the wider social state.

“It is not a matter of revolt against insane ideals around him but of escaping from his own insane premises, which are continually reinforced by the surrounding society. It is possible, however, that the alcoholic is in some way more vulnerable or sensitive than the normal to the fact that his insane (but conventional) premises lead to unsatisfying results.”³⁷⁷

Bateson inverts a common perception whereby system and subject are conceived as separate agents in a prescribed chain of causality: the dysfunctional agent must be reintegrated into the

³⁷⁶ Bateson; 1972: 310

³⁷⁷ *ibid*:311

functional system. Bateson's agent on the other hand struggles to assimilate the dysfunctional system into his reality.

Bateson delivers us the alcoholic as a kind of 'idiot savant' whose "... surrender to alcoholic intoxication provides a partial and subjective short cut to a more correct state of mind".³⁷⁸ The alcoholic's sobriety here is the problem, not his drunkenness which is an- albeit temporary- solution to the problems of his sobriety.

In the case of 'Indian drinking' Bateson hypothesis appears particularly trenchant. The (post-) colonial state of society to which tribal people are being forced to reconcile themselves indeed resembles the 'not good enough' state of sobriety. Drinking so can be understood as attempts of 'restorative activity'.³⁷⁹

* * *

Regarding the stereotype of the drunken Indian, which is commonly that of a fighting Indian (an impression reflected in statistics of American Native alcohol related deaths by accidents, homicides and suicides), Bateson's argument leads to an interesting perspective: Usually violence is seen as the quasi-inevitable consequence of Indian drinking; it is a cathartic dysfunction that is rooted in Native problems with alcohol.

But perhaps violence should be conceived as the result of an alchemic process where hopes and desires have found fulfilment in drunkenness and in which that temporarily achieved 'state of perfection' creates a kind of separation anxiety?

³⁷⁸ *ibid*:309

³⁷⁹ Bateson has led me to a close semblance of what alcohol counsellors dismissed as clients' 'lame excuses' for irresponsibility and self-indulgence: There are many better ways to- cultural- recovery and harmony, they would point out.

The drunk is reluctant or even afraid to let go of the state of perfection that is drunkenness. He³⁸⁰ anticipates the loss that he will feel once the drink has worn off, when he will be expelled from bliss back into reality. To the drunk this feels unbearable.

Possibly, following Bateson's argument, it is not drunkenness that makes people violent, but the frustration about the limitations of the state of drunkenness; the enforced return to real life's harshness. Maybe, then, drunken fighting could be conceived as a defence against sobriety? That is to say: Drunken Indians fight to fight off sobriety.

Drunkenness is after all, phenomenologically viewed, the 'superior state'.

* * *

In practice and popular ideation, the focus on alcohol I found in the field was one-dimensional and determinedly negative.

Considering that the ethnographic starting-point of this study were IHS and tribal mental health and alcohol-rehabilitation services it is not surprising that I received predominantly pessimistic views on alcohol and drinking. These were after all services dedicated to treating those regarded as alcohol's victims through the application of 'culturally appropriate' approaches within a 'culturally sensitive' framework.

In this milieu there was a fundamental belief that alcohol is not made for Indians and that Indians are not made for alcohol. Alcohol seemed to be equated with the European mentality. Implicitly the effects of alcohol perpetuated the colonial destructive legacy. Alcohol was in a sense the mirror-image to Native culture: it turned everything that was sustaining, solid and harmonious in the tradition around and into a negative.

³⁸⁰ Or: she...

The specialised, culture-focused framework of treatment services can be understood as bearing a message in the implicit juxtaposition of symptom and culture. Native culture, it is implied, is inherently healing. It will make good the hurt that has been wreaked on people by alien substances and by the separation from one's own cultural roots.

It is understandable that tensions would be sought and found in the relations of alcohol to culture, and vice versa. This was indeed the core approach of the DBHS' treatment programme which was essentially a cultural immersion programme.

If clients learnt enough of their culture, their clans, the underlying ideas that had sustained the tribe through its history, they would be able to 'live in balance'. They would feel no need for alcohol or drugs to feel okay. Being restored to the Diné way would do this for them.

This belief was borne out by Norman's experience who had indeed felt that he had been healed by his culture and 'the love of his relatives'.

The culture's healing potential here is employed to replace alcohol. There is no question in these programmes that Native clients are being made to live in an insane world in 'pathological states of sobriety'. The style of sobriety that they are being offered instead is spiritual and transformative. It is the traditional way, the way how things were before the bílagáana came.

* * *

Those who have experienced it may agree that there can be something divine about the state of drunkenness while it persists, however reviled and condemned inebriation is by social and cultural mores. At the 'crest' of inebriation, that brief state where the drinker enjoys all the benefits of drunkenness without yet feeling discomfort or 'come-down' the transformative properties of alcohol indeed have something of magic to it.

During my fieldwork at the rehabilitation services I sometimes wondered how this 'essential' quality of alcohol could be so persistently ignored and banished from the programme.

The void at the centre of the rehabilitation approach seemed more like the elephant in the room.

After all a majority here- with the exception of the lifelong teetotal facilitator- had at some time known the joys of convivial drinking, before it degenerated into pathological drinking.

Would acknowledging the potentially positive properties of alcohol compromise treatment? But if a drinker's motivation is so ephemeral that it can be swayed by the mere mention of alcohol-ic good times, what chance has he got in the long run of staying sober? Can treatment based on denial be effective?

The 'positive' effects of alcohol are less divisive, so much may be said. Alcohol at its best is an agent of cohesion.

It is conceivable that the moment of ephemeral delight that alcohol offers is an experience shared cross-culturally by drinkers, albeit embedded in the respective context of social, cultural and drinking habits.

Drinking 'committed' as knowing transgression and tainted by an uneasy conscience may be different in its effect than drinking that is socially condoned.

Native drinking historically inhabits a liminal conceptual space, where stigmatized contemporary consumption retains a resonance of the ancestral pursuit of sacred inebriation.

Perhaps sobriety to American Indians is not just an individual, but a collective problem that must be borne individually, however. The idea of isolation from and within the mainstream should here be taken quite literally- it is the loneliness of minorities and the marginalized.

Within the act of collective drinking the problem of sobriety is collectively rectified. The social components of drinking- the incremental extension of boundaries by the recruitment of participants described as integral to drinking-sprees, resembles migratory movements gaining volume, echoes perhaps of the now distant nomadic past.

PART V
‘CHOSEN TRAUMA’

Volkan, a psychoanalyst working on large-group identity speaks about ‘chosen trauma’, whereby traumatized groups’

“collective experience of victimisation, losses, shame, and humiliation, as well as helplessness and an inability to assert itself. (...) cannot assert themselves in socially or politically adaptive ways and may end up internalizing a sense of helpless rage, idealizing masochism, or becoming prone to maladaptive sadistic outbursts³⁸¹ (...) cannot successfully complete certain psychological tasks and (they) , then, transmit such tasks to the children of the next generation.”³⁸²

The transmission of these uncompleted psychological tasks and of fantasies of restitution proceeds through ‘narratives of societal collapse’ that revolve around collectively experienced trauma. Once trauma has been internalised the clock will never be turned back, the collective can return to its original pristine state no more.

Nostalgia is not singular to traumatised groups, but traumatised groups may experience nostalgia as offering them ‘compensatory benefits’. Nostalgia is a state without ambiguity: it turns what has

³⁸¹ Within a social science context the language of psychoanalysis can seem somewhat judgemental and value-laden.³⁸¹ What after all are ‘*adaptive*’, ‘*normal*’, ‘*maladaptive*’, ‘*sadistic*’ ‘*masochistic*’, ‘*exaggerated*’ but terms conveying normative judgements? This is certainly one possible critique of psychoanalysis. But psychoanalysis in practice rarely concedes to ‘normality’ as an existent state. In psychoanalysis *normality* appears as an ideal based on denial and sublimation. The human condition aspires to an untroubled contained state of serene satiation. This state of contentedness, alas, runs counter to the Darwinian laws of nature which demand a perpetual libidinous voracity in the service of maintaining the species.

‘Abnormality’ rather than ‘normality’ is the state we all share. The psychoanalytic approach has extended the conceptual vocabulary addressing and mourning the fundamental conflict arising out of the disjuncture of psychic yearning and the hard facts of libidinal physicality. One of psychoanalysis’ contributions is the inversion of those social mores that privilege the external, physical and material. It has shown a way of focusing instead on internal and unconscious processes as a parallel reality. It is this validation of internal processes that is potentially revolutionary in a political sense.

³⁸² Volkan, Vamik: Chosen Trauma, the Political Ideology of Entitlement and Violence; 2004; <http://www.vamikvolkan.com/Chosen-Trauma%2C-the-Political-Ideology-of-Entitlement-and-Violence.php>

been lost into an image of perfection, a wondrous mirage of untroubled times appearing through a separating age of injury. The fantasy of perfection that nostalgia delivers is incontestable. The past's golden hue makes its loss the harder to bear.

Traumatized groups, according to Volkan, may develop what Levin defined as an exaggerated sense of entitlement, through which to restore destroyed beliefs, lost values and damaged potency.³⁸³ Trauma narratives as restorative fantasies cement this sense of entitlement.

Volkan, who worked extensively as a facilitator of "psycho political dialogues between representatives of large enemy groups", uses the 'large tent' metaphor for group-identity originally employed by Freud: it is the protective layers of canvas which envelop, substantiate and create the group's being.

Volkan elaborates on the tent metaphor and focuses on the canvas itself, on the many threads that together combine to form a weave. At times of collective stress the group's concern with repairing and protecting the canvas of their tent by whatever means available becomes imperative.

Volkan speaks of the phenomenon of 'chosen trauma' that follows collective experiences of "victimisation, losses, shame, and humiliation, (...) helplessness and an inability to assert".

Chosen trauma:

"refers to the shared mental representation of a large group's massive trauma experienced by its ancestors at the hands of an enemy group, and the images of heroes, victims, or both connected with it. Of course, large groups do not intend to be victimized, but they "choose" to mythologize and psychologize the mental representation of the event. When this occurs the reality of the event no longer matters to societal movements."³⁸⁴

³⁸³ Levin categorizes sense of entitlement into 'normal entitlement', 'restricted entitlement' and 'exaggerated entitlement'; Levin, 1970: 1-10;

³⁸⁴ Volkan, Vamik: Chosen Trauma, the Political Ideology of Entitlement and Violence; 2004; <http://www.vamikvolkan.com/Chosen-Trauma%2C-the-Political-Ideology-of-Entitlement-and-Violence.php>

In the specific case of Navajo history it seemed that powerlessness- the powerlessness to resist the displacement of the Long Walk; the powerless of the bystander unable to help his own; the powerlessness of parents incapable of protecting their children from being forcibly removed from home; the powerlessness of the herd-owner to prevent the federally ordered livestock reduction; the powerlessness of a minority to challenge discriminatory treatment and unequal opportunities; the powerless of elders to engender traditions and respect in their descendents- was a comprehensive and collective experience.

According to Volkan's definition it would be the mental representation of cumulative ancestral suffering that becomes the 'chosen trauma' of their descendants.

Native American alcoholism so can be seen as a consequence of trauma, or a trauma in itself, or even as both: the consequence of a trauma and a trauma that perpetuates itself by intergenerational group mediation of traumatic experiences inflicted by the sufferer on his environment.

In Navajo a term for 'cancer' is 'tóód doo nádzihií', 'the wound that doesn't heal'.

Alcoholism is regarded similarly, as an ever-weeping infection that must be borne collectively.

'Outbreaks' can take the form of domestic violence, irresponsible behaviour, economic unviability, delinquency and so on, and contaminate the community.

* * *

In the DBHS programme many clients supported the theory that Europeans had deliberately manipulated and corrupted Native genes, so that alcoholism was an intentionally implanted genetic fault-line that would wreak its destruction over generations to come.

The colonial legacy was literally conceived as an embodied toxin, a poison that permeates Native being and works its contagion stealthily and persistently. An implanted evil, alcohol is seen as an

independent and dependency-making agent; the colonial power's most effective and enduring instrument of obliteration.

These theories were not in my experience expressed as part of a critical discourse on colonialism. They seemed like one of the few possibilities to understand and express the unconscious, pervasive unease with a historically malevolent and still dominant power.

These theories of deliberate genetic contagion are a very powerful way of signaling the subliminal discontent at the core of post-colonial intercultural relationship.

The perception of malignant colonial intentionality makes clear the extent of fundamental dread left by the colonial legacy. But the theory of genetic contagion may also be interpreted as a defensive internalisation of conflict with an overpowering adversary.

The dominant society is too powerful to be defeated, hence a narrative that validates powerlessness must be found. The theory of genetic mutation is a potent metaphor for the introjection of historical injury.

A fault is created that lives on in perpetuity in descendants; a fault that cannot be eradicated. The genetic damage only leaves strategies of self-injurious resistance; strategies whereby the damaged use their pathologies to wound 'healthy society'.

The 'Drunken Indian' is an emblem of chosen trauma, the quite literally walking wounded in whose destitution is reflected the injury suffered by the whole tribe. This staggering, uncoordinated, dejected ruin of humanity is a monument-in-mortal-shell to historically inflicted damage.

Who would dare to deny when confronted with such evident devastation the harm done to America's Natives?

And so the stereotype of the drunken Indian in itself harbours a duality: The fact that it is a stereotype attests to the proliferation of the phenomenon, and this in turn may be employed to

establish the point that may otherwise be denied, namely that there is obvious suffering and dysfunctionality in Native American communities.

Stereotypes and tropes are never merely an- albeit overblown- reflection of the other, they are also projections of aspects of the self.

The 'establishment' appears rather liberal in its tendency to invest certain cultural and economic groups with pathologies that in fact may represent a projection of its own fears into another.

The spectre of Native drunkenness so also should be understood as a conjecture of 'savagism', an externalisation of fears and desires that do not cohere easily with ideals of civilisation and entitlement.

It is conceivable that Anglos perceive the 'Drunken Indian' as exonerating their colonial misdeeds: "This is what Indians do when left to themselves"; while Native views on Indian alcoholism may be: "See what you have reduced us to?"

* * *

What remains is that with the colonial enterprise a long established fait accompli, the early colonists' unfavourable assessment of Indian drinking now is supported by Indian communities themselves.

The negative assessment of the effects of drinking on tribal societies may represent a realistic appreciation of damage inflicted by the colonial process, or it may reflect (and thereby prove) hegemonically developed and mediated views on Native vulnerability.

Interesting, and perhaps rather optimistic, is the Duran's hypothesis that the deferred acknowledgement of responsibility haunts "colonial perpetrators with guilt and existential emptiness."³⁸⁵

Theirs' is a theory of inevitable justice. The dominant society may bask in the trappings of material success and political power, but it cannot protect itself from its "existential emptiness". Certainly this would help explain some of the manic phenomena evident in wider American society as defense mechanisms shielding against unbearable guilt.

The problem here is that many descendants of colonial perpetrators do not perceive themselves as such.

The Duran's critique of the failure of colonial perpetrators to own up to ancestral misdeeds presumes a homogeneous cultural identification within European ranks which may not reflect the historical reality of the fiercely hierarchical and unequal structure of European societies- and in present-day North American society.

Even contemporary paradigms struggle with the dilemma how to conceptualise and accommodate the phenomenon of the oppressive oppressed and perpetrating victims.

While the colonial project may have been schemed and strategized by a small European elite who succeeded in transposing their positions of control to the New World, a critical mass of migrants were themselves the unwanted, exploited and persecuted in their own countries.

'The perpetrator victim dichotomy can break down pretty quickly', according to Joseph Gone in a recent AAA panel on Historical Trauma.³⁸⁶

It is perhaps that historical sense of injury that European colonial migrants carry that makes for a particularly rabid sense of entitlement in the present.

³⁸⁵ Duran & Duran; 1995:30

³⁸⁶ American Anthropological Association Annual Conference : American Indian 'Historical Trauma' Panel, San Francisco 2012

The sense of having come from nothing and conquered uncounted adversities, to then achieve prosperity is at the heart of the American ideation, as much as the dishwasher-to-millionaire fantasy. The American Dream itself is built on memories of deprivation.

In essence there is perhaps more identification from American Europeans with American Indians than is conscious or admitted to.

Here ethnic adversaries, European have-nots fleeing poverty and deprivation and Native Americans whose experience of the European invasion may be likened to being visited by a plague of locusts, eye each-other with mutual resentment and envy.

“Don’t blame us” say the Europeans: “How come you did not do what we managed to do?” Indian tribes’ failure to resist the colonial conquest is here taken as a sign of implicit inferiority. “We were doing okay until you came and ruined it all” respond Native Americans.³⁸⁷

Regardless of the ample evidence supporting social, economic and cultural inequity, a persistent inequality of opportunity and the irrefutability of the manifold oppressions and injustices inflicted on Native Americans, the historically transmitted migrant narratives focusing on the valour and resourcefulness of the early migrants in a way constitute their own post-traumatic trajectory.

In this sense colonist/ Native dichotomies beg to be reconsidered as the encounter between people(s) whose existential experiences are not that far apart.

To evoke Joffe once again for whom hate and envy are manifestations of “one side of an essentially ambivalent relationship,”³⁸⁸ any strong reaction to ‘an other’ or ‘the other’ ‘however expressed indicates interest, relationship and empathy, whether ‘positive’ or ‘negative’.³⁸⁹

³⁸⁷ These are paraphrases of pronouncements made in conversations by European and Native Americans. Some European Americans stated that Europeans had indeed saved Indians rather than destroyed them, while some Native Americans evoked pre-European halcyon days of harmonious and trouble-free communities. And as with all observations recorded here, although these comments are significant and prolific enough to be considered, this is not to claim that they represent a particular proportion of attitudes residing in any one population.

³⁸⁸ Joffe;1969:533-545

³⁸⁹ As pointed out in the ‘Cyberspace chapter’ in the Appendix, animosity itself is a complex emotion- or a complex of emotions, which is perpetuated by keeping the image of its objects simple. The bestowing of stereotypes on adversaries indicate attention to the other. To extract and caricature another’s traits, the other first must be engaged with.

And while I cannot come to any certain conclusions regarding most of the observations, hypotheses and theories inventoried here, the one thing I can state with reasonable certainty is that the susceptibility to over-simplify and stereotype 'the other' is a manifest shared trait of humanity as far as I have experienced it.

And it is not a question of who or even whether any one perspective is 'right', but the appreciation of a stereotype, Janus-faced and promiscuously and polymorphously perverse, that I would like to commend to the reader as epitomizing the ambiguous potential of the reality we all inhabit.

* * *

POSTSCRIPT

It took me years of sanitized theorizing about the manifestation and implications of Indian Drinking, until one day a personal experience adjusted my observational parameters and gave me a taste of the potency of social judgement.

I was on a road-trip with two female friends, one Anglo, one Navajo, Monica and Jayne, both in their early 60s. On the first evening we stopped at a gas-station outside the reservation.

The gas-station store's coolers were amply filled with an admirable selection of beers- not just the usual Coors, Buds and Miller Lites- but microbrews to delight an aficionado's heart.

After a long, hot day's back-seat driving, and looking on as a stream of customers made their purchases of beer, I felt a rising longing for a cold brew.

"Is it alright if I buy myself a beer?" I asked Jayne, my Navajo friend, who was nearby perusing a display of candy. Right away I could see from Jayne's face that I had made a mistake.

"You have to ask Monica. It is her car." She frowned.

I decided that it would be wiser after all to forgo the beer. When I returned to the car, in the twilight I saw my lady-friends, their heads close together. They drew apart hastily when I approached.

"You have been talking about me" I said, feeling defensive.

There was a pause.

"Well, how do you behave when you drink?" asked Monica, the Anglo, uncertainly.

"Have you never had a beer before?" I asked Monica. I knew that Jayne did not drink.

Monica answered that yes, of course she had drunk beer when she was young; even had had a toke of weed now and then. She did not drink now for health and spiritual reasons. Her experiences with alcohol and 'weed' were of casual and unproblematic 'leisure-use'.

That night after the gas-station incident, at dinner Jayne did not look at me at all and avoided addressing me directly.

I did not drink during the three days of the trip, but started to feel that with my expressed desire to buy a beer I had done irreparable damage particularly to Jayne's and my relations.

I began to experience myself as it felt that Jayne did: as a delinquent and somewhat lesser person given to distasteful, lowly appetites. I was not able to regain my ease with Jayne.

My feeling was that our friendship had come to an end. It was a sad loss of a company I had hitherto enjoyed very much.

I now had the opportunity to experience to a small degree what it may be like to feel stigmatised and outcast for drinking.

I felt guilty, humiliated, inadequate for having committed a social gaffe whose depth I had not appreciated; a gaffe which had turned out to be a serious transgression that somehow could not be discussed nor repaired.³⁹⁰

My desire for liquor had relegated me to another realm, the realm of undesirables. I regretted making that mistake, but felt that there was no undoing it.³⁹¹

That swift condemnation, that stern judgement hit me to the core. It was one of the more potently affecting experiences of instantaneous exclusion in my adult life, precisely because the disapproval was so silent, the process of expulsion so swift, that I did not know I had crossed a threshold until it had happened.

What made it more difficult was that the process of judging had been unconscious, visceral and now cast all my behaviour in the light of characteristics typical of a drinker.

It was a final judgement.

³⁹⁰ And while it is unclear if the desire to drink beer had confirmed an outsider status I had held in this group anyway, but that I had not been aware of before, or whether it indeed effected a dramatic shift in these two women's attitude towards me is difficult to determine. My experience was one of instant stigmatisation, whether earlier precedents had been set for this or not. And I did not deal well with this experience, but retaliated much as an adolescent would by being moody and snappy and altogether giving up on efforts at reconciliation.

³⁹¹ Had I been a youngster still, I thought, I would perhaps have acted on my feeling defensive, bought a six-pack and drunk this in the back of the car, burping demonstratively, just to act out the position of delinquent outsider I had been accorded.

If this experience reflects in any measure how an Indian is made to feel when s/he drinks by a disapproving community, then I would argue that the stigmatisation of drinkers by communities constitutes a discrete category on its own with considerable psychological implications.

Judging from my own experience being stigmatised and feeling outcast does little to motivate a wish to reform. On the contrary I find it conceivable that the burden of being judged; the feeling of being cast out creates a momentum carrying the miscreant towards the 'good object' - the bottle.

Or maybe I just 'imagined things' and overreacted.

CONCLUSION

“... the Second Law of Thermodynamics, the law of entropy, whereby ‘the randomness of probability will always eat up order and pattern in the world’ that is, while each purposive organism will have created an order for itself by selecting a set of possible relations between possible things in the world (and defining it as ‘order’, or ‘law’ or ‘custom’ or ‘norm’), still its world will tend towards entropy because any number of other possible permutations of relations are likely to occur to it in future. Order and pattern in the world are eaten up by the organism shuffling and recombining the relations between components of circuits...”³⁹²

Colonial- and post-colonial relations- in fact it may be argued all relations- are propelled and perpetuated to a certain extent by symbiotic drives towards the other.

