

Ethnoautobiography
as
Practice of Radical Presence

Storying the Self in Participatory Visions

[Excerpts from this article are published in
ReVision, 26(2), pp. 4-11.]

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And even when I affirm something, I am still questioning.
Jacques Rigaut¹

“Who are you?” This question by a Native American colleague spawned inquiries and self-reflections that have resulted in a practice of radical presence termed “ethnoautobiography.”² Her question, of course, did not aim for my cv or an account of the existentialist trajectory I saw myself on. It was an attempt to probe the cracks of my White mind and a challenge in order to elicit answers from within an indigenous paradigm. I did not have a tribe, clan or totem for an answer, I barely knew my ancestors beyond the generation of my grandparents and my place of birth seemed remote – yet, as we developed a decolonizing framework for co-teaching Native students, I wanted to be certain that I did not perpetrate conscious or unconscious supremacy, Whiteness, or colonial thinking. So I pursued my answers as my colleague persevered in confronting me with the internal and external losses I felt. Confronting this lack spawned ethnoautobiographical inquiries and storytelling. My answers to the question “who are you?” have evolved over the years, not just by deepening my understanding of the northerly Indo-European peoples and their cultural and political histories and interactions with neighboring Finno-Ugric peoples, but also by deepening my understanding of the contemporary context and need to provide answers outside of the framework of modernity. I write as a person of European and Germanic ancestries, a White man who has settled rather recently on Native American lands. The authorial self of this article does not claim to speak outside of these markers, it speaks rather self-consciously through them. My concern is the White or eurocentered mind and its experiences and descriptions of personal and transpersonal events.

“Who are you?” One strand of answers and inspirations emerges out of the shambles of modernity, the critique and breakdown of assurances about self and other, personal and transpersonal, man and nature, science and inquiry; the ferment of this

¹ Quoted from Minh-ha (1991, p. 121).

² My thanks to Apela Colorado and her supportive tenacity in facilitating my initial answers.

postmodern situation provides release from certain strictures, yet the dangers of cynicism and inflationary ungroundedness require imaginative responses. Therefore the second strand of my answers and inspirations emerges from indigenous contexts that define visionary enterprises of grounded presence in place – undermining anthropological representations, New Age phantasies or idolatrous notions of traditionalism.

For a White man engaged in any spiritual practice and inquiry of this nature – whether as psychologist, educator, writer or in some other role – inevitably makes these ventures and adventures critical, unless he wants to perpetrate essentializing or retro-romantic notions. Decolonizing is thus not just the recovery of the memory traces of indigenous presences, but a creative psychospiritual, moral, political and activist endeavor. It doesn't just join 'the other' in its struggles of decolonization, first and foremost it turns its gaze to the center of colonial processes, upon itself, its process of self-colonization. The imperial gaze of transpersonal anthropology and psychology has its origins in a dissociative and objectifying construction of self and reality, furthering the colonization of peoples, nature and spirituality and providing notions of individualism, resources, sovereignty, etc. that serve the trivial measures of commerce.

Leslie Marmon Silko (1979, p. 213) has pointed out that when Whites "attempt to cast off their Anglo-American values, their Anglo-American origins, they violate a fundamental belief held by the tribal people they desire to emulate: they deny the truth; they deny their history, their very origins. The writing of imitation "Indian" poems then, is pathetic evidence that in more than two hundred years, Anglo-Americans have failed to create a satisfactory identity for themselves."

Indigenous Context

So, why write ethnoautobiography?

- The overarching context for ethnoautobiographical inquiries is the *decolonization* of the centers and the creation of margin upon margin throughout the centers, fissures for the remembrance of tribal origins.

- The *deconstruction of Whiteness* (as eurocentered, hegemonic, colonizing, economically globalizing consciousness) is a more specific context that seeks the end of racialism and identity politics, and their essentialist, and often enough phantastic, notions of origin, hybridity, race, Indians, etc.

- In an *ecological context* this means the remembrance of local knowledge, the province, an indigenist perspective of place and its history that deconstructs the objectification of nature.

- In the context of the *social world* ethnoautobiography facilitates the demise of narcissistic individualism, the emergent modern norm, and resolutions of antagonistic constructions of individual and community; now the inevitable tensions between the two may be catalyzed into an agonistic play supportive of individual vision as well as the multivocality of communal histories; "personal stories are coherent and name individual identities within tribal communities and are not an obvious opposition to communal values" (Vizenor 1994, p. 162); struggles for social justice and equality, *la lotta continua*, find new frames of reference.

- In the context of *gender roles* it means the deconstruction of bipolar categories serving the supremacy of man and the creation not of a vapid androgyny, but the celebration of a multiformous holosexuality.

- In the context of *shamanism*, the oldest stream of endeavors labeled 'transpersonal' by modern minds, ethnoautobiography means the remembrance of the communal cultural context from which visionary experiences and healing stories and ceremonies arise; it facilitates the devaluation of visions that have dollar signs as footnotes and are inflated to comical, yet dangerous proportions.

- In the context of the modernist endeavor of *transpersonal psychology* it means the celebration and incantation of participatory events in ways that deconstruct objectivifying, idolatrous, narcissistic, empiricist and dogmatic interpretations of what appears extraordinary between the blinders of the modern mind. It is within a tragicomedy of pathological epistemological errors that willing mercenary actors seek to satisfy presentday spiritual hunger with various ideological mixtures of fundamentalism, inflation, narcissism, dogmatism and other potent ingredients.