Whether in the visceral revulsion with which Benjamin Franklin beholds drunken Indians; in the conspicuous avoidance of rising to provocation evident in the Hózhóní team towards Mr Essel; in the flurry of write-ups; complaints and grievance procedures; in the Indian behaving like and becoming a White man (that is: aggressive, rapacious, undisciplined), under the influence of drink; in Mr Essel aspiring to Indianness through witchcraft accusations; in residential schools forcing young children to mimic Whites, in the community critique of Norman’s too Anglo politics and in Hózhóní clinicians immersing and abandoning themselves to bureaucratic protocol- in all of these prisms of post-colonial Anglo/Indian relations and dynamics there is evidence of mimetic behaviour, endeavour or conversely critique of mimetic behaviour.

This is not to negate the quasi immutability of entrenched power-relations, economic inequity and cultural domination that are found in this field. But beyond historical, structural and socially emplotted relations, there may be other fundamentally unifying dynamics at work.

* * *

³⁹² Rapport & Overing; 2000:109

In my thesis bureaucratic protocol, political transitions, witchcraft hysteria and cathartic alcohol-use were not so much chosen as foci, but rather insinuated themselves into it.

In the course of research which had been embarked on with a straight-forward brief; plans, intentions and preconceptions were continuously thwarted by the ambiguous complexity of the reality encountered in the field.

As with the mostly submerged iceberg mentioned elsewhere, I had a pervasive impression of the depth of the unsaid, the ineffable, the unhomely and the unacknowledged in inter- and intra-cultural relations. That ambiguity formed an almost textural counterpoint to the unequivocal, unambiguous Golem-like structure of bureaucracy and policy.

The 'prisms' I have attempted to represent in this study are liminal sketches- impressions- of transitional dynamics that officially tend to remain unacknowledged.

Unofficial, indeterminate, unsanctioned activity (or 'acting-out'), quantitatively makes up a significant proportion of activity, and so must be acknowledged as significant at least in the amount of time and energy expenditure these 'unproductive' activities demand.

Alcohol for instance has a litmus-effect, in that it highlights individually held and collectively shared paradigms both through the attitudes it provokes and the behaviour it generates when consumed. Against these dynamics, creative and perhaps somewhat perverse modes of acting out adversarial relationship; official policy, bureaucratic protocol and administrative process stand stagnant and immutable.

It is here that the idea of loss should be kept alive: The process of apportioning policies, guidelines and protocol to fragile, ambiguous and mutable concepts and entities may transform them into 'congealed spirit' encased in inflexible structures, tendencies that are evident in the educational domain or in health-care.

Applying the theory of entropy here, these 'unconstructive' pursuits may be reclassified as necessary systemic disorder and their connotation inverted so that official protocol and dictate

come to stand for 'disorder' and activities subversive of it become 'order' in the sense that they agitate towards restoring justice where otherwise inequity rules.

"Peace" says Judith Butler "is the active and difficult resistance to the terrible temptations of war"³⁹³, and that inversion where war is the indulgent norm and peace the difficult to adhere to exception, seems a truer approximation of the rapacious dynamics of hostility.

Mr Essel's witchcraft accusations lead us either to detect strategic assimilation for the purposes of assertion, or a mimetic act engendered by a desire to be closer to- or become - the other.

Witchcraft- here: sympathetic witchcraft- is, as has been argued, a most intimate mode of aggressing against another. Witching is attack and tribute in one. Engaging in witchcraft also always brings with it the danger of evil intent rebounding on the perpetrator, thus making it potentially contagious. Witchcraft, as opposed to the machinations of bureaucracy, is not rule by distance.

Mr Essel's 'tantrum of desire', a fantasy of possession and invasion that he perhaps wished rather than feared to be true, may be seen as emblematic of the complex ambiguities inherent in intercultural relations. Staff's lack of interest towards Mr Essel and his accusations on the other hand do not merely spring out of Mr Essel's misjudging the milieu, but also represent active acts of rejection and resistance.

An alternative mode of disquieting and intimate engagement with the powerful or unattainable other is found in the strategically timed juvenile delinquency that incurs reduced punishment.

In both 'strategies' or pursuits, Mr Essel's and the adolescents', there is a certain voluptuous abandonment to a hostile³⁹⁴ and controlling other who is colonising the mind.

Perhaps it is easier to actively (re-) project an introjected bad object or hostile entity into an other; to combat terrifying fantasy with a reality that is at least made tangible.

³⁹³ Stauffer, Jill and Judith Butler; 2003: 99-121

³⁹⁴ possibly imaginary-

* * *

Freud conceived of the unconscious principally as a chaotic, undifferentiated and undifferentiating space, wherein drives, blind and amoeba-like, magnetically attracted, advance towards the other. That primitive, essential drive for togetherness is, I would argue, indiscriminate because it is regressive and aspires to prenatal, intra-uterine symbiotic fusion.³⁹⁵ Rudimentary resonance of this powerful, though mostly sublimated drive may be found in any relationship and any relational dynamics, regardless of whether these are divisive or inclusive, centrifugally or centripetally expressed.

Gregory Bateson, anthropologist and ‘father’ to the concept of systemic therapy, aspired to a holistic and systemic view of the world and adopted the concept of ‘entropy’ from the second law of thermodynamics to explore meta-patterns and systemic interconnectivity:

“The notion of the amount of information attaches itself very naturally to a classical notion in statistical mechanics: that of entropy. Just as the amount of information in a system is a measure of its degree of organization, so the entropy of a system is a measure of its degree of disorganization: and the one is simply the negative of the other.”³⁹⁶

The notion that disorder is as much a systemic constituent as is order represents a paradigmatic shift, where the cessation of the moralistic privileging of order over disorder liberates us to consider communities, groups, organisations and families as systemic entities that draw and depend on each and every of their component elements equally.

³⁹⁵ Doi;1973

³⁹⁶ Wiener; 1949:18 ; in: Rapport & Overing , 2000: 103

Historical ambivalence and contemporary ambiguity and persisting segregationist tendencies in present-day society have created ambivalent and adversarial relationships among North American communities that nevertheless harbour a degree of intimacy and exercise a certain centripetal pull. The metaphor of the crab-barrel is more than merely descriptive of a state in which those mired in subalternity seek to hinder each others' advance. For what fate awaits the crab that makes it out of the barrel brimful with peers?

Pearce's³⁹⁷ suggestion that the construction and destruction of 'The Savage' reflects the introjection and projection of a 'part-object' and constitutes a mechanism of defence helps to make sense of complex historical relational dynamics. His theory is applicable to colonists and colonised both, whose unconscious activities constitute a parallel, ineffable realm of relational dynamics accompanying 'visible' and acknowledged structural dynamics.

Horkheimer and Adorno³⁹⁸ speak of the loss of the capacity of nuance that springs out of a fundamental mistaking of the dialectics of scientific inquiry for the unambiguous pursuit of uncontested hypotheses.

With the capacity for ambivalence, dimensions of complexity are lost in everyday life to the short-term gratification found in the pursuit of facile certainties. This tendency may be found in the way cultural- and linguistic- complexities are sacrificed to ideals of accessibility and inclusivity. Language-loss however, is a silent loss. Like 'White Thunder's' Menomini, gradual diminishment may lead to change and eventual creolization to create a novel and serviceable vernacular that is fit for purpose. What has been lost on the way is difficult to estimate. And, more importantly, there may be no-one to name and mourn the loss.

³⁹⁷ Pearce; 1953

³⁹⁸ Horkheimer & Adorno; 2004 [1944]

And this leads to Gramsci's subalterns, "deprived of historical initiative, in continuous but disorganic expansion, unable to go beyond a certain qualitative level, which still remains below the level of the possession of the State and of the real exercise of hegemony over the whole of society..."³⁹⁹

The way hegemony agitates in contemporary multi-cultural, pluralistic societies is less through its residing in and being disseminated through certain bounded institutions. It is more akin to miasma; an invisible, untraceable, contour-less 'Zeitgeist' that permeates and creates unquestioning adherence to an obscured status quo. The "obligatory reference to the values of neutrality and disinterested loyalty to the public good"⁴⁰⁰ by representatives of the State and bureaucracy may be seen as one such hegemonic strategy. Those who decide to attack these structures implicitly attack 'the public good' and thereby harm the collective.

That 'obligatory reference' is therefore much more than mere reference: It is a demagogic statement of ideology that is rendered unassailable by its self-pronounced altruism.

The Indian Health Service's declared mission is to serve the health of American Indian and Alaska Natives and to address and balance health-status inequities.

That goal of serving the Native public good shields the IHS from trenchant critique and makes it unresponsive to change. It is the institution rather than its agents that are occupied by it, that is an emblem of certain beliefs.

Even if none of its agents actively subscribe to these beliefs, the institution and the ideologies that adhere to it will endure without the support of agitating, active agency.

Weber's bureaucratic machinery hosting 'congealed spirit' is here seen as transhistorical and transcultural.

The stifling of engaged agency in favour of efficient protocol is particularly evident in the way bureaucratic protocol and administrative procedure are privileged over engagement with patients.

³⁹⁹ Gramsci; 1971:Notebook 16, § 9; 388-99

⁴⁰⁰ Bourdieu; 1998:59

On the other hand, the adversarial processing of intra-group relations through crab-antics or by Jhon's Syndrome within organisational, institutional and political 'imported frameworks' here emerge as evidence of an ongoing process of hybridisation.

And hybridisation, conversely, may be taken as mimetic. The legacy of colonialism and its contemporary presentation and processing are nothing if not ambiguous.

* * *

In his essay "Mimicry and Legendary Psychasthenia" Roger Caillois⁴⁰¹ challenges the "heavy predilection for ulterior motives"⁴⁰² in biological theories that conceive of mimicry as 'offensive' or 'defensive'. Rather than accepting the prevalent utilitarian notion of natural mimicry as an offensive mechanism that helps predators to predate or as a defensive mechanism that helps to protect from predators, Caillois suggests that mimicry is an essentially symbiotic drive. For him mimicry is akin to sympathetic magic. Mimicry is "a temptation by space",⁴⁰³ "an incantation fixed at its culminating point and having caught the sorcerer in his own trap".⁴⁰⁴

Species are not just divided by their differing survivalist imperatives; they are also conjoined in a shared space; bound together by their mutual desiring of otherness, and by their attempts of approximating that otherness by mimicking it. Mimicry so is not mere entrapment or deception- it is homage, a tribute to alterity. Mimicry and mimesis are not that far apart, they are natural and cultural renditions respectively, emerging from the same root. With this conceptual inversion Caillois dissolves orthodox dichotomies that separate predator from prey along essentialist parameters.

⁴⁰¹ Caillois; (1935) 1984

⁴⁰² *ibid*:16

⁴⁰³ *ibid*:28

⁴⁰⁴ *ibid*:27

Caillois' perspective on mimicry is arguably systemic, in that it conceives of participating constituents as transcending evolutionary-separatist dichotomies.

While that view does of course not dispense with nature 'red in tooth and claw's' realities of predation and survival, it provides a quasi-poetic intimation of interconnectivity beyond biological 'opportunism'.

René Girard⁴⁰⁵ incorporates the mimetic drive into the dynamics of desire and argues that desire is always triangulated. Desire is generated through the beholding of what another desires, which then becomes the subject's object of desire. Within this triangulation one element- the rival who has engendered desire- must eventually be eliminated, and by taking his place in relation to the desired object, the subject himself transforms into the desirous other. Girard conceives of violent desire as the link that mediates mutable relations and shifting positions between agents.

Homi Bhabha's thoughts on colonial mimicry as "the desire for a reformed, recognizable Other, as a subject of a difference that is almost the same but not quite"⁴⁰⁶ delivers, when held against Caillois' conjecture of mimicry as essentially symbiotic, a somewhat pedestrian conception of colonial relational dynamics. Bhabha ignores the primordial libidinous and symbiotic incentive that plays a part in propelling adversaries towards each other.

Caillois understanding of mimicry is arguably the most transcendental and visionary: he links the phenomenon of mimicry to the "huge realm of sympathetic magic- things that have once been in contact remain united, just as association by resemblance corresponds quite precisely to the *tractio similia* of magic: like produces like."

Whether contact is conceived of as transformative or contagious, it is the idea of reciprocal impact and inherent relationality that is held as significant.

⁴⁰⁵ Williams ed.; Girard ; 1996

⁴⁰⁶ Bhabha; 1994:86

Beyond operative dichotomies there is contact. Contact, whatever its nature, whether empathetic or adversarial, always mediates a quantum of change, however minute, and so is in some way transformative and bonding.

To desire the other is an approximation of the wish to be the other- to become or to consume the other; the emulation of the other through mimicry is but a step away from annihilating the other. Mimetic activity engages with and transcends boundaries between self and other. Any engagement with the other harbours elements of mimetic conduct: For responsiveness between stranger-entities to be achieved there must a degree of mutual mimetic emulation.

Walter Benjamin perceives evidence of mimesis, symbolic or otherwise in all human activity and throughout history; “Like the ancient prophets reading entrails, the modern reader discerns similarities that fuse the material medium of language with a ‘flash’ of similarity.”⁴⁰⁷

These perspectives enable us to contemplate relations with ‘the other’ as transcending reductive dichotomies which conceive of such relationships primarily in terms of structural power, inequity and crude strategies of exploitation and subjugation.

They pay homage to what often is ignored: incomplete states, substitutive alterity and ambiguous positioning.

They appeal to our ‘negative capability’; that is the ability to tolerate uncertainty, mutability, volatility and those things that remain beyond our understanding and beyond our control and that, unbidden and often denied, rule our lives and the ‘human condition’.

* * *

⁴⁰⁷ Benjamin;1978:335

EPILOGUE

The story that follows was told to me by Josephine. Josephine in fact told me this story several times, on different occasions. She told me the story as it appears here, without comment or interpretation.

I offer Josephine's story in the spirit of uncertainty that I have tried to honour in this thesis.

I am not at all sure what to make of Josephine's story, or how to interpret it.

I find it, despite its leaving me at a loss for interpretations- or perhaps with too many possible interpretations- curiously powerful.

That Josephine repeated the story on several occasions, each time 'out of the blue' and unrelated to our conversation at the time, apparently forgetting that she had told it to me before, seems to indicate that it was an important story to her, although, as I say, she did not comment on the story, she just told it as follows:

It is said that one of Josephine's ancestors, a woman, was around the time of the Long Walk abducted and delivered into servitude to a Hispanic family far away.⁴⁰⁸

She had a child and a dog.⁴⁰⁹

The woman, Josephine's ancestor, remained in captivity and in that family's service for a long time.

Eventually she plotted her escape. Every day when she was making tortillas for her 'masters' table, she began to store away an amount of flour, small enough not to be missed.

⁴⁰⁸ Josephine herself was not too clear about the exact circumstances of her ancestor's involuntary displacement. She thought it likely that the woman's eventual *masters* or *owners* had probably been *Hispanic* not *Anglo*. This assumption may be linked to the more openly acknowledged and expressed historical animosity between Native American and Mexican groups in the region. In preliminary negotiations to the 1868 Navajo treaty, Navajo tribal leaders make mention to assaults and abductions inflicted on them by *Mexicans*. Somewhat diplomatically, one may say, mention of problems between Navajos and Anglos appear largely omitted in these negotiations. It may be strategically more prudent to deflect the location of conflict away from the de facto locus of power onto a less influential entity.

⁴⁰⁹ It wasn't clear whether the child had been born in captivity and of captors, whether his conception had been a consequence of rape; my impression was that the woman had been abducted with child and dog.

She did this for months, hiding the flour in a sack that she made from a piece of her clothing.

Finally, one day, she packed her sack of flour, took her dog and fled captivity.

She and the dog traversed hundreds of miles on foot, surviving on the flour she had saved over those months when she had been preparing for her flight, and on what she could forage in this inhospitable terrain. It took her a long time, but eventually she reached her homeland.

When I heard the story for the second time I asked Josephine:

“What happened to her son?”

“I heard that years later, much, much later he came to the reservation to see where his mother had come from.”

“And then?”

“Then he left again, I guess” Josephine said.

And perhaps because Josephine did not evaluate or judge the story at all; simply narrated it as representative of what happened to people during the Long Walk era, it seems to pose more questions than it solves.

I think of this story as the delivery of a monad, a configuration with which Walter Benjamin describes the cognitive disruption of historical process:

“Where thinking suddenly stops in a configuration pregnant with tensions, it gives that configuration a shock, by which it crystallizes into a monad.”⁴¹⁰

⁴¹⁰ Benjamin; 1968: 263

“My dictionary tells me a monad is a most mysterious thing” writes Taussig, evidently intrigued by Benjamin’s evocative use of the term:

“neither matter nor spirit, but both and something else as well. It is mysterious because of its oneness, its being the “unit one,” more than an atom, “an elementary unextended spiritual substance from which material properties are derived”. Like the gold and fossils in the subterranean rivers, or the curiously textured stones found on the island of Gorgona, this monad of Benjamin’s crystallized by shock is an object violently expelled from the continuum of the historical process”.⁴¹¹

‘Shock’, and objects “violently expelled from the continuum of the historical process” seem apt metaphors on which to end this thesis.

* * *

⁴¹¹ Taussig; 2004: 247

APPENDIX

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I
TROUBLE IN CYBERSPACE:
Cowboys and Indians.... And Never The Twain Shall Meet...

ABSTRACT

Anglo-American and American Indian relations have been formed and are strained by a multitude of factors. The following chapter places contemporary intercultural relations as emerging through a debate in a local newspaper's internet forum within regional history. The city of Farmington in New Mexico on the Navajo Nation gained notoriety for the brutal murders of three Navajo men by Anglo high school students, who were seen to be treated rather leniently by the authorities. Farmington, originally a small farming community, grew exponentially through the oil-and gas-boom, and the influx of people seeking employment from across the country may have contributed to especially tense relations. I was alerted to the Farmington Daily Times 'Topix' forum, by Norman, a political activist, who appears elsewhere in this paper. Norman pointed to the 'Topix' forum as emblematic for the racist attitudes still endemic in border-towns in Indian Country. Here however, the concept of adversarial intimacy is further pursued by exploring a particular 'thread' on the forum developing out of responses to a Daily Times leader article about racism in the region.

* * *

PROLOGUE

“We join President Obama in reflecting on the sacrifices made by the members of our military to defend our great nation. When terrorists attacked on 9/11, it was an attack on our homeland that deeply affected tribal nations, along with our fellow citizens. Osama bin Laden was a shared enemy. Since 2001, 77 American Indians and Alaskan Natives have died defending our country in Afghanistan and Iraq. More than 400 have been wounded.

Let’s be very clear about what is important here; the successful removal of Osama bin Laden as a threat to the United States honors the sacrifice these Native warriors made for the United States and their people.

Our understanding is that bin Laden’s actual code name was ‘Jackpot’ and the operation name was ‘Geronimo.’ To associate a Native warrior with bin Laden is not an accurate reflection of history and it undermines the military service of Native people. It’s critical that military leaders and operational standards honor the service of those who protect our freedom.”⁴¹²

* * *

"Earth to President Obama: The Apache Nation thinks you and the U.S. military are sorely in need of diversity training – and that’s putting it mildly”⁴¹³

* * *

MR GOULD⁴¹⁴ : “We brought this bill⁴¹⁵ forward... we thought this is a historic firearm... it fits well with the history of Arizona... if you see a Western movie the handgun in the hand of John Wayne will be a Colt Single Action Army Revolver or some variant thereof (...) it is a historic firearm, it had a lot to do with the settling of the Arizona territory and what is now the great State of Arizona...”
(...)

⁴¹² Statement by Jefferson Keel; President of the National Congress of American Indians; 4th May 2011; <http://64.38.12.138/News/2011/001401.asp>

⁴¹³ Editorial comment on use of “Geronimo” as code for Osama Bin Laden operation; Indianz.com website; 3rd May 2011; <http://64.38.12.138/News/2011/001397.asp>

⁴¹⁴ Arizona House of Representatives member (R)

⁴¹⁵ SB1610 establishes the Colt Single Action Army Revolver as official State (of Arizona) firearm

MR HALE⁴¹⁶: “Mr Chairman, members of the committee, staff and visitors, sponsors ... I know we are all glorifying a piece of weapon and want to make that a symbol of the State. But you got to remember that before this land or this piece of land became the State of Arizona there were people here, the Native Americans. If you want to symbolize something and shove that something, that symbol in their faces, this is what it is. Because the gun symbolizes the extinction, the extermination of those Indians, but we’re here, that’s what I see, that’s what I hear. And with that I vote “No” and I hope you do also.”

(...)

MR FARNSWORTH⁴¹⁷: “I’d like to explain my vote. Mr Hale I’m sensitive to your feelings and to the way you perceive this, I respectfully see it differently. I see it as – I was raised by a man who...raised me to use firearms, my grandfather was a marksman,...the cowboy history... I was raised riding horses and dealing with cattle and the gun was a very important part of that. I recognize the challenges that went on, some of the atrocities that went on but I don’t think that’s what this is, a manifestation or celebration of those atrocities. It is a recognition that this gun played a major role in this state, even outside of the conflicts between the Indians and those cowboys that were here. ... there were... it was misused and it was used properly, it was used to kill and murder and it was also used to defend and I think this is a recognition of that and I don’t... if I thought this was simply to put in the face of someone a bad act I would oppose this, I don’t see it that way, but I am respectfully sensitive to the way you see it and so with that I vote “Aye”,”⁴¹⁸

* * *

The Creation of New Mexico

**The devil in hell, they say, was chained
And there a thousand years remained,
He never complained, nor did he groan
But decided to start a little hell of his own.
So he asked the Lord if he had any on hand
Left over, when he made his land,
The Lord said, ”Yes, I’ve plenty handy
But I left it all down on the Rio Grande
In fact, old boy, the truck is poor
I don’t think it could be used for hell anymore”**

(...)

**And the devil said it was all he needed
To start a new hell and then he proceeded**

* * *

⁴¹⁶ Arizona House of Representatives member (D), Navajo

⁴¹⁷ Arizona House of Representatives member (R),

⁴¹⁸ SENATE BILL SB1610; Arizona House of Representatives: 24. March 2011; Passed by a majority 4/3. http://azleg.granicus.com/MediaPlayer.php?view_id=13&clip_id=8962; transcript by author

The city of Farmington, on New Mexico's north-western border, derives much of its income from the oil and gas-fields that surround it.

In 1879 first oil-seeps were discovered by farmers and ranchers in San Juan Country, but failed to arouse commercial interest, until an explorative venture by West Texas Refiners Company in 1921 hit on America's largest natural gas-well.