In short, ethnoautobiography seeks to create a space in which indigenous and shamanic notions are no longer presented in a banal imperial parade, but where twisted notions of individualism, transpersonal experiences, nature, gender, and sovereignty can be dissolved with severe humor so that the plural roots of Whiteness can emerge from the shadows. Confronting such multiplicity of indigenous roots can be healing and reassuring, yet the search for true origins is an idolatrous pathology. Uncertainty and ever-changing conversations with visionary presences emerging from creation prevent fundamentalist and dogmatic sales of insurance as tricksters force the hand of reflection and awareness.

Out of decolonizing efforts emerges no certainty of knowledge and self, but the assurance of conversations that nurture. *Criar y dejarse criar* is an Andean notion of visionary presence, "to nurture and be nurtured," mirroring the Quechua *kauan pachari kawsachkauchik, kawsaynuichikunawau, uywaypaqmi wywanakuckkanchik* - "at this time we are sharing with all our family relations, we nurture to be nurtured ourselves" (MACHACA, 1996; MACHACA & MACHACA, 1994). The *Projecto Andino de Tecnologías Campesinas*, PRATEC for short, is dedicated to decolonization and cultural affirmation and embraces notions that nurture the diversity or heterogeneity of life in the *ayllu*, the community consisting of much more than humans.

What happens between the Andean communities of humans, deities and nature is reciprocal dialogue, a relationship which does not assume any distancing and objectification between those dialoguing, but rather an attitude of tenderness and understanding towards the life of the other. Such dialogue does not lead one to a knowledge about the other, but rather to empathize and attune oneself with its mode of being, and in company with that other, to generate and regenerate life. It is a dialogue ... that leads [not to knowledge but] to wisdom. (RENGIFO, 1993, 168, translation by APFFEL-MARGLIN; also Apffel-Marglin with PRATEC 1998)

This is ancient business for tomorrow. Betty Bastien (2003, this issue; 2004) gives descriptions of her understanding of Siksikaitstapi (Blackfoot) cultural practices of participatory visions and communal obligations to the maintenance of alliances with natural presences of spirit(s). Wintu artist Frank LaPena (1999, p. 18) describes how elders "learn the earth's secrets by quietly observing. It is a secret language called knowledge that releases the spirit from stone and heals by tone of voice and by changing sickness into elements that flow instead of blocking life." Visionary presence in place and time affords a precision of imagination that is healing. For people of White mind such

precision has a decolonizing prerequisite lest phantasy and inflation twist what may be healing to serve spurious needs.

Jorge Ferrer (2002) deconstructs the experientialist, empiricist, and perennial assumptions of transpersonal psychology to release the field from its modernist bondage. He suggests that spiritual knowing should be conceived as “creative participation of not only our minds, but also our hearts, bodies, souls, and most vital essence” (p. 115). His participatory vision of human spirituality emerges from a thorough critique of the constructions of what is *trans* to the personal in modern minds. Ferrer’s participatory vision

conceives transpersonal phenomena as (1) *events*, in contrast to intrasubjective experiences; (2) *multilocal*, in that they can arise in different loci, such as an individual, a relationship, a community, a collective identity, or a place; and (3) *participatory*, in that they can invite the generative power and dynamism of all dimensions of human nature to interact with a spiritual power in the cocreation of spiritual worlds. (2002, p. 117)

Ethnoautobiography emerges from the other end, so to speak, a thorough critique of the constructions of the self, of what is *personal* to modern minds and conceives of the self as participatory event. Either approach gives rise to visions of self and transpersonal as participatory events, one inevitably implying the other.

Ethnoautobiography is a visionary and imaginative process that grounds itself in time (smaller and larger planetary and celestial cycles), place (ecology, history of place), history (stories and myths), ancestry, and stories of origin and creation. It takes ethnic origins (genealogy) as one of its pivotal starting points, since it is central to the construction of White selves – after all, the U.S. White self emerged as a contraption emptied by its severance from places of origin and its contrast to the ‘wild Indian’ self and the African slave self. Devoid of many of the traditions and attachments the early settlers left behind, the contemporary self, conceived as well boundaried and masterful, is also empty – an emptiness that the forces of consumerism are eager to fill in our globalizing economy (Cushman 1995).

The shadowy, ephemeral nature of encounters in imaginal realms renders certainty hopeless, yet precision is achieved, now and again, now and then, in the grounding encounters with actual bears, mosquitos, and snakes; with Indian doctors, shamanic literary presences, and card carrying impostors; with colonial atrocities, the viciousness of racism, and the wickedness of economic globalization; with personal wounds, illness, and the treacherous grounds of genealogical roots. Such practice of ethnoautobiography is emancipatory not in the sense of progress, but emancipatory *from the paradigm* of progress. It is a restorative practice not in the sense of the recovery of essentialized roots, but the restoration of a process of balancing through the agonistic play of nurturing conversations. It creates radical presence.

Normative dissociation – splitting from origins, place, time, history – is the central process and shield of the self that modernity created and that is ready to be filled with the virtual everything, the viral simulations and simulacra postmodernity creates in cancerous growth. This is the colonization of what once was a given for participatory selves. Ethnoautobiography as practice of radical presence is designed to release us into the imaginal realms where the traces of our shamanic presences can be recovered. These presences are not transcendent (the only way the dismissive modern mind can conceive of them with its devouring need for dominance and control), they are immanent. Release

from the bondage of modernist conceptions of transpersonal psychology and the modernist constructions of the self is the revenge of the other, as Baudrillard (1993) would have it.