The first commercial oil-well started operation in 1923. The subsequent establishment of oil-refineries in the area and the building of a pipeline to Albuquerque and Santa Fé heralded an economic boom in the area. After the Depression increasing prosperity, changes in lifestyle and the nascent popularity of motorized vehicles boosted the consumption of oil and gas.

In the aftermath of WWII, nationwide industrial expansion and a westward bound population shift coupled to increasingly mobile lifestyles, once again advanced Farmington's fortunes.

Farmington's population of 3637 in 1950 increased tenfold within three years, putting the town's resources under severe strain. By 1960 Farmington declared itself "Energy Capital of the West".

During the following decades Farmington experienced a succession of economic booms and busts, linked to federal restrictions to the pricing of natural energy resources and international oil policies.

The "boomers", as transient oilfield-workers were called, often came from regions with little exposure to native cultures, and had scant knowledge of or respect for their new environment they found themselves in. Boomers were said to have 'imported' their combative prejudice and active hostility towards minorities and particularly towards Indians:

"The discovery of gas and oil in the 1950s brought Anglos from Texas and Oklahoma to the region who had no prior contact with Native cultures. These newcomers were able to establish and maintain control of the economic and political institutions, thereby creating a power

differential between groups that led to negative feelings toward minorities among law enforcement and local citizens.”⁴¹⁹

“A radiograph of the heart of Farmington’s attitude toward its’ Navajo neighbors”⁴²⁰ was a Farmington attorney’s assessment of an incident that took place in the 1950s, when a group of firemen poured a bucket of red paint over a group of drunken Indians. The assault aroused no discernable public outrage amongst Farmington’s white majority.

The firemen’s attack was reflected in the practice of ‘Indian Rolling’ popular amongst high school students who methodically targeted and assaulted drunk and incapacitated Indians. “Indian Rolling” is a reoccurring phenomenon in border towns, and is variously glossed as an initiation rite, thrill-seeking hate crime and racially motivated attack.

In 1974 Farmington gained nationwide notoriety through the killing of three Navajo men who were tortured, mutilated and murdered by white teenagers. The murders caused particular consternation because the three adolescent perpetrators were sentenced to reform school rather than being tried as adults, despite the brutality of their crime.

“The Chokecherry Canyon Murders” aftermath is remembered by some Navajo as “the time we got political.”⁴²¹ Protest marches through Farmington’s downtown were staged on successive weeks, causing concern among the business community whose revenue was beginning to be affected.

“I approached a scene so in keeping with my idea of a Western-style showdown, it could have been staged. Perhaps a half-dozen young Indians wearing cowboy hats and red headbands and enough military touches to identify them as modern warriors were faced off against a six-man contingent of horsemen dressed in Old West cavalry uniforms. Only the aggressive movement of the mounted men, who seemed ready to spur their skittish horses forward, and the menace of the

⁴¹⁹ Donaldson; 2006: 11

⁴²⁰ Barker, 1992: 27

⁴²¹ ‘Josephine’, Personal Communication, 2005;

Indians, who wore sunglasses that wouldn't let you see their eyes, just your own bulging reflection, said that this was not a scheduled performance."⁴²²

In 1975 the New Mexico Advisory Committee to the United States Commission on Civil Rights submitted "The Farmington Report: A Conflict of Cultures."⁴²³ The committee gathered evidence through open hearings, individual testimonies and field-investigations and concluded in its report that prejudice, inequality of opportunity and discriminatory treatment of Native Americans were complex and widespread. The Commission made detailed policy recommendations how to address and improve these conditions through a series of comprehensive social, political, educational, organisational and health-focused measures.

In 2005 the New Mexico Advisory Committee returned to Farmington to conduct a follow-up enquiry and submitted "The Farmington Report- Civil Rights for Native Americans 30 Years Later"⁴²⁴. The report lauded a marked improvement in conditions and inter-group relations, although it found that problems continued to persist.

In June 2006 Farmington intercultural relations were once again strained, when a Navajo man was offered a lift by three white men, who then seriously assaulted him. A week later a young Navajo man was fatally shot by a Farmington police officer. These two incidents rekindled memories of the 1974 murders and concerned tribal members and Farmington citizens converged and mobilised to discuss ways to confront hate crimes in the community.

The Farmington Community Relations Commission⁴²⁵ was established by the City of Farmington in 2008 in response to grassroots campaigning and public hearings.

⁴²² Barker; 1992:13

⁴²³ Chin, Laura et al; ed.: New Mexico Advisory Committee to the United States Commission on Civil Rights: The Farmington Report : A Conflict of Cultures; 1974

⁴²⁴ New Mexico Advisory Committee to the US Commission for Civil Rights: The Farmington Report: Civil Rights for Native Americans 30 Years Later; 2005

⁴²⁵ Its members are selected by the Mayor of Farmington through an application process and serve 2 year terms. In April 2011 the Committee's members comprised 3 females (1 Navajo, 2 Anglo), 4 males (? 1 African-American, 2 Navajo, 1 Anglo)

In April 2010 a young Navajo man with learning disabilities was attacked by three McDonald's workers in Farmington, who assaulted him, branded a swastika on his arm, and shaved a swastika onto the back of his head.

This case is the first in the Nation to be prosecuted by the Department of Justice under the Matthew Shepard and James Byrd, Jr. Hate Crimes Prevention Act ⁴²⁶

Under the headline "It is time to make history, not to relive it" a June 2010 Farmington Daily Times' editorial commented an impasse between the Farmington Community Relations Commission and the Navajo Nation Human Rights Commission in negotiations regarding the development of a joint mission statement thus:

"The source of contention in this case is the move, rightfully made, by Farmington Mayor Tommy Roberts to pull language in the accord that takes us all from promoting progress back to placing blame. The agreement, once there is one, is intended to strengthen the communications between the Navajo Nation and the city, and to coordinate services that promote positive relations between the people living within both. Leonard Gorman, the Navajo commission's executive director, wants the draft his group provided to keep a few select stinging reminders in the document, such as "We must never forget the tragedies inflicted against the Navajo people and other indigenous peoples within the United States..."⁴²⁷

In a February 2011 press-release regarding the launching of its "Inebriates Have Rights" campaign, the Navajo Nation Human Rights Commission⁴²⁸ makes reference to occurrences of maltreatment of inebriates and mentions "the practice of Indian Rolling" and the fatal shooting of an unarmed Navajo in a Wal-Mart parking lot by a non-Navajo police officer. The press release concludes with a quote from an email by Leonard Gorman of the NNHRC:

"Gorman explained that the Navajo dollar spent by responsible Navajo people has built a solid economic base for border towns and this issue can be addressed with money that flows from the Navajo Nation to border towns. He said, "There has to be realization by all parties that this is an issue not only in the border towns but in almost every community in the world."⁴²⁹

⁴²⁶ Public Law No. 111-84, passed by 111th Congress, 2009

⁴²⁷ Farmington Daily Times Editorial; 13. June 2010

⁴²⁸ further: NNHRC

⁴²⁹ Navajo Nation Human Rights Commission Inebriates Have Rights Campaign Press Release, February 18th 2011

The Farmington Daily Times newspaper on April 7th, 2011 ran a front-page article on the placing on paid leave of a San Juan County deputy due to use of force on duty.⁴³⁰ The newspaper's online version included a patrol-car video-recording of the police officer apprehending and then beating a St. Patrick's Day reveller - a young man of Navajo appearance - repeatedly with a flashlight on March, 17th, 2011 in the vicinity of a downtown bar.

* * *

⁴³⁰ "Deputy on Leave for Use of Force Review"; Farmington Daily Times; 7th April 2011

“Man has, as it were, become a kind of prosthetic God. When he puts on all his auxiliary organs he is truly magnificent; but those organs have not grown on to him and they still give him much trouble at times.”⁴³¹

* * *

No racism problems? That's simply denial ⁴³²

Trust is a tough thing to earn and although things are greatly improved, frankly speaking, the city of Farmington in its efforts to battle racism hasn't earned all the trust it still needs to earn. The city's Community Relations Commission is trying to decide how to improve attendance and participation at its meetings in light of low turnouts and few complaints filed with the entity. Likewise for the Navajo Nation and its commission under a similar mandate to hear and address charges and complaints of racial or other types of discrimination. Observers who claim that race and diversity relations in Farmington are greatly improved from what existed in years past are correct; they are. However those living in apathy, denial or ignorance would like to argue that there is no need for the Community Relations Commission or no need for special efforts by the city because there is no racism issue still in Farmington. Nothing can be further from the truth. Creating these types of community commissions was a step in the right direction. So, if problems exist, why aren't people voicing concern to the commission and thus the city? For one thing, it took the city nearly two years to create the commission. That showed the public that it simply wasn't a priority. Since the commission's creation, support of it can be called questionable at best. There is little advertisement or promotion in advance of the meetings other than media coverage, and it is hard to criticize the lack of attendance by the public when too many of the commission's own members fail to show, as is now common practice. Much of the public is unaware of the commission's scope of authority. What can be accomplished by taking time and the courage to speak in a public forum? That answer is not always evident to those most likely to be the people in need of attention. From the flip side, what protects people who have false accusations filed against them? The Community Relations Commission is not a cure-all entity, nor was it intended for such. Its primary function was intended to be service as a platform for residents to voice their concerns and have confidence someone was listening with sincerity. Those dedicated members of the commission looking for solutions deserve a special thanks for their efforts, including new ideas to meet in more informal settings such as over coffee or to create more exposure for the commission with appearances at public events. That shows who is dedicated to making a difference. Racism still exists in Farmington and on the Navajo Nation. All one needs to do for proof of that is to read the online Topix discussion forum that can be found at daily-times.com. Almost every topic seems to include someone's racist comments, which spark never-ending rebuttals. "I personally don't feel that discrimination is a large problem," city councilor George Sharpe recently said in a public meeting. It may be a much-improved issue, but racism both in Farmington and on the Navajo Nation nonetheless does remain an issue. Any case of someone feeling hatred or unfair treatment from discrimination is one too many, and Farmington should aspire to zero tolerance for racism, not just an improvement. Likewise for the Navajo Nation. It's an ongoing fight, and thank you to those who continue the fight. A good community is one spelled with unity.

* * *

⁴³¹ Freud;1991:280

⁴³² Farmington Daily Times, Online Article; Posted by staff writer; Posted: 13/09/2009 12:00:00 AM MDT

The Farmington Daily Times, owned by the US-based MediaNews Group, has a circulation of approximately 15 650 and is published daily.

Daily Times articles are also available online for a limited time, after which they are archived and can be accessed by paid subscription.

The Daily Times invites its readers to comment on its 'TOPIX' online forum.

Access to TOPIX is unrestricted and available to the general public by logging on to comment..

The log-in process is notably easy and the forum is immediately accessible.⁴³³ No formal registration or password is required. The only indication of contributors' identities is the server's location which appears under commentators' names. Although the server is not always synonymous with the contributor's location, it is relevant as the only reliable information of a forum participant's identity in that it remains consistent and cannot be manipulated by forum users.

As names are not password protected it is easy to assume someone else's name and to contribute under another identity, often in subversive or slanderous ways.

Participants sometimes contribute assuming different names and identities. These cases of 'name-jacking' and 'multi-nicking' may only transpire to the forum's readership if they maintain close attention to contributors' servers. Participants may also take on another's name and slightly corrupt it, so "Thinker" in this thread at one point becomes "Thinker-Stinker" then "Stinker", which then morphs to "Stinkfinger", not only indicating rising animosity between contributors but also increasing puerility as the forum progresses.

The TOPIX thread relating to the "No racism problems..." article started in September 2009 and continued to December 2010. The thread lay dormant from April to December 2010, and comprised 3009 comments at the time of writing.

⁴³³ Broadband- and mobile internet services are widely available in the area, and all public libraries in the area offer free internet access and free computer-use to the public.

Contributors commonly choose their forum-names either to reflect on their particular identity, attitude, characteristic, preoccupation or intent.

Names range from the sober: “Sam”; the informative: “Navajo grandma”; the self-regarding or self-ironic: “Thinker”, “Saint”, “Bleeding Heart Liberal”, to the political: “Taxpayer”; the potentially ominous: “Carson”⁴³⁴; the quirky: “ShrubFan”, “CursorManiac” to area-specific identity references: “JhonFromTotaStreet”⁴³⁵, “JhonFromChickenStreet”⁴³⁶ and the provocative: “Jesus Christ”, “Cruella de Ville’s Advocate”; and the puerile: “Oneeyed Fuckstick” etc.

* * *

The first ten comments posted on TOPIX in response to the Daily Times September, 13th 2009 article are testament to the forum’s operative albeit ‘dysfunctional’ pluralism. Considering the limited space and format, there is a sense of immediacy even at the forum’s beginning stages and evidence of a remarkably dense ‘scrum’ of views and attitudes.

It doesn’t take long until the first potentially contentious statements are made⁴³⁷:

⁴³⁴ Possibly in reference to Kit Carson, implementer of the ‘scorched earth campaign’ which destroyed land cultivated by the Navajo, who eventually were forced to capitulate and submit to the governments enforced relocation to Bosque Redondo, which was coordinated by Carson.

⁴³⁵ John, Jhon, or Jaan: An emic term for a reservation or rural -‘boondocks’- ‘Indian’ ; synonymous with ‘unsophisticated’ Totah: Navajo name for Farmington (Three Rivers)

⁴³⁶ Chicken Street: An area south of downtown Main Street, Farmington, known as an area where street-drinkers gather, and where the shelter, soup-kitchens, the food-bank and the Farmington Indian Center are located.

⁴³⁷ Posts below are arranged as follows: **Name**; Server Location; # Number in thread; Date;

Comment; *quoted comment in italics*

Pedro; Ignacio, CO; #1 Sep 14, 2009

Here we go again. Let’s get the racial comments going.

Jade; United States; #2; Sep 14, 2009

Do we really need another one of these?

Solution; Spokane, WA; #3 ; Sep 14, 2009

If it is true that there is indeed racism in a particular area, why frequent it...stay away. I do. Simple as that, there are other places that would love your presence and your money.

uKnOmE; Shiprock, NM; #4 ; Sep 14, 2009

Thank you and amen!

Northern ojobwe; Bemidji, MN; #5; Sep 14, 2009

“ dont let anyone take over on any Indian land, blacks and mexicans have made it way up here already. There are glad when we dont do anything about racism” (sic) ; “Racism is still alive in thisarea becauseof the fact the minorities keep yelling it. "he got shot cuz he was native" or "he got arrested cuz he was black" if everyone would STOP throwing the racism card it would die down and not be as crazy” (sic)

Right away battle-lines are drawn: “Your post is rich with unintentional humor“.

A contributor with the intriguing and in this framework potentially incendiary name ‘Sallaam’, (possibly an idiosyncratic transcription of the Arabic greeting), makes a brief appearance.

‘Cline’ whose artless choice of a name- possibly his own surname or first name- may be taken to establish his integrity, makes an attempt to contribute factually and auto-biographically to this debate.

dont let anyone take over on any Indian land, blacks and mexicans have made it way up here already. There are glad when we dont do anything about racism.

Taxpayer; Albuquerque, NM; #6; Sep 14, 2009

Jade wrote: *Do we really need another one of these?*

Apparently the DT feels that we do. The DT needs endlessly to stir the pot and create more tired threads about racism. Controversy sells papers and the DT needs business. They can sell more 50 cent papers this way, all under the guise of good journalism. How magnanimous of them.

Taxpayer; Albuquerque, NM; #7 ; Sep 14, 2009

Northern ojibwe wrote: *dont let anyone take over on any Indian land, blacks and mexicans have made it way up here already. There are glad when we dont do anything about racism.*

Your post is rich with unintentional humor.

Convert; Jacksonville, FL; #8; Sep 14, 2009

Sallaam Maybe they need to watch this: <http://www.youtube.com/watch...>

ShrubFan18; Farmington;#9; Sep 14, 2009

Racism is still alive in thisarea becauseof the fact the minorities keep yelling it. "he got shot cuz he was native" or "he got arrested cuz he was black" if everyone would STOP throwing the racism card it would die down and not be as crazy.

Cline; Lubbock, TX; #10; Sep 14, 2009

Mr. Sharp MAY THINK that racism is not a huge problem in Farmington right now but i would strangly disagree. I am a half Navajo and half Hispanic woman that attended Farmington High School and grew up in Farmington and that statement is a flat out lie. When i was in high school in farmington it was obvious that the different ethnic grups in school would not associate with each other just because of race. And 99.9% of the fights that took place in or around the school was based on race. I was even confronted one day as i walked through the halls of my school going to my next class and a "cowboy" came up to me and straight out told me that they,"need to round up all the indians and get rid of every one of them." I was very offended and i'm not going to lie i said some comments back because i'm proud of who i am and where i come from. What about the recent happenings of intoxicated natives that are being bribed to go out to the country to drink with people and get the life beaten out of them. I mean i understand that they have a choice to choose to go or not but, in reality people know and have an idea that that induvidual is drunk and obviously not in the right state of mind to understand that thats a wrong situation to do. Rasism is everywhere and it's hard to stop it because of the teachings of parents nowadays. Natives everywhere are a proud race and no matter what i will fight rasism no matter where it goes because it's wrong.

TOPIX contributors succeed in ten posts in what is rarely accomplished elsewhere: together they establish a pluralist discourse in action.⁴³⁸

There is a notable efficiency to this abbreviated and anonymized way of conjuring an impression of community dynamics and non-consensual diversity of outlook. Opinions that are usually segregated and sanitized, here are voluptuously indulged in.

Throughout the thread there is evidence of the implied or explicit wish for a closer encounter, albeit often adversarial. Several participants threaten that they will ‘check up on someone’, or will appear at their work in order to verify their identity and statements: “I know where you work now and I’ll come by and talk to your manager”; “I’m parked behind Durango Pete’s and if anyone wants to try to take me on...”

Despite the combative attitudes and conflicting opinions here it seems that the forum for participants is not enough. Provocation and opinion-differences lead to the wish to meet the other ‘in the flesh’, even if it is only to pummel them into shape or submission.

Psychodynamically speaking the wish to face or confront conflict presents as an advance on the position of conflict-avoidance- or -denial.

Not all interpersonal curiosity expressed in the forum is adversarial. Speculation regarding identities abound, as exploratory- perhaps ironic- forays into virtual dating territory are made:

Old white Man; Albuquerque, NM⁴³⁹

Navajo grandma are you single. I love mutton and i can haul wood for you.
Ditto

TotahStreetJhon; Albuquerque, NM⁴⁴⁰

Four Corners Observer wrote:

Which one? There are about 3 that I know of on this forum, one from LA, one from Durango and one from F-town. From experience the one from LA is the authentic one. The ones from f-town and Durango are fakes--meaning your mutton will be from safeway and she won't cook with Bluebird Flour. Also, she probably wont know how to build a fire. The one from LA probably does but she may need some practice. This thread has been hijacked once again by hatemongers looking for their cheap thrills. I say those of us who truly have something to say ignore or report some of these threads for abuse.

⁴³⁸ -however empirically unreliable and distasteful it may appear to discerning opinion-holders.

⁴³⁹ Post number :#1835

⁴⁴⁰ #1852

The one from LA is like all pro Dine',but living in LA. Probably gave up her traditional Dine' life on the rez,got pregnate to a Biligaana and eneded up in LA. Now she's talking like she's the "Annie Wuaneke" of the DT forumn while sipping on Starbucks latte',and bragging to her Jewish friends at the spa that she's 100% pure JHON straight from Manulito's loins. Meanwhile,us Jhons here in Totah struggle to fight the real fight for the betterment of society's future and our childeren. I get so tired of "Apples" from off the rez playing "wannabe",when us struggling Jhonz have to be Navajo here in F-Town. PS,my address says Albuquerque,but that's cause Qwest is my Internet provider.

These posts which follow a personal advance made by 'Old White Man' towards 'Navajo grandma', ostensibly lead to a discussion regarding authenticity. The issue of assumed or fake identity – always present in such a forum- is addressed by applying stereotypes as complimentary characteristics.

'Old White Man' offers himself as suitably acculturated or assimilable mate to 'Navajo grandma': he shares an assumed Navajo appetite for mutton and can make himself useful to her by 'hauling wood'.

These sparse references are an example of tropes as powerful semiotics: They effectively transmit a bucolic image of traditional Navajo rural life revolving around life-stock and environmentally dependent subsistence.

'Old White Man' implicitly subjugates himself to Navajo grandma's wellbeing, with the humble offer to serve her by fulfilling a menial, physical task, so helping to keep her warm (assuming that the quaintly-monikered 'Navajo grandma' does live in a Hogan, out on the Rez and uses wood for cooking and heat).

'Old White Man's' fantasy is immediately questioned by 'Four Corners Observer' authoritatively casting doubt on 'Navajo grandma's' identity:

Frances Clarke; Tucson, AZ⁴⁴¹

As for Navajo grandma, I would not make any assumptions about her camp cooking ability. She can probably buy Blue Bird flour anywhere. She has dignity and makes a lot of sense, so to me that translates into she probably can build a fire and cook.

⁴⁴¹ #1849

‘Four Corners Observer’ adjudicates identities and determines authenticity citing ‘experience’.

‘Four Corners Observer’ also establishes benchmarks for authenticity: Bluebird Flour (from a regional flour-mill) will be used by authentic Navajo women (to make frybread, natch), who butcher their own sheep rather than purchasing meat at the supermarket and who know how to build a fire.

‘LA Navajo woman’ - oddly the one with the remotest server- is speculatively taken to be authentically Navajo, albeit somewhat removed from traditional activities and pursuits “may need some practice.”

Intriguingly, perception here may lie in the eyes of the beholder: It is difficult to determine whether self-identified Navajo contributors to the forum are indeed authentic- and what is an authentic Navajo?

“When you say Navajo Nation what do you mean by Navajo Nation? A tribal member of a particular boundary that’s designated by US bureaucracy (...) or either the actual Navajo tribal lineage. Within that sphere again it gets complicated because you have to know a lot about the – I call it orthodox Navajo worldview (...). And if you are very articulate in that realm, does that mean that you are Navajo? Then you don’t know the bureaucracy and – when you talk Navajo constantly, does that mean you are Navajo? Then some (...) actually they live on the Reservation, but they are not articulate in those subjects, and their basic language revolves around basic everyday survival – feeding the baby, opening a can of milk- a bottle of milk, to have food- canned food, sustenance from trading posts- mostly convenience stores right now. And the trading posts that are still open on the isolated parts of the Reservation they just stock basic commodities that you see in convenience stores, just like 711, just chockfull of - like junk food. Nestle products, candy, cookies, soda, colored drinks etc. And to look at yourself and say I’m Navajo, and then all of a sudden you realize that all your sustenance is all this packaged product by international conglomerates. And so where does that leave you?” ⁴⁴²

At least their participation in an internet forum does not automatically seem to preclude them from being ‘authentic’, so the stereotype of an ‘authentic Indian’- at least in the TOPIX forum- seems to have moved with the times.

Is the self-deprecating and subservient ‘Old White Man’ indeed offering himself as a possible suitor to ‘Navajo grandma’? Or is he insidiously perpetuating a stereotype of rural backwardness in a country that places progress and material acquisition above other lifestyle choices?

⁴⁴² Excerpt from transcribed interview with Larry King

A woman who may be wooed simply by a shared appetite for mutton and the willingness to haul wood, may be conceived as either reassuringly uncomplicated in a Rousseauian romantic sense, or conversely as of perturbingly ‘primitive’ wants.

Then again the ambiguity of the image may convey exactly that: ‘Old White Man’s’ conflicted sentiments about Navajo women. Perhaps he is torn between a yearning for an imagined simple life- where his tasks and responsibilities are clearly prescribed, where his usefulness is established by nothing more complex than hauling wood and where a harmonious relationship can be effortlessly sustained by shared food preferences,- and whatever organisational complexities and material rewards his present life-style affords him.

‘TotahStreetJhon’⁴⁴³ responds to speculations as to Navajo female posters’ authenticity and identity with another spin:

TotahStreetJhon

“The one from LA is like all pro Dine',but living in LA. Probably gave up her traditional Dine' life on the rez, got pregantate to a Biligaana and ended up in LA. Now she's talking like she's the "Annie Wuaneke"⁴⁴⁴ of the DT forumn while sipping on Starbucks latte',and bragging to her Jewish friends at the spa that she's 100% pure JHON straight from Manulito's⁴⁴⁵ loins. Meanwhile,us Jhons here in Totah struggle to fight the real fight for the betterment of society's future and our childeren. I get so tired of "Apples"⁴⁴⁶ from off the rez playing "wannabe"⁴⁴⁷,when us struggling Jhonz have to be Navajo here in F-Town. PS,my address says Albuquerque,but that's cause Qwest is my Internet provider.”⁴⁴⁸

⁴⁴³ The name “TotahStreetJhon” is in itself semiotically complex: Totah (Navajo name for Farmington: To (water; river) + tah (three); Jhon: from: John- rural Reservation Indian, in contemporary reference used mostly as an intra-cultural, humorously self-denigratory term. Frequently spelled either Jhon or Jaan. The former spelling may be interpreted as deliberate signifier, indicating lack of education, simple-mindedness, illiteracy, lack of familiarity with the majority language etc. The latter spelling- Jaan, may be taken primarily as a phonetic rendition of John. The choice of spelling may therefore be quite significant in terms of the commenter’s position. TotahStreetJhon may either be read as a Jhon/John/Jaan/ Rez-Navajo living in Farmington, or perhaps as Totah Street-Jhon, a transient, living on Farmington’s streets, or – condensing in a three-term-name, prejudicial perceptions of Navajo as unsophisticated, economically unviable and drinking and living on the street. TotahStreetJhon contributes to the forum using different variants of ‘Jhon + .pseudonyms.

⁴⁴⁴ Annie Wauneka (1910-1997) prominent Navajo healthcare campaigner, advocating and promoting an integrated medical model on the Navajo Nation.

⁴⁴⁵ Manuelito († 1893), Navajo leader active in resistance against the enforced relocation, one of the signers of the 1868 Navajo Treaty. His name lives on through the Chief Manuelito Scholarship open to outstanding Navajo highschool graduates.

⁴⁴⁶ Apple: Red on the outside, white on the inside. Pseudo-Indian

⁴⁴⁷ Wannabe: Wanting to be Indian; Pretending to be Indian

⁴⁴⁸ Quotes are presented in original form and spelling

‘TotahStreetJhon’s’ fantasy of “the one from LA” contrasts with ‘Old White Man’s’ and is no less effective as a condensed mediation of clichés of privileged urban living ⁴⁴⁹and as a concise rendition of popular machinations of establishing Navajo authenticity to Bilagáana.

The reference to Annie Wauneka and Manuelito, a prominent Diné healthcare campaigner and a tribal leader respectively, juxtaposes the exoticised urban conjecture of Native Americans as emancipators and warriors with struggling backwater Jhonz.

Whether ‘TotahStreetJhon’ assumes ‘LA-Navajo Woman’ disseminates Native lore for her own benefit, to inflate her kudos, or to play up to ‘Bilagáana’ and ‘Jewish friends’ fantasies and expectations, remains ambiguous. The move to the metropolis is however seen to have given her an inflated sense of self-importance: She is now visiting her sense of superiority- gained by the proximity to Bilagáanas and Jews- on the Daily Times forum, assuming the mantel of a tribal icon-Annie Wauneka.

The contrasting of the Bilagáana, who has gotten Navajo Grandma pregnant, and perhaps has lured her away to a life of luxury, and urbane Jewish friends, who here are implicitly associated with self-indulgence and intercultural curiosity- hence their possible appreciation for Navajo Grandma’s genealogy, whether done deliberately or unconsciously, is sociologically lucid: Farmington is a majority Christian-Conservative town, and its Jewish community is small and not in the public eye. Residues of a- possibly faith-based- anti-Semitism at times surface.

Jews to many of the fundamentalist Christian groups here remain the People who “killed our Lord.” So the reference to ‘Jewish friends’ may to some carry sinister rather than sophisticated implications.

‘TotahStreetJhon’ then contrasts his life of authentic identity, existential hardship, political responsibility, family obligation and social vision in an adversarial environment with the identity-struggle- and conflict-free urban life that he fantasizes ‘Navajo Grandma’ leads.

⁴⁴⁹ Starbucks Latte, Jewish friends and spas, although all three may be found even in Farmington, but perhaps without the metropolitan sophistication

While ‘Navajo Grandma’ reaps all the benefits of being associated with Native identity in an environment amiably shared with her by a pampered white elite “...us struggling Jhonz have to be Navajo here in F-Town.”

Is there a note of wistfulness to be detected in ‘TotahStreetJhon’s’ post? Is this post an envious attack on ‘Navajo Grandma’, or on ‘Old White Man’s’ desire for ‘Navajo grandma’?

‘What you are really desiring, ‘Old White Man’, is not an authentic Indian woman, but someone urbanized and corrupted by White culture’?

Is ‘TotahStreetJhon’ longing to inhabit an ambiance where he may transition, unchallenged, from ‘Jhon’ to ‘Manuelito’s descendant’?

The conflict and contradictions potentially inherent in ‘TotahStreetJhon’s’ post do not escape the vigilant and malicious co-commentators for long, as we will see later.

It seems that ‘TotahStreetJhon’ is staying, not because he likes it, but because he sees it as his duty to altruistically strive for his People’s betterment, regardless of the hardship F-town presents him with, so implicitly juxtaposing Western individualism with a communitarian tribal ethos.

Is the ‘F- town’ intentionally provocative or merely a convenient abbreviation?

TotahStreetJhon conveys, in seeming contradiction to his wryly self-deprecating name, that he is an individual sufficiently sophisticated and knowledgeable of Californian urban life to be able to stereotype it with lofty disdain.

‘TotahStreetJhon’s’ post subverts ‘Navajo Grandma’s’ claims to Navajo identity, while simultaneously effecting an oblique deconstruction of- or attack on- ‘Old White Man’s’ quaint fantasies and appetite for Navajo women (as in: ‘Another Bìlagáana has had her already, Old White Man!’), and advancing himself as a stakeholder of gritty Navajo authenticity within the forum.

The ambiguities of these posts make them gateways to social analysis and meaning-making.

The inherent modular duality of the forum comments, at once ferociously undifferentiated and subjectively ambiguous, make them inclusive, as each variant meaning arises out of a juncture between commenter and beholder's perspective.

Intention does not necessarily reap the planned effect, as comments posted early on in the forum seem to show:

A Thinker; Bloomfield, NM⁴⁵⁰

Cursor Maniac wrote:

What can be done to change these hate filled hearts?

“Excellent question. Unfortunately, it IS in the hearts of people, and how is that changed? I moved here 40 years ago, and as I said in my previous post, immediately noticed the disdain with which the natives were treated. Since the native culture was new for me, I found it fascinating, so I was surprised at the disgust with which it was held among many (seemed to me to be the majority) of whites here in this area.

At the time, the Civil Rights Movement was going full steam in the South, which is where I'm from, and in discussions with people here, I would correlate those attitudes with those directed toward the natives here. Not one person with whom I had those conversations at that time could even begin to see the similarities.

These were not overall ill-informed individuals; many were educated, self-professed Christians, and other people from all walks of life with whom I came in contact. They represented all areas and levels of Farmington society.

Things may have gotten worse, as you have said, Cursor, in that there is a general increase in lack of respect directed to everything and everyone these days, but the attitude toward natives has existed here as far back as I am able to recall.

It has seemed to me that there is the implied and assumed position of white superiority, alongside and included with the expected idea and attitude that natives defer to whites. This can be seen even in mere body language when both groups are in public.....let's say, meeting on the street, shopping in stores, eating out in restaurants.

Over the years, I have heard so many derogatory remarks from merchants directed toward the natives WHO ARE SPENDING MONEY IN THESE PEOPLE'S STORES!!

It has always baffled me.”

Cursor Maniac⁴⁵¹

“My son married a Navajo woman and she is a wonderful person. We love her and she has raised my two grandchildren to be productive, well mannered and all around good kids. I have to question the hate to hope that someday I will understand it. It breaks my heart to think that there are those who would hate my grandchildren simply because they look and are part Indian. What can be done to change these hate filled hearts?

I share your concern for your grandchildren. It doesn't appear to be a problem in the public schools locally, due to the diverse ethnicity. Yet, in some establishments there is a certain look or feeling I get when accompanied my one or more of my grandchildren. I am not paranoid, just on red alert. I immediately let it be know that they are with me, probably with a what's it to you

⁴⁵⁰ #149

⁴⁵¹ #151

attitude. Since being blessed with these grandchildren, I have become more aware of racism in the SJC”.

TwoShoes⁴⁵²

“Want to live a long time? Just Marry a Navajo Woman, and live on the Rez. It will sure seem like a long time! Haha”

JhonFromChickenStreet⁴⁵³

TwoShoes wrote:

Want to live a long time? Just Marry a Navajo Woman, and live on the Rez. It will sure seem like a long time! haha

“Yeah right!!! Many will take that advice, leaving the rest of us Jhonz without a suitable spouse. The only ones left would be the single mothers with 3-6 kids, working at Mustang and a broke down car (and a thick Rez accent to boot). Please don't encourage these Biligaana's to take our women”.

‘A Thinker’ and ‘Cursor Maniac’, according to their posts both middle-aged Anglo females, feel perturbed by the social inequities and prejudice they see Navajo in Farmington subjected to and are the more political among the posters. In the course of the thread, they are variously accused of being incendiary through their insistence on pointing out Farmington’s racist attitudes, being self-haters, being subliminally racist themselves, of posting under different identities and eventually have their names name-jacked and corrupted in various ways.

Irreverent responses to serious-minded posts, (see comment #151) , are fairly typical.

‘TotahStreetJhon’, here posting as ‘JhonFromChickenStreet’ retaliates with a plea to Bílagáanas not to steal all the best Navajo women (so perhaps his later comments taking on ‘Navajo Grandma’ do to some degree reflect his personal pre-occupation?)

Informative, political, detail-focused comments and ‘voices of reason’ in this forum do rarely result in sustained debates, but are quickly subjected to mauling and manipulation of varying degrees of skill and creativity. By Comment # 293, two weeks or so later, ‘A Thinker’ is markedly more terse in her response to ‘Its up to us’ attempt at mediation:

A Thinker; Bloomfield, NM⁴⁵⁴

⁴⁵² #150

⁴⁵³ #153

⁴⁵⁴ #293

Its up to us wrote:

So sad! I read all these posts and it's nothing but a vicious circle of assumptions and name calling. Racism exists and yes it is very sad but it's all what we make it and we can all continue the ugly name calling and pointing fingers or except that it exists and realize that it always will. There is nothing we can do about the mean hateful people in the world. But we can change our attitudes. As long as we fight it like this, it's always going to exist in our 'individual lives'. Everyone has posted words which are equally just as mean and discriminating which doesn't make any of one you any better. This is what is wrong with the world today. I personally never felt any 'racism' towards the few that are being accused on this post. We are all using that term a little to lightly here(San Juan County)and therefore it exists in your world!! We all need to see that we are all human and God's children, we are all special in a "different way" but also equally. We need to teach our children that for they are the future!!

“Platitudes. Pollyanna personified.
Time to wake up and smell the roses”.

‘Its up to us’ attempt to rouse the community to more positive, inclusive and self-critical attitudes is roundly dismissed by ‘A Thinker’ as “Platitudes. Pollyanna personified”, even though ‘TotahStreetJhon’ attempted a similar position 200 posts or so ago.

Transitioning through the forum so seems to have affected a ‘baptism of fire’. In the space of a short time ‘A Thinker’ appears to no longer believe that things can be set right in this community. But perhaps ‘A Thinker’ is asserting the position she believes to hold as the forum’s resident thinker against a potential new incumbent rather than disagreeing with the content of It is up to us’ post? Or has the continuous onslaught and ganging-up on her by contributors who are ired by ‘A Thinker’s’ liberal views finally got to her?

Eventually ‘A Thinker’, goaded by hostile commentators doubting her integrity and identity begins to post using her first name, as a demonstration to her commitment to her views and convictions.

‘Thinker’s’ and ‘Cursor Maniac’s’ supporters and detractors do not appear to be divided along cultural lines or even according to shared belief, but operate under an egalitarian imperative to pull self-promoted spokespersons back down into the ranks- the crab-barrel metaphor is applicable here too.

Below ‘Melanie Thinker’s’ “Merry Christmas!” is reproached by ‘JhonFromTotahStreet’s’ terse admonition introducing his post:

“Please stick to the topic”

JhonFromTotahStreet⁴⁵⁵

Melanie Thinker wrote:

Merry Christmas!

“Please stick to the topic. Racism against the Dine not only pretains to F-Town but all of San Juan Co. Yesterday, I was medically treating lonely, old Biligaana woman in Flora Vista when she grunted "The Idians are spreading that Swine Flu, makes me wonder if they check all Indian nurses who do home vists." I simply replied "If you feel uncortable about this Navajo doing your home visit, please let my D.O.N. know immediatly." She snorted "If I do that,they won't have any RN's coming over to treat me. They'll just send me to a nursing home. I don't want that." Knowing that I got under her skin I went in for the kill "Well you should have your childern or grandkids take care of you. Our company will train a family memeber to care for you as a CNA." Defeated, she shrugged her shoulders and said in tears "I ain't got no one who wants to do that. No one wants to work now days. I'm all by myself. No one loves me.." I fulfilled by 1 hr duty listening to her compalin about her son, and left. I registered my compalint to my DON, and left to Aztec to endure more racism from 4 other Biligaana patients. Thankfully they kept their opinions to themselves....”

By this point the forum has been running for months, with a hard core of contributors and intermittent and sporadic visitors. Alliances have been established and destroyed, threats have been issued, and slanderous speculations have been bandied about. To have an attempt at seasonal felicitations dismissed, is perhaps more expressive and ominous than a page-long pontification would be.

Is there an implicit rejection to ‘JhonFromTotahStreet’s’ “Please stick to the topic”:

We are not here to exchange pleasantries? We don’t have anything in common except an interest in this topic? I’m not interested in socializing with you?

This response appears to be an oblique rebuke to ‘Melanie Thinker’, from ‘JhonFromTotahStreet’, who in principle shares Melanie’s views on racism and prejudice in Farmington.

It is a testament to the semiotic potency of this medium that exclusion or rejection can be effectively conveyed by such scant phrasing.

⁴⁵⁵ #1558

This may be because cyber-discourse allows for ambiguity without resolution and therefore possibly is a more accurate reflection of the chaos resident in reality, than the manicured, public policy sanctioned version of undifferentiated cohesion.

‘JhonFromTotahStreet’s’ rendition of his home-visit to an Anglo patient is so vividly expressive in its polemic description that it reminds of a film-script.

The scenario ‘JhonFromTotahStreet’ describes is a celebration of inverted power-relations: It is now the helpless, abandoned, uncouth and ungainly, prejudiced Bílagáana woman, who is a victim of her own race’s negligent attitudes towards the elderly and at the mercy of a somewhat contemptuous Indian nurse. The chilling glee with which the patient’s loneliness is recounted⁴⁵⁶ may alert to a contemporary variant of warfare by infiltration in which Anglo society self-destructs through lack of community ethos, and now has to rely on the formerly subjugated and diminished, who here, frankly comes across as a wolf in sheep’s clothing.

Yei Cheii⁴⁵⁷; Shiprock, NM;

Jesus Christ wrote:

Racism is alive and well in Farmington. I'm surprised we don't have a more visible KKK chapter. I know Aztec has their membership in the hundreds. Just look at the local gunshops in Farmington, they practically say "WHITES ONLY". Everytime I go to the gun stores, they just look at me as if I walked in by accident, thinking that since my skin is brown or I appear to be Native, I am not welcomed to do business there. I guess they are afraid of a strong-willed Native wanting to purchase a gun, as if Natives are not allowed to own guns in Farmington. We should run these racist businesses out of town, since they are un-American. We should arm every Navajo in the city limits so that all these racist pricks like George Sharpe⁴⁵⁸ can urinate on themselves. Goerge Sharpe is too scared of Natives that is why he said it was not an issue, too scared about Native getting their rights and standing up for them with a gun, some good old American butt kicking! God Bless America for letting us Natives buy lots guns! We need some assault rifles for young All-American Natives

“damn RezNeck! Go back to the hills and shoot at some prairie dogs with your BB gun. clllaaaay.. oodiishni!!! “⁴⁵⁹

‘Jesus Christ’s’ intentions or attitudes are particularly difficult to determine, as he appropriates conservative American patriotic and NRA-rhetoric⁴⁶⁰ under the guise of Native militancy.

⁴⁵⁶ She may well be invented, or a composite of several taxing patients ‘Jhon’ has encountered in his career

⁴⁵⁷ Yei Cheii: may be derived from Yei bi'cheii, The Nightway healing ceremony, literally ‘grandfather of the gods’; #1654

⁴⁵⁸ Farmington City Councilor

⁴⁵⁹ 1) clllaaaay. 2) oodiishni : idiosyncratic phonetic spelling of 1) ass (arse) 2) “I’m just saying... “

It is unclear whether he is Native or “appears to be Native”, whether he is enthusiastically sympathizing with the plight of Farmington Navajo or, in the manner of an agent provocateur trying to mix things up by using a combination of patriotic cant and an All-American call to arms to subvert what is usually perceived as the domain of old(er) white men (stereotypically speaking).

For this assumed demographic a self-described brown-skinned young man with the chosen pseudonym of ‘Jesus Christ’, intoning: “God Bless America for letting us Natives buy lots guns! We need some assault rifles for young All-American Natives” may conceivably lead some to a re-consideration of the limitations of the 2nd Amendment.

‘Yeii Cheii’ (who as the pseudonym seems to indicate, may be an older man or grandfather) dismisses Jesus Christ’s incendiary rhetoric with a tersely humorous putdown ⁴⁶¹, which is in tone evocative of a sanguine elder issuing an amused reprimand and thereby diffusing potential tension.

The final address in Navajo may be in the manner of a conciliatory aside, and appears to indicate that ‘Yeii Cheii’ is taking ‘Jesus Christ’ to be Navajo.

‘Yeii Cheii’s’ comment is noteworthy not only for its pedagogic finesse, but also in that it constitutes an apparently intra-group reproach issued within the problematic framework of contentious or hostile inter-group discourse.

⁴⁶⁰ National Rifle Association: fervent advocates for the 2nd Amendment’s right of all American citizens to bear arms. See: <http://home.nra.org/#/home>

⁴⁶¹ Urban Dictionary definition: “ **rezneck**: The Native American version of a redneck. These individuals live on Tribal Reservations (The Rez) and behave similar to people dwelling in southern states, country and/or backwoods.

Note: Children of Reznecks are Rez Rats "You might be a rezneck if you pop the screen out of your kitchen window to shoot squirrels with your b.b. gun." (True story, they were getting in the bird feeders!)"'; in: <http://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=rezneck>

The juxtaposition of stereotype and Navajo invective makes ‘Yei Cheii’s’ intervention appear simultaneously attacking and conspiratorial, a position so opaquely ambiguous as to make him unassailable.

‘TotahStreetJhon’s’ hypotheses regarding ‘Navajo Grandma’s’ Californian lifestyle are mercilessly unmasked as being based on envy and fear:

Francis Clarke ; Albuquerque⁴⁶²
TotahStreetJhon wrote:

The one from LA is like all pro Dine',but living in LA. Probably gave up her traditional Dine' life on the rez,got pregnate to a Biligaana and eneded up in LA. Now she's talking like she's the "Annie Wuaneka" of the DT forumn while sipping on Starbucks latte',and bragging to her Jewish friends at the spa that she's 100% pure JHON straight from Manulito's loins. Meanwhile,us Jhons here in Totah struggle to fight the real fight for the betterment of society's future and our childeren. I get so tired of "Apples" from off the rez playing "wannabe",when us struggling Jhonz have to be Navajo here in F-Town. PS,my address says Albuquerque,but that's cause Qwest is my Internet provider.

“Why do you "have" to be here in F-town. Nobody's holding a gun to your head. Move. Then you can also be an apple and play wanabee with your jewish friends. What's the matter, you scared to move away from the rez's umbilical cord? Scared you can't make it on your own? BTW, if you insist on referring to white people as biligaana's while you call us racist, then I'll call you a rez-pig. That's a fair exchange”.

‘Francis Clarke’ here equates Bíłagáana as having similarly negative connotations as rez-pig, possibly for incendiary reasons

From ‘TotahStreetJhon’s’ post ‘Francis Clarke’ has extracted ‘apple’ ‘wannabe’ and ‘jewish friends’ deftly conveying the impression that were it not for fear and infantile dependency, ‘TotahStreetJhon’ may well prefer the cushy life of urban inauthenticity and identity-fakery that he accuses ‘Navajo grandma’ of for himself.

‘Francis Clarke’ has name-jacked and modified ‘Frances Clarke’ aka ‘Cursor Maniac’s’ name. ‘Frances Clarke’ and ‘Melanie Thinker’ aka ‘A Thinker’, both self-identified as white, both with concerns regarding Farmington’s race-relations and both attempting to ‘educate’ the forum have been consistent contributors and have apparently aroused the ire of many readers of the forum. After a flurry of hostile speculation regarding their identity and true provenance (they were

⁴⁶² #1857

accused of having assumed and posting under the identity of whoever happened to form an alliance or agree with their opinions- ‘Navajo Grandma’ amongst others), ‘Frances Clarke’ and ‘Melanie Thinker’ aka ‘A Thinker’ demonstratively start to post under their (as they claim) real names.