That revenge may be seen in the way in which the Whites have been mysteriously made aware of the disarray of their own culture, the way in which they have been overwhelmed by an ancestral torpor and are now succumbing little by little to the grip of 'dreamtime.' This reversal is a worldwide phenomenon. It is now becoming clear that *everything* we once thought dead and buried, everything we thought left behind for ever by the ineluctable march of universal progress, is not dead at all, but on the contrary likely to return – not as some archaic or nostalgic vestige (all our indefatigable museumification notwithstanding), but with a vehemence and a virulence that are modern in every sense – and to reach the very heart of our ultra-sophisticated but ultra-vulnerable systems, which it will easily convulse from within without mounting a frontal attack. Such is the destiny of radical otherness – a destiny that no homily of reconciliation and no apology for difference is going to alter. (p. 138)

Reviving radical otherness in ourselves and liberating participatory events from the shackles of modernity to serve an imaginative sovereignty and social justice is a humbling endeavor that requires compassion and patience. The touchstone of the precision of our imagination is as much in the release of spirit from the stone as in the release of radical otherness within ourselves, as confrontations with colonial Whiteness, sexism, ecocide become part of our healing presence. "Transcendence of the (un)known opens out onto a limitless field. Everything remains to be done" (Minh-ha 1991, p. 145).

The Self That is Not Modern

"Who am I? And who are you?" Responses to these questions have varied across the ages, not just as far as content is concerned, but also as regards the *process*, by which individuals have arrived at their answers, the *qualities and dimensions* of self inquiry. The ancient Hebrew self was committed to partnership with a particular God and the lines between the individual and Yahweh and the tribe are not always clear. The selves of the protagonists in Aeschylus' *Oresteia* are not experiencing inner conflicts in the way modern individuals do, and neither are their selves firmly bounded. Detienne (1996, p. 135) discusses *The Masters of Truth in Archaic Greece*, and how "in the wake of the magi and ecstatic individuals, the philosophers claimed the ability to attain and reveal a truth that was at once the 'homologue and the antithesis' of religious truth," a reflection of the emergence of a new sense of self as "mythical thought shifted to rational thought." Cushman has argued that "the masterful, bounded self of today, with few allegiances and many subjective 'inner' feelings, is a relatively new player on the historical stage" (1995, p. 357). The modern self we are so familiar with is of rather recent origin and probably only two hundred or so years old. The term 'autobiography' emerges in the English language at the beginning of the 19th century. As an expression of the modern self it is an equally recent event, the self-conscious telling and creating of who we think we are and how we would like to be seen. Autobiographies provide access to understanding the social constructions of the self and a means of creative revisioning.

It is easy to see that contemporary identities are challenged as economic globalization, the internet and other forces impact how we see ourselves and others, often leaving the sense of identity threatened, if not in shambles. We only need to think

of the fundamentalist and essentializing solutions that lead to bloody wars or the disorientation caused by the lack of local attachments, the indiscriminate inundation with global information, or experiences of strange-seeming cultures flooding the familiar. Identities, more often than not, are no longer secure and anxiety is one of the consequences. How to fill the voids created in our selves and in our spiritual lives?

What does it mean to conceive of spiritual or transpersonal events not as individualistic, but participatory events that are creative in nature as human potentialities are explored in multifarious ways? Who is the self participating in these events? How should we tell our stories in order to impede imperialistic relationships with spirit(s) and to decolonize the spiritual? Transpersonal psychologists are self-conscious about transpersonal experiences, but should we also be just as self-conscious about the ways in which we narrate the stories of our selves? The beginnings of transpersonal psychology seem conditioned upon the modernist conception of the well-bounded and masterful self that appropriates spiritual and other realities. A participatory understanding of spiritual events challenges not only their conceptualization, but also, and maybe even more profoundly, our notions of self.

Narrating the self, telling the stories of our identity, or autobiographies, are as much personal as they are visionary and spiritual as well as political acts. What are stories of self that implicitly foster racism, sexism, identity politics, and fundamentalism or idolatry? What qualities of storytelling help us to navigate our way amidst our postmodern challenges and present crises? Which qualities of autobiography are emancipatory, restorative, and further a grounded postmodern imagination? Which stories support social engagement and engage our personal multidimensionality that has been thought asunder by modernity? Today participatory visions of transpersonal theory arise in White minds out of the crisis of modernity and the crisis of transpersonal psychology as modern enterprise, yet they have an ancient imprimatur. Indigenous peoples to this day embody social systems based on a participatory spiritual understanding of reality. Far from vanished and dead, they may provide us with inspirations about decolonizing self stories that need to be told, stories that emancipate us from the colonizing strictures of modernism and its addiction to progress; they may help restore a paradigm of balancing, a notion different from essentializing Edenic phantasies of balance. The participatory visions of indigenous peoples have shown an almost unbelievable capacity to accommodate and dialogue with a wide spectrum of spiritual and religious traditions. The presence of trickster and clown figures seems to be a crucial ingredient in facilitating the process orientation that prevents idolatry and dogmatic closures. Understanding how autobiographical stories are told in indigenous contexts can thus be enlightening, especially since native stories seem to address major contemporary challenges – connection to place, traditional ecological knowledge, connection to community, etc. Not that they necessarily resolve them, but they provide avenues to retell our selves so that they may influence our cognitive functioning in a significant way.

In order to develop a quality of presence akin to the practices of indigenous peoples, it seems necessary that we start where we are, i.e., facing our postmodern malaise, and avoiding such alternatives as nostalgic, folkloric romanticism or nationalistic and religious fundamentalisms. Learning from what indigenous peoples exemplify we, as participants in colonial traditions, may similarly engage in

decolonizing enterprises that indigenous peoples have developed as part of their resistance and survivance, working from the centers of dominance. Deconstructing the modern well-bounded self structures and developing visionary conversations and stories may help dissolve the identity politics that fuel wars and violence. We may now find reassurance in storytelling that celebrates visionary sovereignty in the creation of transpersonal events that leave acquisitive modern selves breathless. Ethnoautobiography is designed as a form of inquiry that deconstructs and assures as the self discovers its native freedom to tell stories in community that provoke the extensions of place, history, and spirits into the self.

The autobiographical understanding of Indigenous Peoples is, it seems, automatically and inevitably *ethnoautobiographical* (or reflective of a sense of self embedded in community). When looking at novels and autobiographies this becomes immediately apparent. Examples are Arnold Krupat's collections *Native American Autobiography* (1994), *Here First* (2000, with Swann), and *I Tell You Now* (1987, with Swann); or Leslie Marmon Silko's *Ceremony* (1977) and *Storyteller* (1981); or N. Scott Momaday's *The Names* (1976), *The Way to Rainy Mountain* (1969), and *House Made of Dawn* (1966); or Gerald Vizenor's *Interior Landscapes* (1990), *Dead Voices* (1992), and *Hiroshima Bugi* (2003). Spending time with Indigenous Peoples has made me aware of the social construction and storied nature of my self, identity, individuality, or personhood *beyond* the notions developed by eurocentered theorists. This led me to contrast the White modernist constructions of self (a racist enterprise) with qualities that define Indigenous self-understanding. Ethnoautobiography emphasizes an anti-essentialist understanding of self and identity by exploring communal and narrative constructions and presentations of identities.

Arnold Krupat, scholar of Native American autobiographies, has observed that

Native American conceptions of the self tend toward integrative rather than oppositional relations with others. Whereas the modern West has tended to define personal identity as involving the successful mediation of an opposition between the individual and society, Native Americans have instead tended to define themselves as persons by successfully integrating themselves into the relevant social groupings – kin, clan, band, etc. – of their respective societies. On the Plains, to be sure, glory and honor were intensely sought out by male warriors who wanted, individually, to be “great men,” but even on the Plains, any personal greatness was important primarily for the good of “the people.” These conceptions may be viewed as “synecdochic,” i.e., based on part-to-whole relations, rather than “metonymic,” i.e., as in the part-to-part relations that most frequently dominate Euramerican autobiography. (Krupat 1994, p. 4)

That egocentric individualism associated with the names of Byron or Rousseau, the cultivation of originality and differentness, was never legitimated by native cultures, to which celebration of the hero-as-solitary would have been incomprehensible. (Krupat 1985, 29)

The emphasis of Native autobiographical stories is thus not merely on interiority and individualism, but just as much on the embeddedness in the whole – community, the stories and histories community carries, places. Krupat's notions have not gone uncontested, Vizenor notes that

natives are not as communal as he might want them to be in theory ... The many ceremonies, shamanic visions, practices, and experiences in native communities are so highly individualistic,

diverse, and unique, that romantic reductions of tradition and community are difficult to support, even in theory ... The vision is a separation and disassociation from ordinary time and space, and from traditions. And the recognition of native visions and nicknames must be earned in communities. That, the recognition of a native presence, is a continuous tease in stories. What is mistaken to be tradition is a visionary sovereignty. (Vizenor & Lee 1999, p. 62)

Notions of ‘tradition’ have suffered greatly from genocidal onslaughts and the acquisitive gaze of anthropology, a reification that cannot indulge the self-affirmative, liberative, and emancipatory movements of imaginal presences.

Dorothy Lee, in 1950, used linguistic analyses to explore notions of self in Wintu culture. “When speaking about Wintu culture, we cannot speak of the self *and* society, but rather of the self *in* society” (1959, p. 132). “A study of the grammatical expression of identity, relationship and otherness, shows that the Wintu conceive of the self not as strictly delimited or defined, but as a concentration, at most, which gradually fades and gives place to the other. Most of what is other for us, is for the Wintu completely or partially or upon occasion, identified with the self” (1959, p. 134). Shweder and Bourne (1984, p. 195) have shown that “different peoples not only adopt distinct world views, but that these world views have a decisive influence on their cognitive functioning.” This leads to questions concerning the relationship between identity and transpersonal experiences. I was raised far from Wintun notions of self. I see my writing as attempts to recapture an entry into this quality of self process by way of attention to dreams and visions as much as by way of critical socio-political reflections in the telling of stories.