‘Francis Clarke’ was quick to assume ‘Frances Clarke’s’ identity and proceeded to post gratuitously offensive comments under her name, much to the confusion and triumph of other posters, who appeared to take ‘Francis’s’ demonstrative bigotry merely as proof that she was at last showing her true colours.

An exasperated ‘Frances Clarke’ (the real one) then implored readers to pay attention to her internet server’s location (Tucson, AZ), which differs from that of impostor ‘Francis’ (Albuquerque, NM).

Speculation regarding identity manipulation, authenticity and location abound in the forum.

It seems that the more adversarial relations between participants are, the more conjecture and projection abounds.

Throughout the thread, assumptions are made and ominous threats are issued: One participant discloses a location where he can be found- apparently an invitation to solve a disagreement through a physical fight. Another announces that they will seek out an awkward poster at their work “I know where you work!” to speak to their manager in order to verify claims made in the forum. Someone claims to consider forwarding a hate-mongering comment to the police to flag the poster as a potential security threat (#1501) to receive a multi-faceted, somewhat confusing response (#1502):

#1501

More Coffee wrote:

Keep posting idiot I have reported you to Farmington Daily News as well as Topix.

Since you urged violence I placed a called to the Farmington Police. A detective will call me soon.

Just keep posting, you are proof of the racism that exists and most of this community denies.

The funny thing about this one is that the Daily Times, ie: not Daily News, does nothing other than pull posts off if they choose to. And the FPD does not put detectives on internet threats, they use patrol officers to check them out first. I wonder if my officer friend would know any thing about it. I think I will give him a

call. I hope you do realize that you just stuck your foot not only in your mouth but you are chewing on your knee.

#1502

Grim Reaper;

“Im sure after they see what mr totahjohn posted im sure theyll agree.You can claim that mexicans are a special race their not.they are people from mexico that are here ripping us off.In case you didnt notice.Hispanic is a race or ethnic group.Mexican is a nationality.GET over it.ANd the police will tell you that theirs a differnce between i would and im going to as you well know since your the grammar police of daily news.Go ahead call them i doubt theyll put a ton of energy into this big investigation.Ive reported stolen things and gotten more response than what your gonna get.”

‘Grim Reaper’ constructs a legalistic case for why it may be legitimate to be prejudiced against Mexicans: they are not a race, ergo it is not racist to dislike them. ‘Grim Reaper’ appears to cite ‘mr totahjohn’s’ comments as mitigating circumstance and then concludes the post by casting aspersions on Farmington police’s efficiency.

This type of exchange indicates escalating hostility and exasperation in the forum. It seems that the forum’s participants are not feeling equipped to solve or resolve their differences without the intervention of outside, establishment authority. The intention to recruit outside agencies as mediators signifies a push from the liminal into the legitimate domain.

It is difficult to determine whether these contacts represent transgressions, transitions or transformations. From a psychodynamic position it can be argued that the attempted shift of relations from the virtual to the real is a sublimated wish for intimacy in the sense of consequential involvement.

In contrast to the cautious, aspirational pronouncements issued in the political domain; the negative attitudes which are usually expressed surreptitiously; and the blandly conflict-avoidant style of inter-group encounters in every-day life, the TOPIX forum gives an impression of a cathartic, or perhaps emetic, process of evacuation, an audacious escalating discharge of stereotyped imagery, discontent and provocation as demonstrated in the following interlinking comments – a bricolage of problematic attitudes:

Haha; Gallup, NM⁴⁶³

If White Conservative families can teach their children on respect for different culture other than their own, I think there would be gradual change about race in the future.

joe dirt Blanding, UT

let me said some thing to all the whites you have been trespassing this land for over 300 years

“I'm white and I have navajos be racist! so maybe you need to re-think your statement.. as for whites trespassing on this land for 300 years. I dont think you or your people own this land.. if it wasnt for us, you wouldnt have a car to drive drunk in!!! or government cheese...for that matter”..

Communication in the virtual sphere has been noted for its potential risks in that individuals are free to express opinions without the inhibiting factors of personal consequence or social sanction.

The anonymity of the internet is seen to encourage the potentially destructive discharge of base and cruel sentiments.

Despite the abundance of socially and politically unsanctioned and problematic attitudes in the TOPIX forum and despite the absence of censorship or interference from editors, the forum's tone, as combative and polemic as it may be, mostly is successful in negotiating the thin line between provocation and insult.

An ethnography of virtual discourse (“dys-course” or in this case “Diss-course”), is by nature of the subject of its focus, an ethnography of the invisible, unfathomable, and unreliable.

Its subjects are beyond the reach of empirical enquiry, and their temporary virtual identity may either correspond to or contradict the ‘everyday self’, as may the opinions expressed in the guise of online persona.

Attitudes gleaned here therefore should not be taken as a reliable index of the current status quo.

We may assume that not all of Farmington's or San Juan County's concerned or unconcerned citizens participate in internet forums.

Certain demographics may be underrepresented here, either because of lack of familiarity with the internet (older age groups, geographically isolated communities, certain religious communities weary of new and popular media), those with a lack of interest in ‘current affairs’;

⁴⁶³ #98

public office holders and policy-makers who may be hesitant to engage in what they may consider a framework with compromising potential lacking integrity, and those members of the public who may perceive the forum as trivial or trivialising means of conducting a debate.⁴⁶⁴ Readers of the forum are given the opportunity to judge comments by clicking on the logo of an axe, which opens a window with fourteen categories out of which readers may choose up to three⁴⁶⁵

Categories are illustrated with emoticons: ‘Brilliant’ by a light bulb, ‘Offtopic’ by a lemon, ‘Touching’ by a heart and ‘Nuts’ by a peanut. The three majority judgements are then displayed as icons above the comment, with the respective number of votes in brackets. The use of emoticons in a potentially incendiary public forum seems to even-handedly diffuse and undermine animosity or aggression.

Any comment however strongly worded may lose some of its impact when headed with Nuts and Lemon emoticons, while clicking on a peanut to judge a comment simultaneously undermines the critique’s acrid potency.

Here the virtual world may be seen as inverting the ‘real’ world, in its abundant offer of opportunities to invent, vent, express, judge, fantasise and attack.

Although potentially unregulated, the forum appears to an extent self-regulating, through the majority of participants’ apparent wish to keep engaging with each other, however acrimoniously.

So while many feel angered and retaliate, few appear to leave irreconcilably alienated. While little of TOPIX content may be taken at face value, the forum offers a comprehensive inventory

⁴⁶⁴ Within my network of friends, acquaintances and *informants* of Navajo and Anglos living in Farmington and environs, no-one would admit to posting on TOPIX, many seemed not familiar with its existence, some would occasionally read it much in the same way they may watch the “Jerry Springer Show”, while breaking out in liberal goosebumps. I was alerted to TOPIX by a Navajo political activist, who recommended TOPIX as an introduction to Farmington’s underbelly, for me to get the full measure of bigotry rife in the area. And at the first (and second) reading I was indeed appalled.

⁴⁶⁵ Categories are: “Brilliant; Clueless; Interesting; Funny; Helpful; Mean; Nuts; Offtopic; Racy; Spam; Agree; Disagree; Touching; Incendiary”

of regional stereotypes and a rare opportunity to observe mutual stereotyping in dynamic interaction. The virtual arena enables adversaries who may otherwise never meet, to not only encounter each (the) other, but to test each other's boundaries and resilience.

Although the tone prevalent throughout the forum may appear transgressive, the risk-free and consequence-less framework that is the virtual forum offers a singular opportunity in a segregated community to engage across cultural and socio-economic boundaries, - to engage on the much more substantial foundation of enduring, historically fermented prejudice, suspicion and resentment, as opposed to the sanitized, politically censored and sanctioned fantasm of intercultural fraternalism peddled by policy-makers.

But lest the forum be seen as purely serving the venting of unsavoury attitudes, it may be argued that *provocation*- from the Latin verb *provocare*: *pro*- "forth" and *vocare* "to call", so literally 'to call forth'- inherently harbours a will to communicate and relate.

The issuing of a polemic statement here may be seen as foremost a calling forth, a beckoning to otherness, to the other. The forum comes to life precisely because of the relational dynamics between participating adversaries.

TOPIX may not be consensus-building, a fact episodically bemoaned by contributors, it does however establish relations between disagreeing and disagreeable participants which may be glossed as adversarial intimacy, and which ultimately impress as more authentic than the circumspect and conflict-avoidant interactions in 'real' life.

The forum in fact presents a relatively egalitarian and accessible framework, its unfiltered inclusiveness exercising a stealthy leveling effect, eroding erudition in some, while advancing creativity in others.

In contrast to 'real' life, which essentially segregates by age, education, economic status and culture, TOPIX is at least advancing towards the American ideal of the 'melting-pot'⁴⁶⁶, in that it

⁴⁶⁶ The American melting-pot was given the following subversive but persuasive spin in Jim Jarmusch's 1986 film *Down By Law*, where one of the protagonists voices the line:

may be described as a stew-pot of not altogether obviously complementary ingredients, that- at least for the time being- share a pot (to over-extend the metaphor).

Judging by the swift pace of postings on the forum, it is likely that comments follow a mode of free association and flow of consciousness, rather than being pre-meditated, deliberated and refined.

The responsive immediacy indicates unconscious, relational processes at work⁴⁶⁷ which transmit pre-conscious systems or codes based on common cultural reservoirs.

This is to say that if responses were premeditated, or rationalized they would make the forum appear less rather than more cohesive: here there is evidence of responsive synchronicity or symbiotic responsiveness. Groups re-act as organic entities, displaying shared agency at the dictate of wider social processes.

Individuation emerges through ratio whereas systemic cohesion is propelled by unconscious processes that here surface as an oceanic state of dystonic togetherness.

Hence the forum's contributors who make attempts at introducing ratio and sustaining a rational discourse (or their subjective perception thereof), are swiftly cut down or ferociously attacked, not because the masses refuse to bow to the voice of reason, but rather because too much ratio disrupts the state of undifferentiated symbiotic, pre-rational togetherness.

Stereotypes may be conceived as a variant of "knowledge being passed (...) in sealed containers"⁴⁶⁸, in this case transmitting reservoirs of folk-reference and discontent.

"My mama used to say that America's the big melting pot. You bring it to a boil and all the scum rises to the top."

⁴⁶⁷ or minus K according to Bion?

⁴⁶⁸ "In the purely intellectual sphere, even the best informed and most thoughtful people work with a growing number of ideas, concepts and statements, the exact meaning and content of which they are not fully aware. The tremendous expansion of objective, available material of knowledge allows or even enforces the use of expressions that pass from hand to hand like sealed containers without the condensed content of thought actually enclosed within them being unfolded for the individual user" Simmel; 1978:449

TOPIX's episodic wallowing in prejudicial attitudes has the vicarious intensity of sampling forbidden fruit. It may draw some of its vigour from participants' shared enjoyment of indulging in socially subversive behaviour in a largely uncharted liminal space.

The process of vitriolic self-expression theoretically is the equivalent of purging, an –if not 'rite' then perhaps at least a 'process of' passage or transition.

This 'rite' consists of having negotiated mutually problematic and terrifying sentiments, and by having experienced each a measure of the other's resilience and potency.

Cyber-media are often dismissed as a virtual variety of (panem et -) circensis; staged discontent that helps to maintain the hegemonic status quo by setting the masses against each other.

Cyber space 'virtually' diffuses discontent in a mass-catharsis that is socio-politically inconsequential.

Posting comments and participating in debate on the forum, voting on comments by clicking on a lemon, peanut or heart logo are activities that convey agency to participants, or more accurately- pseudo-agency:

The 'actions' performed here lack political potency or social impact. But it may be that these virtual debates with their problematic content are being conducted in such an uninhibited, spirited and personal way precisely because participants recognise the medium as transitory, inconsequential and trivial.

Cyber space offers a safe experimental ground for incautious- and unconscious- processes that are indicative of social attitudes and fault-lines, and which in the long run may be effective in terms of group-dynamic process.

That is: conjecture and projection should be acknowledged as significant processes in themselves, 'useful' both as 'diagnostic' or analytic tools. They are the fertile field of pluralist engagement and psychodynamic process, as demonstrated here in 'TotahStreetJhon's' affably confrontational come-back to 'Francis Clark's' 'rez-pig' taunt:

TotalStreetJhon; Albuquerque, NM⁴⁶⁹

Francis Clarke wrote:

Why do you "have" to be here in F-town. Nobody's holding a gun to your head. Move. Then you can also be an apple and play wanabee with your jewish friends. What's the matter, you scared to move away from the rez's umbilical cord? Scared you can't make it on your own?

BTW, if you insist on referring to white people as biligaana's while you call us racist, then I'll call you a rez-pig. That's a fair exchange.

“Oink.Oink. Why would I wanna move? I make 83K a year as a traveling R.N. About 6 months ago the oil trash were saying that I wouldn't have a job when the oilfields stop producing and the layoffs begin. Hah!! I'm busier now,then I was last year(76K),taking care of patients on and off the REZ! I'm the only nurse willing to go thru blinding snow to Igancio to help a pot-bellied Ute just because the Durango R.N's refuse to drive in snow. I don't know of any RN willing to accept an "on call" emergency to Lake Valley at 3 AM on a Sat. night. Go ahead call me a rez pig, but it's probabaly me that's going to save your life one day.”

‘TotalStreetJhon’ here manages the contemptuous dismissal of three groups: “Oilfield trash”

(apparently his primary patient-group are employees of the regional oil- and gas industries and their families),⁴⁷⁰ “Durango R.N.s” (Registered Nurses working in the more affluent Colorado town of Durango who lack the gumption to drive in the snow), and the members of the Ute tribe (prone to abdominal fat-deposits).

His nonchalant dispensing of casual invective spanning economic, professional and ethnic strata is, if invective is acknowledged as constituting a genre in itself, nothing short of masterful.

It is hard to imagine another framework or setting in which mutual abuse and taunting is so gleefully and creatively pursued to such equitable effect.

Stripped of circumspect self-censorship, cautious distance, patronising affability and forced joviality so commonly observed in everyday inter-group interaction, it may be argued that cyber-relations permit or engender what may be termed authentic relational expression, perhaps not least due to the anonymity of the forum that permits participants a temporary release from the strictures of social role and persona.

⁴⁶⁹ |#1868

⁴⁷⁰ As “trash” is typically prefixed with “white” hypotheses regarding the ethnicity of the “oilfield trash” will automatically arise

Paradoxically the very fact that here identities may be disguised, assumed or corrupted contributes to the creation of an egalitarian space, an extra-hierarchical, extra-cultural setting which seems fundamentally and individualistically meritocratic, in that it unites in the communal quest of the mischievous celebration of adversarial diversity protagonists who would ordinarily be divided or separated by social, economic, educational and cultural differences and preconceptions.

This type of discourse or dialogic interaction should be conceived of as a process, in which the fact of engagement with the other whatever the tone of this engagement may be should be appreciated as of possible longitudinal relational significance.

To conclude with the words of Georg Simmel:

“Whether it implies the rejection or the termination of sociation, indifference is purely negative. In contrast to such pure negativity, conflict contains something positive” ⁴⁷¹

⁴⁷¹ Simmel; 1955:14

II

NOTES ON IDENTITY:

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

Native American, American Indian, Native, or Indian?

“I abhor the term Native American. It is a generic government term used to describe all the indigenous prisoners of the United States. These are the American Samoans, the Micronesians, the Aleuts, the original Hawaiians, and the erroneously termed Eskimos, who are actually Upiks and Inupiat. And, of course, the American Indian.

I prefer the term American Indian because I know its origins . . . As an added distinction the American Indian is the only ethnic group in the United States with the American before our ethnicity . . . We were enslaved as American Indians, we were colonized as American Indians, and we will gain our freedom as American Indians, and then we will call ourselves any damn thing we choose.” 472

According to the Bureau of Indian Affairs the term Native American was applied by the BIA to U.S. indigenous populations as administrative category,⁴⁷³ from where it entered mainstream usage at a time of growing awareness and sensitivity concerning the political and symbolic potency of identity-labels, particularly those referencing minority-groups.

The discourse around which terms are correct and preferable has been much less divisive or prominent for Native Americans than for instance for African Americans.

Russell Means, a one-time spokesperson for the American Indian Movement (AIM), dismissed all terms currently in usage as externally imposed that primarily reflect and perpetuate historical misconceptions and colonial injustices and therefore irrelevant to the reality of Native identity.

For Means the time of Native/American/Indian self-determination is yet to come:

⁴⁷² Means, Russell :”I am an American Indian. Not a Native American”

⁴⁷³ “The term, 'Native American,' came into usage in the 1960s to denote the groups served by the Bureau of Indian Affairs: American Indians and Alaska Native (Indians, Eskimos and Aleuts of Alaska). Later the term also included Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders in some Federal programs. It, therefore, came into disfavor among some Indian groups. The preferred term is American Indian.” Answers to Frequently Asked Questions, from the Bureau of Indian Affairs

“and then we will call ourselves any damn thing we choose.”

Means’ rejection of the compromise of relativistic discourse is not appear representative of the larger public debate in Native communities, which is generally cautious and rarely incisive.

The Native American Journalist Association guidelines for journalists equate the terms Native American and American Indian as equally acceptable and stipulate foremost the importance of respect for preferred terms of self-reference and a mindfulness of context:

"The terms 'Native American' and 'American Indian' should be used in U.S. mainstream newspaper stories. Use of 'Indian' alone generally is discouraged. However, it may be used in quotes, and also in terms such as 'urban Indian.' 'Native' alone has come into common usage. It is unacceptable to use 'native American' with a lower case 'n' in native. Native peoples must be allowed to define their own names in the same way other racial or ethnic groups have defined their names. But the only truly accurate terms are specific names of tribal nations, whether they are names of the 560 federally recognized ones, the many other tribes seeking recognition from the U.S. government or the multitude of tribes throughout the other countries in the Americas."⁴⁷⁴

The cautioning tone that NAJA adopts here invites the hypothesis that the more contested and ambiguous an identity is perceived to be, the more potentially problematic become emic and etic choices of terms by which this identity is recognised.⁴⁷⁵

Identity labels, as Means caustically observes, are rooted in historical paradigms and thereby are extensions of territorial whimsy, through which power-relations, attitudes and socio-cultural positions are perpetuated.

⁴⁷⁴ From the Native American Journalist Association *The Reading Red Report: Native Americans in the News* ; [<http://www.naja.com>] quoted in: <http://www.infoplease.com/spot/aihmtterms2.html#naja>

⁴⁷⁵ According to the last available US Census data the preferred terms used for self-reference amongst the US Native population is as follows:

American Indian	49.76
Alaska Native	3.51
Native American	37.35
Some Other Term	3.66
No Preference	5.72

* * *

“The arbitrary nature of the sign explains why the social fact alone can create a linguistic system. The community is necessary if values that owe their existence solely to usage and general acceptance are to be set up; by himself, the individual is incapable of fixing a single value...”⁴⁷⁶

The contexts and particular affiliations of speakers contextually determine the tropes that are appropriate to use. Sometimes the membership of a group contextually ‘sanitizes’ the use of an otherwise derogatory expression.

A multitude of interplaying factors determine what is contextually appropriate.

In the United States’ vastly diverse social landscape expressions affiliated with one group may for that reason become out-of-bounds for use by another.

In the South-western United States where this study is based, “liberal” for instance, is regarded by a significant number of the population as unequivocally negative, as is “socialist”, while “capitalist” is used positively and assertively.

The same demographic would probably refrain from using the term ‘Native American’, as it is seen as the prerogative of the pretentious, distrusted urbane elite.

Certainly, identity-terms as used by individuals or groups are imminently indicative of socio-political attitudes and cultural positions.

Around reservation borders and in border-towns for example the use of problematic or contextually derogatory expressions⁴⁷⁷ appears more pronounced, perhaps in response to the alien other’s disquieting proximity.⁴⁷⁸

The choice of expression however does not only reflect particular attitudes towards the named, but may also signify a conscious defiance of the perceived status quo.⁴⁷⁹

⁴⁷⁶ Saussure, 1966:113

⁴⁷⁷ Language-use is always relative: The word Indian when used by border-town Anglos, is more ambiguous than when used by someone not conversant with Natives or Native culture. Referring to “*Those Indians*” however is taken as a clear acknowledgement of the speaker’s negative attitude towards *Indians*.

⁴⁷⁸ Border towns, the sharing of territory and the impact of proximity on processing alterity will be explored in more detail later.

Hence in this historically tense region, when reference is made to “those Indians” or less implicitly “those damn Indians” or more subtly “some of those Indians” the speaker flags particular attitudes. The mere prefixing of “those” functions as a statement of position. It is clear enough to elicit agreement from the like-minded, and simultaneously elusive enough not to cause direct offence or provoke a challenge.

The use of a particular term may signal aggressive or provocative intent, or may constitute something quite different: the contained venting of frustration in order to prevent an escalation of anger.

Many of the area’s Anglo-inhabitants identify with a ‘frontier-mentality’ and view themselves as central to the upholding of what here are seen as traditional American rights and values: freedom, independence, the right to bear arms and an ever-alert vigilance regarding the potential tyranny of federal government.⁴⁸⁰

This tyranny includes, as mentioned above, “political correctness”, which is by a verbose contingent of the populace lambasted as a restriction of the individual freedom of expression. Perceived censorship appears to increase in some the impulse to be belligerent to, presumably, test the limitations of liberal pseudo-tolerance.

* * *

⁴⁷⁹ A Caucasian man who had in conversation referred to President Obama, as “that nigger”, justified his use of this term as an act of exercising civil liberty, arguing that as the election of an African American president had disproved “*the liberals’*” critique of “*this country*” (the US) as racist, a just stand needed to be made by “*common sense*” against the tyranny of “*political correctness*” Personal communication; Farmington, NM , 12-2009, paraphrased, verbatim quotes in italics

⁴⁸⁰ Proponents of the Second Amendment argue, fairly unanimously, that it is the citizenry’s possession of arms that inhibits the federal government from “taking over”.

Conversely, in the complex manoeuvring of identity-label appropriation and re-appropriation, I have heard Native Americans combine ‘Indian’ with a contextually derogatory pre-fix like “old”, “poor”, “little”, “dumb” in humorous self-reference; as in:

“They are not going to listen to a little old Indian,” or:

“What do I know. I’m just a dumb Indian.”⁴⁸¹

This (self-) ironic usage appears, according to my observations, most commonly amongst age-groups who were educated prior to the 1970s in residential schools, a time when assimilation into the dominant culture was seen still as the main goal of educating American Indians.

It is conceivable that those using ‘Indian’ in combination with self-denigrating prefixes draw on personal experiences of being addressed in a belittling way, or having witnessed someone else spoken to in a contemptuous manner.

This ambivalent style of self-reference signifies a transformational process of conceptual re-possession:

Indian + derogatory prefix simultaneously reminisces on past injuries and indignities and mimics current prejudice, while the term’s ironic appropriation by *an Indian* appears to signal an act of potential transcendence.⁴⁸²

Ironic self-reference in this style however usually remains confined to a context of sympathetic listeners, with nuanced adjustments as to the ‘audience’s’ specifics:

In an all-Native group, self-derogation may express frustration and be more politicized than when used in interaction with non-Natives, when the expression takes on a wry fatalism.

However, when used in communication with a “*those Indians*” adversary, the same style of self-reference should be interpreted as provocative and challenging rather than signifying a post-modern turn of humorous self-denigration.

⁴⁸¹ Personal Communication

⁴⁸² Similar strategies are used by black Americans (young men in the majority) addressing each other with “nigger”, or people with disabilities using “crip” as mutual terms of endearment. The inverted use of erstwhile derogatory labels as terms of endearment is however the pejorative of the members of a particular group.

Lest it be imagined that liberal-conservative lines are clearly drawn according to ethnicity and cultural affiliation, it should be noted that particular attitudes are not confined to specific cultural groups.

I have heard the term “playing the race-card” used by Native Americans against fellow Natives. In fact intra-group suspicion and critique here emerges as a fairly prominent phenomenon, though it is problematic to address.

Rather than by ethnic affiliation, attitudes may be distributed by socio-economic situatedness and educational standard, although attitudinal boundaries remain fluid and flexibly responsive.

Intra-group retaliatory or hyper-critical opinion for instance can be propelled by self-advancing, prospering subjects’ reluctance at being implicitly equated- be it through prejudice or concern- with the disadvantaged contingent of the Native population.

There may be some justification for this, as even benignly inclined members of the dominant majority (Whites/Anglos) persist to primarily conceive of Indians as disadvantaged, downtrodden and traumatised, thereby ignoring the increasing numbers of a Native middle-class who manage to advance while fairly successfully negotiating bi-culturality.

Amongst these Native middle-classes some may concede with the Protestant Ethic perspective that social and economic advancement is primarily in the hands of the individual, and who concur with the view that welfare and social ‘mollycoddling’ keeps Indians in a state of perpetual dependence.

Attitudinal allies so may be found in incongruent pairings, and so confound partisan bias, while accurately reflecting the mercurial quality of present-day pluralist dynamics.

* * *

In the geographic area of this study the colloquial terms used to denote Americans of European descent is “Anglo” or Bílagáana. “Anglo” is a cross-culturally used term of reference that though not devoid of ambiguity, has been long-embedded in regional culture and is widely used as a generic term for Caucasians in this region.

According to local lore it is derived from cattle ranchers, the first Europeans to permanently settle in the area. It is said that these ranchers were of English descent and now “Anglo” is used interchangeably and synonymously with “White” or “Caucasian.”

The expression “Anglo” is however more colloquial and regional than “White” and carries with it an implication of familiarity. In its evocation of alien origin it retains a subtle hint of adversarial positioning, when used by a non-Anglo; which it loses when used in self-reference.

Bílagáana, the Athabascan term for White person came into use as the first Europeans settled in the area and engaged with local tribes through trade.⁴⁸³

Bílagáana is usually glossed as a neutral, descriptive term by Athabascan speakers, although here as with other identity references, the term can either be employed quite neutrally or loaded with pre-judgement, depending on the speaker’s context.

For some Americans of European descent Bílagáana does not appear to be entirely unproblematic and it is notable that those conversant with regional Native culture appear to avoid self-referring as Bílagáana.

When they are on the Navajo reservation and participate in the custom of traditional introduction⁴⁸⁴, few European Americans tend to introduce themselves as Bílagáana.

Instead they appear to prefer evoking their specific European ancestry.

⁴⁸³ Many people use *bilaglana* as a generic term and scant enquiry is made regarding the term’s provenance. Amongst the explanations and hypotheses offered were: “His White Hand”, derived from *b7laa his/her hand*; “With Whose Hand We Fight” derived from *Bíl ahéesh gá to fight with* or “Enemy’s Hand”, *Bony/dried-up*, derived from *Si’gón* terms not entirely devoid of animosity.

⁴⁸⁴ Traditional Diné introduction requires the naming of maternal, paternal, paternal grandfather’s; and maternal grandfather’s clan in specified sequence.

The particulars of cultural descent are in other contexts rarely referred to by European-Americans.

Amongst the cultural groups populating the United States, European Americans who constitute the dominant group in terms of socio-economic position, appear less attached to specific heritages of origin and are less linguistically versatile than other cultural 'minority' groups⁴⁸⁵ who tend to maintain at the very least rudimentary bilingualism and some of knowledge of their culture of origin.

The resurrection of European ancestral history in the context of Navajo introduction may signify any number of impulses or motives: it may be a courteous adaptation to local/ host culture, it may indicate nostalgia or even envy, awakened through the encounter with another culture's resourcefulness and certainty of origin and belonging as evidenced in the style of introduction, or it may be based on an avoidance of being labeled or having to acknowledge being identified as Bítlagáana.

* * *

⁴⁸⁵ Statistically *Hispanic groups* may not be in the minority, but socio-economically they represent as disadvantaged and underrepresented.

[II]

EXPERIMENTS IN CONSPICUOUS ALTERITY

“Even so stimulating and shrewd a theorist as Pierre Bourdieu (1977) appears to think of the Algerian peasants among whom he lived, and by extension, of the practical life of most peoples known to anthropology, as in principle in a state of doxa, of unquestioning acceptance of the social order as an order of nature (in contrast to a state of awareness in which heterodoxy and orthodoxy define each other and conflict). Yet imaginative analysis of worlds alternative to the accepted is universal among Native Americans.”⁴⁸⁶

* * *

“It has always been a great disappointment to Indian people that the humorous side of Indian life has not been emphasized by professed experts.... Indians have found a humorous side to nearly every problem and the experiences of life have generally been so well defined through jokes and stories that they have become a thing in themselves...The more desperate the problem, the more humor is directed to describe it”⁴⁸⁷

Navajo, traditionally an oral culture, is much given to elaborate verbal play and fond of teasing and humorous interaction “where you hear laughing you’ll find a group of Navajo”⁴⁸⁸

Acerbic teasing is viewed as a positive sign of familiarity. It is also a way of saying the unsayable, or perhaps more accurately experimenting with the possibility of expressing the unsayable.

Humorous dialogue accelerates the dynamic shifting of positions between participants. Dialogic negotiation here necessarily is more subtle because of the potential sudden change of genre that is ever-present in joking relations, where ‘going too far’ is never really that far away.

The risk of transgressing and causing real offence is always an inherent possibility, hence the excitement that joking tends to generate. A joking exploitation of ‘problematic identity status’ therefore presented an appropriately betwixt and between approach.

Here the elaborate traditional Navajo opening ritual of introduction by ‘clan’, exercised whenever people meet in a social context offered an opportunity to engage ambivalence.

⁴⁸⁶ Hymes in: Basso;1979:xii-xiii

⁴⁸⁷ Vine Deloria Jr: in: Basso, 1979:.3

⁴⁸⁸ AC; Personal Communication, 04/2005

* * *

“I travel in order to get to know my geography”⁴⁸⁹

As specific as Navajo prescriptions are regarding clan affiliations, as vague and generalising is the description of alien provenances: In reference to European Americans the generic ‘Bílagáana’ is most commonly used. ‘Nakai’ is the term for Mexican: the second largest population-group in the wider region are Mexican-Americans/ Hispanics.

About half or more of the global population would fit the description Bínáa ‘alts’óée diné’ - the slant-eyed people.⁴⁹⁰ Diné bizaad, the Navajo Language, does however afford a vast field of opportunities to the creative linguist who wishes to establish their cultural background through a more specific expression.

A common strategy is to use a popularly known cultural signifier, this may be a cultural trait, food, landscape, wildlife, political or public figure as clan name. The Dutch would be clan of the Wooden Shoe (as the concept of windmills is rather complicated to convey in Navajo), the Swiss might choose to be of the Cheese Clan and so forth.

The introduction by sequential clan affiliation: 1) maternal - born to- clan; 2) paternal – born for- clan 3) paternal grandfather’s clan 4) maternal grandfather’s clan; so open an array of possibilities of self-definition:

As German on my maternal side I was advised to of introduce myself as ‘Bééshbích’ahí diné’– the Metal Hat People, the most commonly used reference for Germans, derived from their WWI soldiers’ metal helmets.

⁴⁸⁹ Note of a madman, in Marcel Reja: L’Art chez les fous; Paris 1907, p.131 quoted by Walter Benjamin: The Arcades Project; Exposé of 1935, p.11

⁴⁹⁰ No distinction is made for instance between Japanese and Chinese, despite the formers’ prominence in WWII and the particular contribution of Navajo code talkers made in the war.

When I expressed reservations about using a clan-name with military connotations, ‘Bídaghaíłchínée diné’, Clan of the One who Smells His Moustache (Hitler) was helpfully offered as alternative.⁴⁹¹

For a generic term for the Iranian ‘paternal clan’ I elicited quite a few creative suggestions: the most neutral of which was ‘Séi táá diné’ - People Surrounded by Sand/ Desert People; (commonly used for Arabs), ‘Dagha tsóo diné’ - People of the One with the Big Moustache - Saddam Hussein (not really correct in view of historical Iran/Iraq animosity); ‘Bígháa ask’íd’íí diné’ - Clan of Animals with Humps (camels); Bít sí bíg’éeéh ast’híí diné - Clan of the Rag Heads.⁴⁹²

Despite my persistence even fluent Navajo speakers failed to figure out how to say “Axis of Evil Clan” which in its political topicality would have been my definitive preference.

During a cultural education class for patients of the tribal alcohol rehabilitation programme the teacher, a tribal ex-politician and medicine man, introduced me with the welcoming comment: “Khomeini has sent her.”⁴⁹³

Whereas most Navajo speakers in this setting were familiar with the term Bééshbích’ahí. for German, possibly garnered from the popular Code Talker film, far fewer knew what to make of the various expressions for my paternal clan.

Despite my visibly different ethnicity and my non-American accent, quite a number of people in the rehab programme, where it was custom to introduce oneself as far as capable in Navajo in the

⁴⁹¹ I resigned myself to continue using Bééshbích’ahí .

⁴⁹² Creative dissent, manifest in much of my ethnographic observations was much in evidence during informants’ linguistic deliberations. A variety of expressions and possible spellings were offered by different individuals. As many of those consulted appeared reticent regarding their Navajo literacy, even when they were fluent speakers, the above terms are chosen from phonetic transcriptions suggested by people who had some familiarity and/or confidence regarding Navajo transcription.

⁴⁹³ Regarded bemusedly by the large group of court-ordered participants, I felt that the way out was to ‘go with the flow’. I did my best to affect a rapt expression and, placing a hand on my heart, exclaimed in Farsi: “Long Live Imam Khomeini (long dead by then), praise Allah”. I am not sure how much of this was comprehended other than that this being understood as a deliberate demonstration of conspicuous/humorous otherness, but there was no apparent negative fall-out or any expression of prejudice or mistrust levied at me as a consequence.

traditional manner, approached me thinking that I was part- Navajo and a client in treatment rather than an observer and volunteer-member of the staff team.⁴⁹⁴

In being pro-active in soliciting essentially ambiguous ‘clan-names’ my potentially problematic identity became a shared concern,⁴⁹⁵ and something of a communal linguistic project where people consulted with each-other and debated the provenance and accuracy of particular expressions. Some rarely used terms would lead to reminiscences of when they had been last heard.

While certain expressions and terms continue to be used routinely and are known even by rudimentary speakers of Navajo, the language’s expressive potential can only unfold with an intricate knowledge of its complex grammar and a thorough familiarity with the vocabulary. Many whose first language had been Navajo admitted that they had come to find English easier to use and had in the process of switching over begun to lose their capacity to express themselves fluently in Navajo.

The search for an identity-reference so illuminated the dynamics of language contraction reflecting the communities’ diminished linguistic capability.

⁴⁹⁴ “You are half-German, eh?” an older client asked, approaching me after an introduction circle in the Cultural Education group’s break – “So what went wrong?”

In the neighbouring hospital’s mental health clinic, a social worker reported that a locum psychiatrist from the Philippines, also with a notable ‘foreign’ accent, was by some clients referred to as “that old Navajo dude” – as a Native psychiatrist he would have been the only exception to an otherwise Anglo-contingent. Dr. L, a concerned and engaged professional with firm- and self-confessed conservative views concerning young peoples’ behaviour, addressed his young patients at times rather sternly, and in a mode that may have resonated as an Elder’s considered authority, rather than being perceived as reflecting the medical genre’s impersonal intervention. “They really listen to what he says, especially the kids” the social worker noted. That foreign-ness was taken for indigeneity or that a playful approach to highlighting alterity sometimes seemed to result in an accelerated cultural incorporation may be a projection of the uncertainties intrinsic in contemporary *macro-managed* Native American identity. My intuitive hypothesis is however that if I had tried to present my potentially –politically- problematic identity in a less conspicuous or pseudo-provocative way, reactions to my cultural background may have well been more adversarial.

⁴⁹⁵ Here it may be significant that many survivors of the boarding-school system, and more recently those educated in border-towns with tense intercultural relations would have their own memories of Native identity being problematized and derided. In fact the discussion of identity references often seemed to lead to personal reminiscences by *informants*.

Navajo, with its intricate and complex grammar and infinite descriptive possibilities leaves a lot of room to the speaker's creativity and imagination. In a language class at a border-town community college I attended, students were asked to think of Navajo ways to express 'sieve'. Is it an object that holds food? An object that water runs through? An object that lets water run off or away? An object that catches food? Mrs Alice W., teacher of Navajo, reported to the class that in a certain part of the reservations patrons of the senior day centre called cell-phones: "The Thing that Makes People Turn Around." They had observed how people speaking on their cell-phones would turn from side to side, probably to improve the phone-reception. Since few monolingual Elders remain, for the young there is less need to struggle to maintain fluency in Navajo, but Navajo loses out on the elders' creative contribution in expanding Navajo vocabulary to include the trappings of modernity.

The neglect of language education other than English attests to a conviction that biculturalism and bilingualism are hindrance rather than help in mainstream Anglo cultural hegemony.

North-American minorities strive towards the mono-lingual cultural mainstream. Bi-lingualism and-culturalism signifies above all failed integration.

Proposition 203, the "English Only Initiative" was passed by Arizona voters in 2000, swiftly followed by a number of other states. Proposition 203 stipulates that the public school curriculum be conducted in one language- English, and that bilingual programme provision cease. The State of Arizona has since achieved notoriety for passing laws that purport to serve the control of 'illegal aliens' but which have been seen as frankly discriminatory, if not outright racist.

Proposition 203 was put to the vote under the mantle of serving the interests of those children who were deemed to have been 'segregated' in bilingual programmes, and who were argued to be at risk of losing out on the advantages reaped by the mainstream, but the bill was initially sponsored by a privileged Anglo-contingent who campaigned for it by stoking fears of an 'alien' (=non-Anglo) takeover of the American public education system.

It seemed that once again officialdom had forced itself on a minority and made itself the informed champion of minority rights by restricting services meant to serve them.

This argument was taken up by the outraged potential beneficiaries of bilingual curricula opposing Proposition 203, amongst others representatives of the Indian tribes of Arizona and the Navajo Nation, who perceived a recurrence of discriminatory political interventions. The alliance condemned the 'mean-spirited' attempt to deprive Native children of their language instruction, campaigning for the continuation of the bilingual programme.

Deborah House⁴⁹⁶ critiques this position in a challenging inversion of the received opinion that the teaching of Native languages in schools is essential for language survival. House finds that the insistence on teaching Native languages in schools primarily attests to a shift of the domain of language acquisition from the domestic and the community to the classroom.

That the teaching and mediating of Native languages is now seen to be a responsibility of the state, House argues, is not necessarily a positive development, nor does it bode well for language survival. For a language to truly survive in all of its complexity, it needs to be experienced and applied multi-contextually. According to House that shifting of responsibility to official administration may be more detrimental to a language than if it were solely mediated- as was the case throughout history until recently- in the family and community.

Normative, standardised language curricula, as much as they preserve and perpetuate, are potentially limiting and reductive. To place the main responsibility for teaching languages into the hands of the State is also to relinquish control to the fickle forces of political authority and bureaucracy.

Plus ça change....

⁴⁹⁶ House; 2002

III

ACCOUNTS OF MATERIAL INEQUITY

Material and economic inequity came to tribes in the guise of the opportunities for waged work. The railways, agricultural concerns, the mining industries followed by the oil- and gas-fields, the service industry and later the cultural industry all offered employment ranging from unskilled and low-paid to skilled and well-remunerated work. Waged employment has had a presence in Indian country from the early 20th Century, which is also when alcohol first made an appearance. Levy and Kunitz⁴⁹⁷ attribute the ‘tradition’ of binge-drinking to pay-days when the work-force – Native and Anglo would celebrate the receipt of their wages together by getting drunk. In terms of the possibilities of conspicuous consumption these periodic alcohol binges may have set a spectacular precedent.

Josephine and Norah from whose accounts I quote below grew up within the traditional subsistence economy, where there were no luxuries only necessities purchased with the occasional supplementary income, there are many people throughout the reservation who only became *active consumers* and participants in the mainstream *market-place* in their adulthood. Some seem to have negotiated this transition with seeming nonchalance and without marked feelings of deprivation, but they may nevertheless have experienced their transition to consumers as a significant shift in life-style.

Families, who neither had life-stock nor a family member bringing in a permanent wage, really were poor:

Groceries- flour, potatoes, oil and coffee were bought in from temporary employment found mostly in border-towns. Often this meant that parents left children on their own, sometimes for days, the oldest entrusted with the care of smaller siblings, while they worked away or were out

⁴⁹⁷ 1974

looking for work. It is conceivable that these parents may have felt relieved at the prospect of BIA schools taking over the care of their children, even though they may have had no particular conception of these schools increasing their children's future opportunities. These children, who were amongst their peers the most economically deprived and the least supported, often endured the hardest time in the residential schools. Their status as poor and abandoned made them a target for the better-situated bullies and they swiftly learnt the intricacies of social stratification.

Norah describes the economic circumstances of her childhood as follows:

“We didn't have any sheep, or anything. I don't know why. But we hadn't any animals. We used to live on fried potatoes, fry-bread and coffee. Or sometimes just bread and water. In spring we used to walk for miles to find wild green onions. They made a really good soup”

Norah eventually moved to Appleton, the border-town to live with her grandmother, who lived on the 'Southside' near the river. Norah's grandmother worked as a dishwasher in a restaurant on Main Street.

“All these old Navajo ladies like my grandma used to wash dishes in Bilagáana restaurants. That was the work they could get”

Norah's indulgence in her teenage years was to go to the cinema and immerse herself in Elvis films. It was, she said, like being transported into another world.

Josephine on the other hand, whose mother raised her children from the yields of the 'traditional' economic mode, subsistence livestock economy, never experienced her frugal upbringing- living with the seasons and the unpredictability and adversity that livestock brought with it: illness, failure to breed, failure to thrive, dry seasons that yielded too little grazing - as deprivation.

“Apparently” she said “we were poor, but we did not know it.”

Josephine confesses that how she came to marry her husband when still a teenager was because he had a 'ride' in which he would take her out to fairs and drive-throughs, where he would buy

her hot dogs and rootbeer floats.⁴⁹⁸ “It was the rootbeer floats that cinched it for me” says Josephine, now divorced from her husband, who is a very active member of her Baptist church.

Norah’s and her sister Emmy’s exchange⁴⁹⁹ regarding what their father and mother had- or rather had not- given them was quite representative of memories of material deprivation.

The conversation as I recall had started with Norah’s statement that her parents never had given her anything; how she once had had to beg her mother’s husband who made a good living for 50 cents as contribution for a school-outing, and how he eventually threw two quarters at her which she had to look for and pick up from the floor.

Robert, a generation or more younger than Norah and Josephine, also grew up in the ‘traditional way’ although his parents were in wage-earning employment. Robert’s mother used to work in a factory on the reservation which closed after external AIM⁵⁰⁰ organisers initiated a strike for better wages and work-conditions.

Robert was one of the few people I met there who seemed to politically lean towards socialism. He was also one of the few people who thought that the AIM people had been right to instigate a strike:

“My mom worked in that factory. I know what the conditions were. They made out that we should be grateful that they did us a favor and put a factory on the Rez. Fact is that they put it here because they knew they’d get cheap labor from us.”

Other people I spoke to were of the opinion that work, however poorly paid and whatever the conditions, was better than no work. That attitude then signals a comprehensive shift in the conceptualisation of livelihood.⁵⁰¹

⁴⁹⁸ Rootbeer float : sweetened carbonated beverage made from originally sassafras root (now substituted by artificial flavours) , served on scoops of ice-cream which float to the top as they dissolve.

⁴⁹⁹ Quoted in Chapter Two

⁵⁰⁰ AIM: American Indian Movement: An American Indian political organisation which in the 1970s gained notoriety for its militancy

⁵⁰¹ This reminds me of an Indian agent’s letters written around 1910 or so and exhibited in the Umista Cultural Center of the Namgis First Nation of Alert Bay in Vancouver Island, BC. In it, to paraphrase, the Indian agent entrusted with the ‘administration ‘ of the Namgis bemoans that the tribe’s young men

Robert's theory is that mistrust first arose between the Navajo through the introduction of land ownership and its documentation to Indian tribes. The notion that something that hitherto had been shared and accessible to all now had been transformed to denominated boundaries to which only named owners had a right of use, introduced novel dynamics into the community, perhaps fuelled by a fear of being disadvantaged rather than by the imperative of acquisition. That is to say that, as I gathered from Robert, people now became absorbed with how much others had, and put their energy into trying to disrupt or sabotage others' prowess. While according to the 'old ways' others' bounty would at one time have been occasion for the entire community to rejoice in anticipation of dutiful and due redistribution, now there was a steady greater growing gap between those who acquired and those who watched.

Wage-earners, and particularly those in higher-earning employment now began to partake of the spoils that had so long been the mainstream's privilege.

Robert, now in his early forties, remembers the obvious difference in life-style between classmates whose fathers earned good money in the mines and on the oil-fields and 'traditional kids' like himself who spoke Navajo at home, who would still be deployed to herd sheep and who would spend summers in the mountains at 'sheep camp' herding live-stock.

Robert recalls spending days in the pursuit of sheep that had gotten away "you didn't dare to come home without them". During summer in the sheep-camp they were chaperoned by an older cousin (a teenager I assume) who, according to Robert's recollections spent the days lazing in the shade, while eating his way through the provisions: "All we got was just potatoes. At the end of the summer he was real fat and we were real skinny."