Ethnoautobiographical inquiry and storytelling explores consciousness as the network of representations held by individuals from a “subjective perspective,” and brings them into inquiring and creative conversation with “objective factors” related to identity construction, neither perspective constant, but part of historical developments (including distinctions between subjectivity and objectivity themselves). Such conversation requires “exact imagination,” Adorno’s *exakte Phantasie*, the opposite of New Age undisciplined subjectivity (cf. Adorno 1970; Nichol森 1997; Vizenor 2003, pp. 36-7). Rather than putting Native and Eurocentered self construction in an evolutionary context, it views them as critical choices impacted by particular notions of politics, psychology, and storytelling. This type of decolonizing inquiry is a critical acknowledgment and exploration of our postmodern situation in which the gains of the discourse of modernity are confronted with its shadows and the critiques from the margins. The postmodern currents in eurocentered social practices connect in interesting ways with indigenous cultures. As Gerald Vizenor (1989, x) has pointed out, “oral cultures have never been without a postmodern condition that enlivens stories and ceremonies, or without trickster signatures and discourse on narrative chance – a comic utterance and adventure to be heard or read.” By contrast, “modernism is a disguise, a pretense of individualism and historicism” (*ibidem*). “The trick, in seven words, is to *elude historicism, racial representations, and remain historical* (Vizenor 1988, xi).

If we acknowledge the narrative instability and productive fluidity of the self as creative unfolding not only in a restrictive individualistic sense, but inclusive of dimensions beyond a mere psychological understanding, then we are challenged to create our narrative presence in a way that takes origins, time, and place into account. This is a spiritual and trans-personal inquiry into individual consciousness as it functions in particular social roles, situations, and places (trans-personal, marked by a dash,

includes the domains of transpersonal psychology, but beyond that the ecological, moral, historical and other domains of the person that are the subject matter of ethnoautobiography). Deconstructing the idolatry of the masterful self simultaneously deflates the rarification of transpersonal experiences – imaginal presences are a creative source of selves expanding, yet cut to size.

Ethnoautobiography Defined

Notions of ethnoautobiography and autoethnography, using these and similar terms, have emerged in recent years as part of interdisciplinary courses and classes addressing issues of race, multiculturalism, etc. as well as in the field of literary criticism (e.g., Shirinian 2001; Ellis and Bochner 2000). I define *ethnoautobiography* as creative self-exploratory writing (or oral presentation) that grounds itself in the ethnic, cultural, historical, ecological, and gender background of the author. Part of such writing is the investigation of hybridity, categorical borderlands and transgressions, and the multiplicity of (hi)stories carried outside and inside the definitions and discourses of the dominant society of a particular place and time. As creative and evocative writing and storytelling, ethnoautobiography explores consciousness as the network of representations held by individuals from a subjective perspective, and brings them into inquiring conversation with objective factors related to identity construction.

The term *ethnoautobiography* highlights issues of ethnicity. The reasons for this choice of term should already be apparent and will be explored further below; it should be seen, particularly, in the context of the history of self which shows that the modernist or White self emerged using ethnic self-denials. This emphasis is, if we use an indigenous sense of presence for the interpretation of the *ethno*- part of the word, an umbrella for issues of culture, place (ecology), gender, history, and time. Osage Native Carter Revard (quoted in Nabokov 2002, p. 85) stated that “the ‘wild’ Indian was tied to land, to people, to origins and way of life by every kind of human ordering we can imagine. ‘History’ and ‘Myth’ and ‘Identity’ are not three separate matters, here, but three aspects of one human being.” This is a good illustration of what ethnoautobiography is inquiring about. Consequently, its application means to inquire about the beginning place (our ancestry or ancestries in the sense of specific genealogy); ethnicity; inquiry about indigenous roots; history of place; gender; place and ecology; culture; origin stories and creation myths; and finally, with encouragement for staunch tentativeness, all this may be woven together into some temporary closure – only to be woven again and again, to be made new in the next telling. In a formal sense the dimensions just listed constitute the protocol or necessary and minimal ingredients for ethnoautobiographical explorations, without their presence in an indigenous sense is not an emergent potential.

Ethnoautobiographical inquiry emphasizes the narrative nature of human beings and works to deconstruct essentialist notions of self, other, truth, origin, history, ethnicity, authenticity, colonialism, Christianity, emotion (*true* feeling), and similar concepts and judgments. This hermeneutic understanding presupposes that we are not unfolding from some presumed true essence, but constitute somatic interactive presences as human beings in time and place – imaginative acts of survival grounded in observation. We are entangled in a multiplicity of stories and carry multiple voices. This, inevitably, leads to awareness of hybridity, trans-gressions between stories, and

experiences of uneasy fits of categorical choices and ascriptions. Neither cultures nor individuals are unitary or monistic phenomena; they carry a diversity of stories, attributions, definitions, histories, etc. that may be incorporated in individuals or between which individuals may transgress or merely digress. Acknowledging hybridity opens up what has been called a “Third Space.” Exploring it “we may elude the politics of polarity and emerge as the others of our selves” (Bhabha 1995, p. 209). Presence arises out of the fissures between polarities or the *Ginnunga gap*, the creative gap of gaps of the Old Norse peoples, the meeting of fire and ice. The colonization of realms set aside for empiricist governance thus gives way to human presence in the imaginal.

Acknowledging uniqueness and individuality, together with our entwinement in stories and conditions larger than a monadic or individualistic self likes to acknowledge, creates presence. In fact, ethnoautobiographical inquiry can be seen as one of the possible injunctive definitions for coming-to-presence. This is not the revival of something past, but an evocation that breaks open the pathologies of modernity that are in the process of destroying what remains as its achievements. Mutuality, community, historical awareness, and egalitarian politics are among the conditions in which we can develop practices of embodiment that supercede essentialist notions of authenticity or self-actualization. The creation and creativity of such presence is the confrontation with our current postmodern challenges and opportunities as well as the remembrance of the postmodern condition of indigenous roots. Creative writing and oral presentations are important tools for ethnoautobiographical investigations. They obviate any essentialist understanding of self. As Vizenor notes, “the autobiographical narrative must be ironic; otherwise some narratives would be more natural and essential than others” (1999, p. 178). While the need for irony certainly pertains to inflationary assertions of the modernist self, narratives deconstructive of Whiteness and reconstructive of indigenous roots find much of their anti-essentialist telling in their persistent critical stance and honesty regarding the subjectivity of ethnoautobiographical stories and their reconstructive, imaginative evocation of older presences for the future. Amidst pain and tears, laughter at White grandiosities, whether at the grand inventories intent on mooring participatory events in categorical schemata or at the romantic representations of the other, will help to burst narcissistic bubbles.

Ethnoautobiography is not autobiography. By virtue of its coordinates (history, myth, place, identity, etc.) it inevitably inquires into the definitions and discourses of the dominant society of a particular place and time and thus questions them (the German *hinterfragen*, to question or *inquire behind* the appearances, provides a good image). It does not merely comply with the matrices offered, but works with them creatively and critically. Ethnoautobiography explores consciousness from a subjective perspective and, importantly, relates it to objective factors – thus it is also a moral and politico-historical discourse, enlivened and enspirited by the subjectivity of the teller.

This discourse can be situated using Krupat’s (2002) and Rabinow’s (1986) helpful distinctions between nationalistic, indigenist, and cosmopolitan stances (originally developed to identify ethnographical approaches as well as perspectives on Native American literatures). As decolonizing practice ethnoautobiography engages a conversation of indigenist and cosmopolitan perspectives, i.e., local knowledge, ethnic epistememes, and place as sources of knowledge and value on one hand, and on the other a comparative and critical cosmopolitanism that approaches worldliness, universality, and

internationalism in response to Euro-centered supremacist notions. Thus we may imaginatively inquire into self narratives outside the bounds and strictures of “the West” or “the Occident.” Our increasing planetary awareness needs to find mediation in our rootedness, i.e. the capacity to be engaged with the conundra created by our simultaneous presence in province and cosmopolis. It is in this way that we may be able to travel with roots and address issues of sovereignty imaginatively, as, for example, Vizenor (1998, p. 190) suggests by noting in the Native American context that, “clearly, the notions of native sovereignty must embrace more than mere reservation territory”:

The sovereignty of motion is mythic, material, and visionary, not mere territoriality, in the sense of colonialism and nationalism. Native transmotion is an original natural union in the stories of emergence and migration that relate humans to an environment and to the spiritual and political significance of animals and other creations. Monotheism is dominance over nature; transmotion is natural reason, and native creation with other creatures. (Vizenor 1998, p. 182-3)

This notion of sovereignty is epistemologically different from eurocentered political thinking inflicted upon others. Engaging with it as non-indigenous people leads us back to the consideration of the tribal origins of the White mind, part of the decolonizing moves of ethnoautobiography.

Memory and Imagination

Autobiographies and memoirs are life stories that may or may not, depending on the life and work of the author, address the various dimensions of ethnoautobiography. When the French feminist thinker Hélène Cixous writes about *rootprints*, she describes what can be considered the beginning point of an ethnoautobiographical inquiry:

What constitutes the originary earth, the native country of my writing is a vast expanse of time and lands where my long, my double childhood unfolds. I have a childhood with two memories. My own childhood was accompanied and illustrated by the childhood of my mother. The German childhood of my mother came to recount and resuscitate itself in my childhood like an immense North in my South. With Omi, my grandmother, the North went back even further. Consequently, although I am profoundly Mediterranean of body, of appearance, of *jouissances*, all my imaginary affinities are Nordic. (Cixous 1997, p. 181)

The *Albums and legends* chapter of her book, from which the above quote is taken, touches upon numerous themes that could be points of departure for ethnoautobiographical writing. In this autobiographical statement she anchors the creation of her feminist critical presence to the originary earth and native countries of her hybridity.

Paul John Eakin (1985, pp. 5-6) has pointed out:

Adventurous twentieth-century autobiographers ... no longer believe that autobiography can offer a faithful and unmediated reconstruction of a historically verifiable past; instead, it expresses the play of the autobiographical act itself, in which the materials of the past are shaped by memory and imagination to serve the needs of present consciousness. Autobiography in our time is increasingly understood as both an art of memory and an art of imagination; indeed, memory and imagination become so intimately complementary in the autobiographical act that it is usually impossible to distinguish between them in practice.

Ethnoautobiography is in this sense a particular act of the imagination that strives to overcome modern strictures and re-imagine a tribal or native sense of self-actualization

and sovereignty as it investigates critically and self-critically “the needs of present consciousness.” In the process it may develop generative and playful clearings that interrupt the seemingly self-destructive forces of modernist limitations in a global world where imagination rarely seems to have roots and the celebration of transpersonal experiences ever so frequently serves the brightly colored spinnaker sails of the ego.