On a more contemporary note Robert also recalled one of his cousins 'huffing gas' – that is sniffing petrol, a rather urban adolescent pursuit.

unaccountably seem to prefer trawling the bay in their canoes to fish instead of gratefully taking up the opportunity to work in the newly established fish-processing factories, gutting fish and earning a wage.

IV

NOTES ON WITCHCRAFT

Although witchcraft accusations according to my information are fairly frequent, they are usually disclosed to confidants, rather than discussed in public.

I once overheard a Human Resources officer at the hospital on the phone dealing with a witchcraft complaint by a member of staff. When I enquired if this was a routine occurrence, his response seemed fuelled by eagerness to discourage me from forming the notion that Navajo held onto primitive beliefs like witchcraft. Witchcraft should be conceptualised, he instructed me, taking a functionalist approach, as a variation on the vocabulary of discontent:

“They work together, they bug each-other. They call it witchcraft”

Considering the team-members that may have bugged or been bugged by Mr Essel (assuming that the other Anglos could be counted out, as they were without exception, not familiar enough with Navajo cultural mores), none sprang to mind as an obvious pursuer or inflicter of witchcraft.

Who could be the culprit witching ‘Diablo’?

This question seemed to intrigue several members of staff, until it emerged through someone quite well informed regarding the dynamics of Mr Essel’s persecutory anxieties, that in fact he must be accusing an old adversary, now working at another service.

The old adversary, who regarded herself as a practicing Christian, when catching wind of her suspected witching activities was incensed:

“Who’s his medicine man? Huh! It’s that guy, Mr Greyeyes. Spreading lies. Making false accusations. He’s not being professional. I have a mind of suing him for malpractice! ”

The intention of suing a medicine man for a wrong witchcraft diagnosis seemed intriguingly at odds with preformed notions regarding boundaries and divisions between ‘traditional’ and ‘contemporary’ strategies.

Although the accused seemed to lay the blame foremost on the medicine man, it is not necessarily to be concluded that Mr Essel's interpretation tallied with his medicine man's diagnosis.

Often a diagnostic pronouncement is vague enough for patients to have quite a lot of leeway to draw their own conclusions, and to determine, which current adversary is the most likely perpetrator of witching mischief.

“So they go to diagnosticians- handtremblers, star-gazers or occasionally you might refer somebody: “I know this person- he’s very good. They’re very good, but they charge a lot. If you pay then, they’ll tell you exactly why you are having this problem... and those were associated with Peyoteism and they said those are the ones that would suck out projectiles that were put in by you or something like Voodoo packages or baggages..

(...)

...All of a sudden a lot of NAC⁵⁰² people...new....they kind of came in. That was becoming strong and a lot of people go through those practitioners, and they were (...) still using a lot of traditional Navajo way of explaining things, but they were pretty much practitioners in NAC also.

So when I was a kid, that’s what we would hear : “*eii yóó háa ú géé*”: he can really take things out “*háa ú géé*” means take things out “*ats’óós*” means sucking.

I was so young that I never went through one. But my (other) sisters and my mother, they would talk about “oh that time we went over there, yes! Remember when he picked that out, that bone. “

He said it was the bone of an Anasazi or bilagáana or something like that. Somebody is jealous of you because you have a lot of sheep and you are wealthy.

That’s what it was all based on: jealousy. Because your family has a strong foundation, and you are living in a good environment and you are looking as if you are making a .. smooth livelihood with no problems. And my Dad works, so there was probably jealousy over that, because he can afford a truck. But then we had a better truck – it wasn’t a new truck- because he used it only on the weekend. When he was off he was always up in the mountain, gathering firewood for the winter, and he’d be carrying big logs, and we’d be up there with him. And as children we’d do the best we can.

And my mum just took care of the sheep.

Sheep is a 24 hour lifestyle, because in the wintertime, when lambs are being born, you have to make sure that they don’t freeze and for a few days you keep them with the lambs and so you keep some hay on the side, and you feed them, and you herd the other one out there to graze. And then, at the same time some mothers would not want their off-spring and so you have to tie those moms and then feed the baby.

And eventually nurture them like that. And sometimes they re-adopt them.

Other times they just never want to do anything with their lamb, with their offspring.

And basically I think that’s what human beings were doing also. But we didn’t know how to deal with it, we went to practitioners.

I start referring to them as charlatans, because they would spring up like that. “⁵⁰³

⁵⁰² NAC: Native American Church (also known as The Peyote Way, or Peyote Church): The Native American Church – The Peyote Way – began in the Plains regions at the end of the 19th Century. A travelling ‘church’, operating through ceremonial gatherings held in tents, it rapidly gained fellowship pan-tribally. Because of its ceremonial use of the hallucinogen Peyote, the NAC initially met with considerable resistance. The Navajo Tribal Council declared the NAC as illegal in 1940, deeming it to be at odds with both Navajo religion and Christianity as practiced on the Reservation.

In 1959 the Native American Church of North America filed an action against the Navajo Nation seeking to repeal the Tribe’s prohibition on the purchase, possession and consumption of Peyote on tribal lands, sanctioned by fines and imprisonment. The action against the tribal council was dismissed and peyote remained illegal until in 1967 the prohibition of Peyote use in NAC ceremonies was repealed.

⁵⁰³ Larry King; Interview; Transcript by author

It is said by some raised traditionally that the uses and abuses of witchcraft reflect a general corruption that has taken place in recent decades.

They see the apparent proliferation of witching activity and diagnoses as evidence of an inversion of values, a turning away from the mindful focus on 'keeping things in balance' and following the Beauty Way- towards what may be seen as a validation of envy, suspicion and social disruption through a newly emergent populist 'witchcraft genre'.

Larry links an increased dependence on medicine men and a willingness to put up with 'charlatany' to a lack of containment, a diminishing capacity to nurture and fragmented and damaged family- and social bonds.

Here the causes of misfortune are- unusually- sought beyond the economic:

Like the sheep that ultimately rejects its lamb for reasons that are difficult to discern, the capacity to 'mother' and to keep a family safe and together has been eroded by a chain of historical and social events and disruptions.

Early separation, residential school experiences, the impact of federal interventions or interference in Native social and economic organisation, have produced generations of individuals who are finding it hard to care for each-other and to relate to each-other.⁵⁰⁴

As mentioned elsewhere, complaints about harsh and aloof mothers, and absent and abusive fathers were endemic.

Many individuals complained that they had experienced very little tenderness during their formative years. The access for some to wage-earning employment and opportunities to participate in economic activities, fundamental changes of life-style through increased mobility

⁵⁰⁴ This was a frequently encountered statement, often illustrated by people's own experiences in the relations with their parents. That there had been a deterioration in Navajo social and family relations, observable through the phenomena of child- and elderly abuse, domestic violence and alcohol- and substance misuse problems, seemed to constitute a generally shared consensus. For me however, as an observer and volunteer clinician the state of Navajo society as emerging through individuals who presented as patients, seemed more functional than dysfunctional in terms of the insightfulness and ability to relate and share that most patients seemed to demonstrate.

and further expanding opportunity, create a stratified community that demonstratively divides the haves from the have-nots.

The fear of destructive jealousy that drives the wealthy to medicine men thus may be interpreted as harbouring an element of restorative justice: Similar to Evil Eye beliefs, those who elevate themselves over the general community, by their very prominence, become targets to destructive forces.

The roots of witchcraft-fears as indicated in the above extract of an interview may be seen as two-fold: Firstly it may be seen as symptomatic of the anxiety that resides within a family- or social - unit that suffers from a lack of containment, which in turn generates feelings of vulnerability and the fear of being powerless to withstand or defend against external (evil) forces. Second, economic inequality engenders envious attacks that are operative through witchcraft.

Witchcraft, while it is a changing genre, and while witchcraft accusations seem prolifically represented across a variety of milieus and settings, is not a new phenomenon.

It does seem however (and this is a hypothesis) that symptoms that once would have been seen as linked to contacts or transgressions pertaining to the natural world and Navajo behavioural prescriptions regarding man's interaction with it, now are increasingly interpreted as witchcraft caused by adversaries.

This "witching" turn may be a synchronous process shadowing the gradual dissolution of the traditional proximity of social organisation to the natural environment. As nature's force as retributive agent diminishes in significance, human agency takes its place.

"And how I see it also is, Navajo were pretty much two class: the powers... powerful people who were the medicine men, medicine practitioners, and the commoners were just out there farming, herding the livestock and when they were ill, see, they would be the ones that would go to the practitioners and say:

"I'm begging you. This is happening to me. What could it be? I'm offering you this."

And then they'd go through a procedure and say:

"Hm! Well with what you told me and whatnot, there was a big lightning-storm, and there was lightning close by you and you were breathing the smoke from the lightning, so that's what affected you. So you have to..."

You know, they diagnose... so they give you a particular prescription, and there were all these different practitioners around and you go up...

And then you go and then you offer them something of value.

And it used to be that you could just give them a loaf of bread, bread that was baked under a hot ember, underneath a fire, and those were before iron baking implements came into the Navajo world, or maybe kneel-down-bread, bread-mush, corn-mush wrapped in a husk and then put in a hot ash and fire put on it again.

So that's what you would offer.

Either that, or your jewellery. And it was not a whole length,- you could just detach a piece. And there were times when he said: "you can just tear off a fringe of your outfit" - and that was enough.

(...)

Just a symbolic offering...

But things had changed and money became a big factor, and this one sorcery and witchcraft became a big issue then too, so going through these people and they start going through a good amount..."⁵⁰⁵

Here traditional medicine men, hataalii, are referred to as powerful in terms of status and as in holding particular powers and skills and an implicit distinction is drawn between 'natural causation' and 'human agency' – witchcraft and sorcery, and ceremonial treatment for support or for economic gain.

The implication here is that the social status and power that hataalii held because of their skills and knowledge 'in the old days' had in themselves been the reward.

Once the old tradition of symbolic offerings in exchange for curing interventions had given way to material remuneration, the promise of economic gain had drawn to the field a large number of practitioners who were in it for the money. The field was now becoming overrun by opportunist and manipulative business people in the guise of medicine men.

Under the headline "Fake Healers plague Navajo Nation" the online version of High Country News reports on charlatans on the Navajo Nation:

"...The woman said her guests told her the so-called medicine man's closing chant was fake, that he didn't know the ritual. That meant the ceremony was invalid, and it forced her to find another traditional healer and again prepare food for friends and family at a new ceremony.

The healers at the meeting explained they were powerless to take action against charlatans or to tell her which healers are authentic, so when the woman left, she was angrier than ever.

Sammie Slivers, a chanter and president of the group, says there are several hundred healers on the reservation, but no one knows how many of them are fakes.

The association has resisted calls to publish a list of recommended chanters, herbalists and hand tremblers, partly because no one agrees on the qualities that make a true healer, or what makes a charlatan. And this, of course, makes prosecuting charlatans impossible. Navajo Tribal Court officials say they can't remember a case coming before them....

But across Indian country, reservation leaders have complained for decades of people cashing in on the desire to be cured through traditional healing. Many people come to the Navajo reservation

⁵⁰⁵ Larry King; Interview; Transcript by author

claiming to have healing powers derived from the spirit of a long-dead chief or healer, says Deschinny.

"Whenever these kinds of people come," he says, "people seem to flock to them in the hopes of being healed." It's still not uncommon on the reservation, he adds, to come across an Anglo woman, dressed in '60s hippie style, claiming the baby she is carrying or gave birth to is possessed by the spirit of a healer. But on the reservation, the charlatan problem is caused more by Navajos than non-Indians."⁵⁰⁶

This is not to say that bona fide medicine men always epitomized strictly ethical principles.

The power and position they held also afforded them opportunities for misconduct. Children of 'old-style' medicine men have reported that their fathers' occupation endowed them with a kind of celebrity status, which they rapaciously enjoyed. Ceremonies and gatherings were often occasions for promiscuity and drinking. Many medicine men are rumoured to have left a trail of babies, conceived at ceremonies, in their wake. Other children of medicine men have considered much more worrying doubts regarding their fathers' possible 'dual careers' as both curers/medicine men and the feared 'inflictors' of evil sorcery: skin walkers.

That some healers are suspected to be 'bad' and 'dangerous' and corrupt is therefore not necessarily a sign of recent times.

Rather than hypothesising about the veracity of these speculations and suspicions, they may be taken as an indication of a certain wariness regarding placing trust and hope in anyone one may have to depend on.

What is being focused on here are the presentation and generating of ambivalent attitudes. It is not the intention to imply that these 'jaundiced' perspectives reliably reflect reality.

While witchcraft accusations appeared fairly prolific, the medicine men I encountered in various settings, engaged in teaching, lecturing and diagnosing, never mentioned witchcraft outright, and in the majority in their references as well as in their diagnostic approaches focused on voluntary or accidental transgressions as the primary causes of most ill-health and misfortune.

⁵⁰⁶ High Country News; 13th October 1997; <http://www.hcn.org/issues/116/3714>

That approach was echoed by a ‘traditional’ employee of a department adjacent to the Clinic, who once observed that the disturbing and disturbed atmosphere in the team was probably caused by staff being constantly exposed to ‘imbalance’ in the form of depression, anger, deviance, unhappiness, bereavements (and therefore death by proxy) brought in by patients, and not doing enough in terms of protection (-prayers) and purification (-rites) to restore themselves to balance and harmony.

In other words, staff had lost touch with the mindful and circumspect traditions that would have helped them not to be adversely affected by their patients’ disease.

This view seems to be much closer to the orthodox ‘traditional’ approach that divines causes, but widely eschews creating blame, as this only perpetuates and further entraps subjects in cycles of negativity and destructiveness. Most medicine men, whether NAC or traditional, seemed to adhere to this ideation, and seemed to avoid blaming particular agents as the creators of mischief. Perhaps then the mention of witchcraft and the indulging in witchcraft accusations is strictly confined to the layperson’s realm, where it appears that witchcraft accusations may be interpreted as a substitutive act emulating to a degree the effects of witchcraft – disturbing, disruptive, disquieting and subtly destructive, without running the full unpredictable risks of witchcraft activity.

* * *

The implicit distinction between Diné traditional belief and ‘incoming’ practitioners and belief-systems made in the above interview by Larry King seems to hint at a certain ambiguity regarding ‘invading’ belief-systems.

In the interview a proliferation of witchcraft accusations- and diagnostics is linked directly to the influx of unscrupulous practitioners who are in the field for material gain.

Kluckhohn (1944) correlates trauma and stress and prohibitions regarding intra-group aggression as leading to witchcraft as a legitimate substitute for channelling problematic and unsanctioned feelings.

Leighton and Kluckhohn (1956) note the apparent core-position of fear in Navajo religion:

"When one first studies Navajo belief and practice, he thinks more than once that the Eskimo's description of their religion—'we do not believe, we fear'—would be appropriate for the Navajo as well."⁵⁰⁷

Whether it is entirely accurate to classify the type of witchcraft discussed here as a religious belief or activity is debatable. I think it may be more apt to call it as it emerges in the contexts mentioned, as religious-derivative, retaining in its practice only vestiges of reference to a belief-system.

Although the emic term "witchcraft" has been used so far, it would be more correct to use the term 'sorcery', to be precise contagious or sympathetic sorcery for the practice known in Navajo as *íínzhíid* practiced by obtaining an object or bodily waste of the intended victim and then burying it.

The institutional use of witchcraft complements the strategic employment of bureaucratically processed complaints and grievances. While the externalising or projection of destructive wishes towards another may be a common motivating factor, the practice of *íínzhíid*, sympathetic magic establishes both autonomy and, invasive, intimacy: Sympathetic magic is a relatively low-maintenance practice, it needs no assistants, experts or paraphernalia and the target is invaded and affected by the witchcraft's impact. At a psychodynamic level witchcraft may work – for the 'witching agent'⁵⁰⁸ as a cathartic purge of negative sentiments.

In its 'popular' guise as practiced in the IHS and similarly 'official settings' it seems an autodidactic practice not much given to orthodoxy. The impression given here was that when

⁵⁰⁷ Kluckhohn & Leighton 1956

⁵⁰⁸ Someone engaging in this type of sympathetic magic should not necessarily be regarded as a witch.

sympathetic magic was practiced, it was in such a low key way as to allow even instigator him/herself to be in denial about engaging in witching, in the manner of "... just fooling around". Dramatic and preparation-intense witchcraft as sourcing bones, corpses, killing horned toads seemed out of bounds: Accessible forms of sympathetic magic allow for bodily debris- fingernails, hair, used Kleenex to be taken and buried under a tree struck by lightning, which are plentiful in this region. Some may even just resort to a curse, bad wish or negative thought, unsubstantiated by paraphernalia that they hope will eventually find its target. The act of burying is in itself discharge of negativity, and regardless of magic's efficacy, it is conceivable that some of the operative sentiments leading to the witching may lessen through that act. According to historic sources and older accounts on diagnostic procedures, healing ceremonies and Medicine Ways⁵⁰⁹, the causes of troubles, illness and malaise most frequently appear to be what can be broadly categorized as transgressions of varying severity, primarily vis-à-vis the natural environment,⁵¹⁰ human agency seems to feature less prominently. Witchcraft, whilst it may also be seen as a transgression, seems set apart as a phenomenon, in that it is an activity undertaken with the deliberate intent to harm another.

Incest, though for the most causing harm, differs in that it is usually conducted for reasons of gratification of the perpetrating party, rather than with the primary intention of causing damage, although this may also play a part as motive.

⁵⁰⁹ Levy et al. 1987

⁵¹⁰ This is a broad category: Pollution, the mingling of substances, agents, entities that should be kept apart constitutes a transgression; prohibited contact, whether contextually sanctioned or absolutely forbidden, is a transgression- the former may apply to crossing a coyote's path, the latter may pertain to incest; contact with lightning is a transgression (of elements). Deliberate or accidental, these transgressions result in consequences of varying magnitude. While some symptoms are comparatively mild and easy to remedy, others as for instance the "Moth Madness" resulting from incest, is very difficult to cure.

Because witchcraft involves a deliberately malevolent human agent, it may be argued that its diagnosis is particularly disquieting, because the perpetrator's ill-intent may well persist beyond the cure of his/her witching- effects.⁵¹¹

It must be stated again that witchcraft is not a new phenomenon, and what is explored here, is the apparent shift in the balance of diagnostic focus on natural forces to human agency and the consequent proliferation of witchcraft accusations and diagnosis.

One of the reasons for this may be that contemporary life-style is increasingly further removed from nature's impact, and traditional prohibitions therefore are gradually losing their significance. In terms of the business interest of unscrupulous practitioners mentioned in the interview, who are implicated with initiating a trend of for-profit-healing, witchcraft- and sorcery diagnoses widen the field of causation and therefore expand the 'patient-base.' While there are only so many lightning-strikes, crossing coyotes and encounters with snakes that may occur to an individual, the number of enemies up to mischief and dabbling in sorcery is virtually inexhaustible.

Although I have heard the views and suspicions voiced in this interview shared by other people, there are other possible interpretations why witchcraft should gain prominence.

It is likely that similar to post-traumatic reactions, an underscore of persecutory anxiety has taken hold of communities, for the cumulative reasons of historical vicissitudes and contemporary stressors and challenges.

Exploring witchcraft not structurally, but phenomenologically, its' impact may be defined as invasive on multiple levels: not only is the act of 'witching' by the preferred method of contagious or sympathetic magic invasive; the very suspicion of being witched and its diagnostic confirmation themselves have- psychodynamically speaking- invasive properties.

⁵¹¹ Although it is said that those who engage in 'witching' someone will eventually suffer their ill-intent themselves. Perpetrators are said to be particularly at hazard, when their 'witching' has been detected.

The intended victims' knowledge of being the target of projected harm inflicted by a distanced and therefore disembodied malevolent agent, may itself have a harmful effect on subjects.

Witchcraft is contact and injury by proxy, and therefore not directly tangible. It so may be seen as a phenomenon that combines oppositional dynamics: invasion and contagion versus distance and intangibility.

Pursuing a psychodynamic perspective, it may be argued that contagion and invasion possess a certain ambiguity: while being conducted as hostile acts, the appropriation of another's bodily waste products- hair, nails-cuttings, saliva etc. for the purposes of sorcery establishes a relational intimacy.

Regarding witchcraft as a fundamentally intimate act may help to explain why in its contemporary guise accusations often appear to surface in organisational contexts, when relations have broken down and constructive communication between parties does not seem possible.

'Witching' so may symbolize simultaneously a destructive attack and a relational approach.

Locating the roots of a disturbance in a concrete entity may be disquieting as much as it may be curative, for once a cause for mishap and misfortune can be determined, the patient or victim is on the path of seizing back control.

* * *

Historically sorcery practices may have been more nuanced and complex than the strategies employed in the circumstances within the clinic mentioned here, which seemed reminiscent of an all-accessible DIY approach, where sorcery could be 'inflicted' on an adversary with minimal fuss, so to speak.

This appeared to also apply to the antidote to sorcery-effects, which could, I was assured, be self-administered:

If feeling at hazard of being a witching victim, smudging oneself with ash of either cedar or sage would be a perfectly adequate strategy to ward off the evil spell.

As these observations are drawn from within a particular setting and from a very small sample, no claims can be made that these statements accurately represent actual practices. What these observations however do convey reliably is a demonstration of flexibility, creativity and pragmatic opportunism in cultural practice.

Perhaps the term 'practice' is even too strong and it would be more precise to label the 'witching' activities as cultural references introduced to an alien context. In fact it would be more accurate to speak of witchcraft accusations.

While I have encountered a number of individuals in organisational contexts who have stated, hinted at or suspected that they may have been an intended target of witchcraft, I have never encountered anyone who admitted to having witched someone, not even in reference to a past activity.

Does the witching world therefore consist entirely of victims, and no perpetrators? Or is a confession of witchcraft-activity potentially so damaging of reputation and status that it cannot be admitted to?

The effects of suspected witching seemed to be relatively mild- a misbehaving dog, indefinable physical malaise, a domestic accident, a tooth-ache, car-trouble, a job-application rejected- these were the order of suspected witching-effects, offering testimony to spite rather than destructiveness.

It may be that no-one would admit to having used witchcraft against an adversary because of an innate belief in swift retribution visited on those who engage in negative activities.

But it may be equally true – and I would find this more plausible, that in fact no witchcraft was engaged in by clinical staff here, and that the idea of it in a way served as a catharsis of the accumulated tensions in the team.

The witchcraft (accusations) as observed in this context seemed to be based on a very vague concept of its machinations and dynamic, they seemed formulaic in a way- an apparently 'knee-jerk' blaming device for any type of occurring trouble.