In her poem *Eastern War Time*, Adrienne Rich (1991, p. 44) illustrates that such imagination, if pursued in its multiplicity and hybridity, is likely a far cry from a retro-romantic return to roots:

Memory says: Want to do right? Don't count on me.
I'm a canal in Europe where bodies are floating
I'm a mass grave I'm the life that returns
I'm a table set with room for the Stranger
I'm a field with corners left for the landless
I'm accused of child-death of drinking blood
I'm a man-child praising God he's a man
I'm a woman bargaining for a chicken
I'm a woman who sells for a boat ticket
I'm a family dispersed between night and fog
I'm an immigrant tailor who says *A coat
is not a piece of cloth only* I sway
in the learning of the master-mystics
I have dreamed of Zion I've dreamed of world revolution
I have dreamed that my children could live at last like others
I have walked the children of others through ranks of hatred
I'm a corpse dredged from a canal in Berlin
a river in Mississippi I'm a woman standing
with other women dressed in black
on the streets of Haifa, Tel Aviv, Jerusalem
there is spit on my sleeve there are phonecalls in the night
I am a woman standing in line for gasmasks
I stand on a road in Ramallah with naked face listening
I am standing here in your poem unsatisfied
lifting my smoky mirror

Here the awareness of history, myth and identity are, indeed, not three separate matters, but are three aspects of one human being – the remembrance of storytelling that supercedes nostalgic proclamations of essentialist origins. Pizer (1995, p. 3) notes that “the grounds for this dismissal [of origins or *Ursprungsphilosophie*] are quite easy to summarize: the pursuit of origin is regarded as nostalgic, as a search for authoritarian ‘first principles,’ as univocal, and as an attempt to attain philosophical closure and thereby foreclose debate entirely.” In contradistinction to this perspective he assumes that “it can be demonstrated that all individual domains are inherently intertwined at their origin – that no construct is pristine, singular, or temporally privileged but always already linked to other peoples, other languages, other texts *in its site or sites of origin* – then the supremacism associated with philosophies of origin will be turned on its head” (p. 6). Ethnoautobiographical inquiries into roots and origins assume exactly such multiplicity, multivocality, or plurality in our beginning points. Their critical celebration in imaginal stories creates the potential for native presence.

The crossblood Anishinaabe author Gerald Vizenor (1984, p. 7) asserts this anti-essentialist approach from a native perspective:

The woodland creation stories are told from visual memories and ecstatic strategies, not from scriptures. In the oral tradition, the mythic

origins of tribal people are creative expressions, original eruptions in time, not a mere recitation or a recorded narrative in grammatical time. The teller of stories is an artist, a person of wit and imagination, who relumes the diverse memories of the visual past into the experiences and metaphors of the present. The past is familiar enough in the circles of the seasons, woodland places, lake and rivers, to focus a listener on an environmental metaphor and an intersection where the earth started in mythic time, where a trickster or a little woodland person stopped to imagine the earth. The tribal creation takes place at the time of the telling in the oral tradition; the variations in mythic stories are the imaginative desires of tribal artists.

Adrienne Rich writes, “I sway in the learnings of the master-mystics ... I have dreamed of Zion ... I have dreamed of world revolution,” and Keeshkemun, an orator of the Anishinaabe crane totem, proclaims to the English colonizer at the beginning of a resistance speech: “I am a bird who rises from the earth, and flies far up, into the skies, out of human sight; but though not visible to the eye, my voice is heard from afar, and resounds over the earth.” His speech was “strategic, diplomatic, and literary, evidence of native transmotion and survivance” (Vizenor 1998, 120) – a deliberate act of noncompliance and native self-affirmation. The presence of trickster figures, *naanabozho* in Vizenor’s writing or Loki in the Old Norse stories, is an inevitable and mandatory ingredient in ethnoautobiographical creations.

“To Tell a Story...”

The remembrance of a trans-personal self woven into history, myth, place, gender, and ancestral lines may thus be survivance, resistance, truth-telling, and imaginative inquiry that narrates freely and narrates for the sake of freedom. This sovereign self exits from dissociative White machinations and enters osmotic processes in the imaginal realms of immanent spirit(s). The certainty of transpersonal categories dissolves into the ironic, tricksterish, and humorous play of polymorphous participatory events. As Homi Bhabha has asserted: “The right to narrate is not simply a linguistic act; it is also a metaphor for the fundamental human interest in freedom itself, the right to be heard, to be recognized and represented.” N. Scott Momaday (1975/1987, p. 566) has written that “to tell a story in the proper way, to hear a story told in the proper way – this is very old and sacred business, and it is very good.” What might this *proper way* in the sense of indigenous propriety mean? Why would it be *very old and sacred* business? Why would it be *very good*? What is a non-native person to do?

To tell our individual story in the proper way, to my White mind, means speaking of myth, history, and individuality; it means bringing together our life stories with dimensions larger than an isolating self; it means being crane or the woman standing in line for gasmasks. To tell our story in the proper way means imagining ourselves with something resembling an indigenous process of awareness – the freedom to be an artist aware of indigenous roots. Asserting this freedom to narrate ourselves means taking on the obligation to overcome obstacles to our trans-personal imagination. It means decolonization as much as self-actualization (not as the unfolding of a preconceived, essential true way of being, but as a continuing, unceasing struggle to find authenticity and integrity *within* communities, places, and histories, i.e., to find better and more creatively accurate expressions for ourselves). It means re-imagining ourselves as part of an ongoing creation story continuing from the mythic realms our ancestors envisioned,

imagining them for today. It means to be free not in an individualistic sense, but as an individual bearing obligations for liberating narratives grounded in time, place, and social conditions. It is the practice of a particular form of socially engaged spirituality in which the self practices embodied narratives borne by and bearing upon its spiritual and social entanglements.