In this these accusations bear witness to the historical process of 'enforced dilution', where traditionally complex practices are rendered in a simplified and abbreviated form. Witchcraft is de-contextualised, and then re-positioned vis-à-vis a thoroughly Western indoctrinated and dictated medical milieu.

'Witchcraft' so undergoes a metamorphosis whereby it comes to simultaneously represent damaged relational dynamics, cultural assertion and the subversion of the dominant structure.

The somewhat formulaically established doctrine of intercultural mindfulness and respect that is operative in the Indian Health Service ensures that what is glossed as cultural practice, may not be questioned, critiqued or explored by Anglo-staff.

Thus, Anglo staff in the Hózhóní Clinic (apart from Mr Essel, who was a believer and in fact the prime instigator of witchcraft-accusations), were, surrounded by organisational witchcraft frenzy, restricted in their reactive scope to simply having to ignore the activities and accusations, and pretend that nothing around them was at odds. This created a somewhat surreal impression of parallel universes coexisting uncomfortably in a small space.

No any one cause or purpose explored and mentioned above should be taken as of primary importance, as much as it here must remain undetermined whether witchcraft's social 'function' is stabilizing or destabilising, integrative or disruptive, cohesive or disturbing. Maybe the drive to categorize and apportion purpose and consequence (whether positive or negative) to social and cultural phenomena has more to do with social sciences' teleological solipsistic tendencies, than with the dynamic and ambiguous manifestations of cultural practices.

The following account was given by Pádraig, an Anglo therapist and the ex-DBHS clinical supervisor.

This scenario took place, I seem to remember, when he was comparatively new to his post in a tribal facility, where he was the only Anglo staff.

Pádraig had recently begun to suffer bouts of malaise and a lack of energy. Usually energetic and bouncy, he found it hard to get up in the morning, his head felt numb, his limbs leaden, his thoughts cloudy.

One day a colleague alerted him that there was some ill-feeling against him – or against his inhabiting a managerial position. There were rumours, the colleague warned, that a member of staff had undertaken to ‘witch’ him.

Pádraig initially felt somewhat perturbed by this information: The revealing of such active ill-will against him was in itself shocking. To Pádraig, who had hitherto been a bystander and interested observer of the culture, witchcraft intentions against him made him a part of ‘the system’ albeit in a disquieting and invasive way.

When Pádraig had spent some time pondering on the situation, it occurred to him that there was no need to feel vulnerable and assailable. After all his “Old World pagan ancestry” had engaged in beliefs that in a way could be seen as complementary: Ill-intent bestows ill-luck, and what you send out will fall back on you.

So Pádraig decided not to confront the situation and not to let himself be drawn into active counter-manoevres, instead seeking solace in what he had distilled from his ancestors’ assumed beliefs in the inevitability of just deserts.

And it came to pass that the ill-intentioned member of staff began to be beset by a series of misfortunes: domestic strife, illness, a rather serious accident. One day she approached Pádraig, visibly ravaged by her recent malheurs, and inquired how he was feeling?

“I’m feeling great, Ermintrude” he retorted, heartily. And then added, his voice vibrant with concern: “But what about you? You look terrible!”

According to Pádraig the attempts to ‘witch’ him either ended there, or remained similarly ineffective.

On narrating this experience Pádraig left me to form my own conclusions.

He neither confirmed nor denied the efficacy of witchcraft, although he seemed to have drawn some comfort and reassurance from (re-) connecting with his own, distant culture and traditions and testing the resilience of his ancestors' creed.

Though strictly speaking the remnants of this belief as manifested here seem to revolve around a conceptualisation of cosmic justice: "What goes round, comes round.."

Whether his initial malaise, and Ermintrude's bad luck were cosmically connected through the dynamics of transcendently inflicted ill-will, or whether the coincidental co-occurrence of disquieting symptoms and misfortune were processed by these individuals bound together by their suffering and divided by mutual scape-goating- who knows?

It seems plausible that the experience of another feeling so strongly negative towards you, or your situation, that they may resort to sorcery to damage you, must be disquieting. It may even be damaging of the unthinking trust in one's environment's essential benignity that is for many of us the source of routine confidence.

Pádraig, in the following years, began to episodically attend protection ceremonies.

This may have been as much the result of progressive cultural adaptation, or a symptom of a sense of vulnerability that many Anglos who are interested and attempt to engage with Navajo culture, seem to eventually experience.

Unless, that is, they are stoically buoyed by the severity of their own convictions: Committed rationalists and those of religious fundamentalist convictions fare especially well in their defence against persuaded and invaded by alien belief-systems.⁵¹²

⁵¹² Here may be a good time to "fess up" personally:

I once had a falling-out with quite a charismatic personality of my acquaintance, who – though professing Christian beliefs, to me always had seemed notably fascinated by 'skin-walkers', a particularly evil and destructive variant of sorcerers. Shortly after the falling-out, I went to look after a friend's pets in her absence for a couple of days. During my friend's absence her elderly dog started to occasionally vomit, - a symptom that its owner thought was related to the dog's 'separation anxiety', when I phoned her to ask for her advice. And indeed, the dog's symptoms initially seemed mild. Very shortly before the friend's return the dog's health however deteriorated, and shortly after his owner's return, he died. I felt quite

* * *

Manifested here is the potently disruptive effect that the mere mention or conjecture of witchcraft can create.

Once a workplace is tainted with a witchcraft accusation, it is however difficult to find one's way back to the innocent days when all that could be seen wrong within a team was people 'bugging each other.'

Speaking dynamically, the introduction of witchcraft accusations into the organisational framework has a certain contagious potency, propelling ordinary discontent into the realm of hysterical persecutory anxiety.⁵¹³

Witchcraft may here represent the symbolic evocation or recruitment of transcendental forces as allies- or conversely the evocation of these forces as adversaries. This may be interpreted as representing a transmutation of the tangible- flesh-and-blood animosity- to the intangible forces of evil. While it may be argued with some justification that Navajo witchcraft is in fact quite tangible and may manifest in all manners of concrete ways: illnesses, afflictions, disturbances, material damage, car-trouble,⁵¹⁴ witch-bundles, live-stock illness or loss, an erring relative, pain- all disruption in everyday phenomena may in fact be caused by witchcraft. And as easily as it is inflicted, as easily it can be banished.

inconsolable. Yes, I had done all that I felt was right. Yes, there had been no indication that the dog was seriously ill. Yes, as my very gracious friend said: "It could have happened to anyone, at any time. It is just one of those things."

How did I, an animal lover, process the situation? My mind kept going back to that recent falling-out, and yes, it did feel plausible, intuitively plausible that is, that the source of the little dog's demise was what is termed witchcraft, and which I here conceived of as a cumulative essence of ill-will that was so powerful as to be invasively destructive. Perhaps the dog had been disturbed by the aura created by these feelings? This is not an attempt to make a case for the efficacy of witchcraft, rather how powerfully effecting projected ill-will can be, and how in the event of interpersonal adversity, instinctual sentiment may turn to processing disquieting experiences according to whatever explanatory models suggest themselves contextually. To those cocooned in an environment favouring what passes for rationality such a rapid sliding into superstition may be difficult to conceive. Reader, I've been there.

⁵¹³ To take a liberty and paraphrase Freud.

⁵¹⁴ I once heard of someone determining the cause of an engine-breakdown as a hair found adhering to a motor-part: Witchcraft.

Apart from the mechanics of witchcraft, the process here is notable. It may be argued that its potency lies in what I would like to gloss as ‘inflationary dynamics’: a cathartic culmination of discontent, anger, dislike, anxiety and fear through the pinpointing in a cause that possesses dyadic properties by being both supernatural in terms of presenting an entity and force that works through agents and can only be approached by proxy, and mundanely concrete in that it is responsive to simple, prescribed and generally accessible means.

* * *

One could look on these dynamics as an interplay of intricate dichotomies, wherein the trivial and the portentous, cultural differences and allegiances, the intra-psychoic and the social incrementally reflect off each other. In this cyclical process the elements contingent to particular dynamics in turn develop dynamics of their own.

In the case of Mr Essel described in Chapter Four, he was quite possibly still smarting from the wounds of recent institutional conflict, of which he had been the primary victim.

This conflict had, as others before it, apparently been conducted in an underhand manner, with conspiratory alliances being brokered behind closed doors, until enough support had been accumulated to initiate an official administrative intervention (possibly in the form of an official complaint to Human Resources), which eventually led to the reinstatement of another Acting Clinical Director.

Just as during the ‘conspiracy’ nothing was stated outright and no direct confrontations took place- excepting Mr Essel’s occasional choleric outbreaks often triggered by apparently innocuous situations, which appeared to be ordinarily accepted as idiosyncratic and culture-specific, anger and temper-tantrums being an ‘Anglo thing’ - its aftermath too vanished into the black hole that is institutional memory, there pooling the steady trickle of animosity, ambivalence

and mutual suspicion that was part of everyday clinical routine, until enough had accumulated for another cathartic crisis.⁵¹⁵

The milieu of repression, denial and avoidance and the tension it generates must be difficult to bear, if not hazardous to emotional, mental - and even physical- health.

The untrammelled expression of anger, as often stated in various contexts, here is 'culturally' not sanctioned, as are any rash and unconsidered statements or the displaying of emotions connected to that. As with most generally formulated edicts, particularly those attempting to condense cultural complexities within accessibly doctrinal form, this had to be taken with a grain of salt: Anger and emotional displays did occur and were accepted, depending on context: An individual may synthesize the emotions of a group and through a group-process that may be called symbiotic dynamics, may either act out, display or articulate feelings that are shared by participants.

⁵¹⁵ This is not taking a geo-physical approach to the dynamics of crisis, it is rather reflecting on the way staff seemed to accommodate and process the threats of a crisis into their working lives: Crises may have represented both a threat and a relief. One of the 'unofficial' skills and tasks expected of a clinician is the capacity to stoically absorb the well-nigh inevitable dose of daily frustration and aggravation ('eating your pound of dirt' so to speak). Hence the looming of a cyclically occurring crisis may not only generate anxiety and foreboding, but also an opportunity for an evacuation of the accumulated 'negativity', a temporarily effective cleansing catharsis - until the next cycle begins...

V

MEDICINE WAYS

(There was...) “ a philosophical difference and they split up. And right now we’ve decided to go with one group and that’s who we’ll be talking to.

(...)

The Navajo Medicine Man Association was one organisation, then they split up because of philosophical differences, and then we just let that be, and then, after a while, we realised that the original Medicine Man Association is the group we wanted to go with. We set up a meeting with them, so that all of the traditional practitioners for the Navajo division, the public Behavioural Health Services would get certified and all of that. That even has yet to come. We ran into some internal things within the Department of Behavioural Health Services, so that’s why we have to wait. We’ll probably get back together with them hopefully (...) to get a mass certification. We have sixteen traditional practitioners with DBHS, so that’s why we need to wait on that. So that’s where we’re at on that.

(...)

I believe we have about fifty-three different Navajo traditional ceremonies that we perform, in addition we have about twenty-one different approaches with the Native American Church. So that is about seventy- four different ceremonies that we have. So, at each of the treatment centres each practitioner knows at least three different ceremonies, up to about fourteen or fifteen. So that’s the variety that we have in there.

(...)

There are some traditional ways that we do things, that have been incorporated into the NAC. So that’s where the twenty-one different come about.

Now I got into this line of work via request. (It was) requested that I put together the traditional healing components curriculum, and I started on that and realised that if we’re to go with CARF at some point in time –(...) if we’re to go with them then we actually need policies and procedures, so I worked on the policies and procedures, so that’s in place right now. It’s awaiting approval by the health and social services committee up at Navajo Nation council, who have put down the outline for the curriculum for the traditional healing component, specifically for the cultural education part of it

(...)

I believe that the leadership- the Department of Behavioural Health Service leadership knew that I had experience working with policies and procedures and curriculums from the western perspective, at the same time having traditional knowledge, traditional understanding, you know, of the ceremonies.

So based on that I was brought in and now I’m a practitioner I’ve become interested in the whole concept of healing from both perspectives, I like to listen to some of the western modalities, and then, of course we have the traditional aspect, which we have for DBHS, which is available for clients which want to have traditional healing.”⁵¹⁶

At present there are two medicine man associations on the Navajo Nation: The Diné Hataa’ii Association and the Azée Bee Nahagha Association, the former the traditional medicine men’ association and the latter the Native American Church’s medicine men’ association.

⁵¹⁶ Interview with DBHS Traditional Practitioner; October 2005; Transcript by Tania Medhat

Their respective attitudes and positions are elucidated by the fact that while the Azée Bee Nahagha Association is quite easily located through its website, where it posts updated information and contacts, the Diné Hataaʼii Association appears to have no website.

In terms of organisation and communication then these two associations present with different strategies, which in an age of an increasing reliance on virtual media may have a significant impact on their public profile and accessibility.

The low profile that the Diné Hataaʼii Association has or keeps, may account for it remaining in structure a community-based assembly of practitioners who are recommended by word-of-mouth, and approached through direct contact with practitioners.

That there is a Diné Hataaʼii Association, is in itself a sign of an increasing- some may say enforced-‘professionalization’ and bureaucratisation, where few occupations escape an official certification process.

Concerns regarding impostors and charlatans may have accelerated initiatives to form associations that simultaneously serve to exclude ‘undesirables’ and to establish a body through which intra-occupational networking and public relations can be conducted, but it is conceivable that the establishment of such an association may have met with considerable resistance by some quarters:

“But some people refuse to adapt to modern technology, preferring a more traditional and respectful (to some people’s perceptions) way of marketing services.

Take Francis Mitchell for instance. The Navajo Nation member chooses not to promote his services as a medicine man online. Rather, he relies on word-of-mouth. Mitchell’s choice stems from a cultural belief that medicine men should not advertise their services.

“It’s not supposed to be a competition,” Mitchell told *The Farmington Daily Times* of his practice. “It’s not a way to recruit business, a way to identify yourself.”

(...)

“Medicine is an attempt to assist, so modern technology is not part of it.”⁵¹⁷

⁵¹⁷ INDIAN COUNTRY TODAY 10.05.2011

<http://indiancountrytodaymedianetwork.com/2011/05/navajo-medicine-man-runs-global-business-without-internet/>

Whether the claim that there is a ‘cultural belief’ that medicine men should not advertise their services is indeed accurate, is debatable. As the advertising of services is a comparatively recent phenomenon, even in terms of the Western culture that has promoted the strategy, it is unlikely that there would be an explicit prohibition for medicine men to promote their skills. Rather, it is likely that advertisement and self-promotion are perceived not to fit into the Medicine Way ethos for a variety of rationales.

One conceivable reason is that in terms of orthodox conceptualisation, soliciting for ‘trade’ may be interpreted as a move towards provoking ill health and misfortune, as references to cure simultaneously harbour implicit references to illness and so may contravene prohibitions regarding the mention and consequent evocation of negativity.

In the same vein the journalist’s use here of the term ‘services’ for Medicine Way activities, may be equally misleading and distorting, as it represents the conducting of healing ceremonies in the terminology of economic exchange. These formulations are of significance insofar as they illuminate a style of cultural short-shrift, the reductive mediation of cultural mores with references to concepts that may not exist ‘traditionally’, for the benefit of ‘outsiders’ (here the readers of the Farmington Daily Times).

This ‘tweaking’ of cultural conceptualisation may be viewed as evidence of adaptive flexibility, or conversely evidence of the impact of cultural hegemony, where cultural content must be mediated as mimicry of the dominant culture.

This may reflect older historical experiences whereby the use and practice of language and culture were controlled by dominant alien forces, for the benefit of whose limited understanding and tolerance, cultural complexities had to be truncated and simplified in order to save them from terminally destructive assaults. It may be argued however that when those put in positions of cultural ambassadors see themselves obliged to ‘summarize’ what are very complex concepts and propositions, the necessarily reductive perspective offered (in good faith) may be eventually be

taken as an authentic representation by those who resort to these sources as primary suppliers of information.

Cultural concepts so are passed progressively curtailed and one may assume that the routine and accepted, in fact ignored, tendency towards cultural reductivism gradually shapes the perception of culture, so that mimicry eventually is taken for authenticity.⁵¹⁸

Native cultures, exoticized and marginalised, carry the burden of being invested as being the emblematic carriers of North-America's history.

Pronouncements, such as Francis Mitchell's, therefore not only serve to convey information, and to provide an introduction for novices, but to communicate certain cultural and moral convictions, in the manner of abbreviated 'sermons' and instructional edicts 'to the people'.

The quote above "it is not supposed to be a competition" also carries in it hints of a reprimand to medicine men who do choose to promote themselves through new technologies, and who therefore are engaging – and perhaps securing an unfair advantage - in competition.

The framework in which this pronouncement is made however- the Farmington Daily Times- with an online version, is in this instance promoting Francis Mitchell as an exemplary traditional medicine man of stringent principles....

* * *

NAC practices, according to some opinions, in their extrovert vicariousness and the implicit sanctioning of 'insobriety' (through the ritual consumption of the hallucinogenic Peyote), run counter to the traditional Navajo Way, which does not accommodate or sanction the consumption of mind-altering substances in its ceremonies.

⁵¹⁸ The here established dichotomy between 'mimicry' and 'authenticity' is in itself problematically absolutist. Perhaps it is less controversial to refer to "degrees of dilution", as explored later in this chapter.

An evangelical Christian descendant of a traditional medicine man, who later seemed to have also engaged in NAC practices, disgustedly recalled as a child being taken to a ceremony, where she was made to eat Peyote:

“... being sick on your feet and seeing scary things: Where’s the good in that?”

This is a reference to the initial effect of Peyote buttons, which as they are ingested may make people nauseous, and though many participants may leave the gathering tent to be sick outside, some may be either overtaken by nausea or may not want to leave the meeting, therefore vomiting in front of them – or on their feet.

The second reference is to the hallucinogenic effects of Peyote, which are not necessarily experienced as ‘scary’ by everyone. It is conceivable that the spectacle of adults being sick and the experience of hallucinations may be very frightening indeed to a child.

The negative impression formed by the narrator was however enduring enough that almost half a century later, she manages to convey a notion of Peyote Gatherings that is as persuasive as it is caricaturing.

As the narrator, who was born in the late 1940s recalls attending this meeting as a child, in terms of the historic context, this meeting must have taken place, before the prohibition of the use of Peyote on the Navajo Nation was repealed in 1967.

More than ten years later the American Indian Religious Freedom Act of 1978 established by law the rights of Native Americans to pursue religious ceremonies and sanctioning the use of ceremonial paraphernalia and substances.⁵¹⁹

⁵¹⁹ **AMERICAN INDIAN RELIGIOUS FREEDOM ACT**

Section 1

On and after August 11, 1978, it shall be the policy of the United States to protect and preserve for American Indians their inherent right of freedom to believe, express, and exercise the traditional religions of the American Indian, Eskimo, Aleut, and Native Hawaiians, including but not limited to access to sites, use and possession of sacred objects, and the freedom to worship through ceremonials

* * *

NAC followers however are still suspect as renegade hedonists by both some traditionalists and Christians, while NAC and hybrid practitioners seem to be the most prolifically represented medicine men on the reservation.⁵²⁰

NAC practitioners perhaps, as their affiliation attests, are more actively and acquisitively intercultural and ‘outward’ looking, adopting a belief that is still comparatively ‘young’ and in contrast to the other incoming Christian churches, was not promoted by members of the dominant-Anglo- population, but by fellow Native pioneers.

Their pan-tribal orientation may make NAC roadmen more likely to master the bureaucratic processes necessary for becoming tribally accredited, established and registered medicine men, than traditional mono-cultural and mono-lingual medicine men out in the rural parts of the reservation.

This is neither to imply nor to deny that there is discord or rivalry between Hataafii and Azée’ Bee Nahagha, but merely to state that the two associations seem to differ from each-other in outlook, manifestation and strategy. A vast majority of practitioners whom I encountered in

and traditional rites.

Section 2

The President shall direct the various Federal departments, agencies, and other instrumentalities responsible for administering relevant laws to evaluate their policies and procedures in consultation with native traditional religious leaders in order to determine appropriate changes necessary to protect and preserve Native American religious cultural rights and practices. Twelve months after August 11, 1978, the President shall report back to Congress the results of his evaluation, including any changes* which were made in administrative policies and procedures, and any recommendations he may have for legislative action.

Public Law 95-341, August, 11th, 1978 (42 U.S.C. 1996 and 1996a) http://www.nps.gov/history/local-law/fhpl_indianrelreact.pdf

⁵²⁰ The term hybrid practitioner here is used to refer to medicine men and practitioners who use a variety of ceremonies and techniques derived and adapted from Traditional, Native American Church and other practices, often developed through contact with and observation of other healers and practitioners.

official settings or positions were NAC and hybrid practitioners. I can only recall a couple of occasions, where a traditional hataalii was an 'official' presence. This apparent marginalisation may well be by choice, hataalii are trained by apprenticeship and are consulted by reputation. As a traditional apprenticeship may last over a decade, with no resorting to the usual accessories to accelerated learning- notebooks, recorders, computers, there is little in terms of easily digestible knowledge to be imparted to the curious layperson. In the 'traditional mode' diagnosticians, who are commonly seen as possessing the gift of diagnosis which may be inherited, diagnose the causes of the affliction, and medicine men who have acquired the knowledge of a particular ceremony (or ceremonies) through being apprenticed to a medicine man then conduct the appropriate Medicine Way.

With changing employment patterns, a moving away from a subsistence economy and livestock-farming, the demands that training as a medicine man places on an individual are not practicable for the majority of those who may be potentially interested.

At present many of the traditional Medicine Ways are said to have but a small number of practitioners remaining who know how to conduct them, and some of the ceremonies are on the way to extinction. While there are sectors of the population whose adherence to a particular belief-system is unwavering and who would not consider the use of other practitioners, many seem less discriminating and willing to engage with a variety of diagnostic and healing-modes. In part this may reflect on the gradual diminishing and loss of nuanced cultural knowledge, which is leading to differences being perceived in terms of broad rather than finely distinguished categories.

It is conceivable that traditional hataalii, NAC roadmen and hybrid practitioners are all regarded as belonging to the category *Native and traditional*, particularly by the not inconsiderable number of people who grew up away from or without cultural knowledge, and whose main priority it is to find a (re-) entry to a cultural realm that they have missed out on. It is likely that these

individuals will prefer a community or group that is inclusive, accepting and flexible enough to tolerate a novice's faux-pas:

A number of individuals, who all appeared to share comparable experiences of growing up culturally distanced and alienated, oppressed by either the educational establishment promoting the dominant culture's way, or tyrannised by parental aspirations to successfully achieve cultural assimilation, reported similar feelings of acceptance, emotional containment and welcoming regard during their first ceremony: "It was like coming home."

A lot of incentives and initiatives spring from these returnees, who are politicized and keenly motivated agents of all matters pertaining to Native heritage and concerns.

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