Murderous Romanticism

The *ethno-* part of the term ethnoautobiography is significant not only as a pointer to an indigenous process of presence and creation beyond folklore and romanticism, but also as a marker for pervasively recurrent contemporary challenges. In many places essentialist constructions of ethnic identity continue to be a hot political issue or an issue that can quickly heat up and ignite.

Identity is bloody business. Religion, nationality, or race may not be the primary causes of war and mass murder. These are more likely to be tyranny, or greed for territory, wealth, and power. But “identity” is what gets the blood boiling, what makes people do unspeakable things to their neighbors. It is the fuel used by agitators to set whole countries on fire. When the world is reduced to a battle between “us and them,” Germans and Jews, Hindus and Muslims, Catholics and Protestants, Hutus and Tutsis, only mass murder will do, for “we” can only survive if “they” are slaughtered. Before we kill them, “they” must be stripped of our common humanity, by humiliating them, degrading them, and giving them numbers instead of names. (Buruma 2002, p. 12)

Ethnoautobiography is an inquiry into identity issues that invites critical reflection on the ways in which ethnicity (in the context of gender and class) has been abused in chauvinistic or nationalistic ways. It seeks to facilitate a discourse that overcomes pernicious identity politics and that addresses the current legitimization crises (the breakdown of so many modern convictions, assumptions, and assurances) resulting in ethnic narratives of dominance and imbalance.

How does ethnoautobiography situate itself in these crises of legitimation? Habermas (1973) discussed contemporary systems and identity crises. Political systems may undergo crises of rationality and legitimacy. It is in the motivational crisis of a socio-cultural system that ethnicity may become bloody political business in order to address, cope with, or survive economic crises, crises of rationality or crises of legitimacy. The failure of social systems to generate sufficient motivation for participation in the political system, education, and employment may be covered up by consumerism. Alternatively, disenfranchised groups may resort to ethnic identity politics in their search for motivation for participation in the social body and survival. Dominant powers may use ethnicity as a way to maintain the motivational force of those in power while discriminating or persecuting those of another ethnicity. The suppression of historical memories may contribute to such crises of motivation as it may fuel the eruption of conflicts charged by ethnic agendas.

Ethnoautobiography as individual or co-operative inquiry situates itself at the intersection of this motivational crises not only with an intent to overcome irrational abuses of ethnic narratives, but to facilitate the constructive use of ethnic narratives for emancipation and egalitarian cultural relationships. Rather than surrendering to regressive chauvinistic abuses of ethnic identity, it addresses the crisis of modernity evidencing the limitations of scientism and bourgeois traditional guiding values. It seeks

to inquire into and create narratives of identity that do not disconnect or dissociate rational inquiry from the felt experience of personhood. Instead of nonparticipatory consciousness it suggests, remembers, and facilitates a process of knowing and being engaged in participatory consciousness. The systems and identity crises identified by Habermas - whether we look at them in the context of globalization a.k.a U.S. or corporate imperialism, political apathy, or militarism – require solutions that present discourses, whether political or psychological, are scarcely able to prefigure. It may therefore be constructive to engage with a quality of discourse that occurs outside the modernity and postmodernity that eurocentered societies are in the grip of (analogous to the sway a psychological complex may hold over an individual). The power of this particular quality of discourse stems from a dissociative and addictive process that perpetrates particular notions of self, other, progress, science, psychology, etc. and obviates moral, political, and psychological inquiries grounded in a larger sense of self. The sense of il-legitimacy and the concomitant motivation crises result, among other things, from a sense of self that can neither bear nor constructively resolve the challenges modernity is up against.

Humanistic and transpersonal psychology, new age shamanism, eastern psychologies, and similar self-actualizing endeavors (mostly essentializing in their approach) are attempts to address contemporary pathologies and immoral practices in eurocentered societies. Yet, commonly they remain part of the individualistic framework of modernity and postmodernity that has generated the contemporary crises of motivation and identity. Overcoming these limitations while preserving the liberating intent means leaving the individualistic eurocentered framework. Contemporary pathologies can only be healed through narratives that include moral discourse as prerequisite. Healing as emancipatory communal discourse requires critical rationality and ideology critique as much as it requires aesthetic, emotional, somatic, and spiritual complements. Not one without the other.

Dion-Buffalo and Mohawk (1994) have provided an analysis distinguishing the two modern discourses from the discourse of Indigenous Peoples. In addition, we can distinguish a fourth discourse: the recovery of indigenous mind. I am presenting the following table because it helps to locate psychological ethnoautobiographical explorations as political and moral discourse. At the presumed end of modernity peoples of eurocentered mind have not only the well established deconstructive postmodern choices, but an additional postmodern choice that combines the constructive potential of postmodernity not only with important gains of modernity, but also the suppressed potential of indigenous understandings of self and society.

The table gives broad catchwords identifying these four qualities of discourse: modern, postmodern, indigenous, and recovered indigenous.

- The first column, on the left, points to the discourse of modernity, the dominant process in eurocentered civil societies since the French and American Revolutions and the Enlightenment, Idealist, and Romantic philosophers, artists, and scientists. Dion-Buffalo and Mohawk talk about participants in this discourse as the “good subjects” who believe in the projects of modernity.
- The second column, on the left, points to the more recent oppositional or critical or deconstructive voices within the eurocentered framework, the postmodern thinkers. The postmodern critics of various stripes can be called the “bad subjects” of modernity, since

they have lost confidence in the project of modernity. This oppositional pair is part of the eurocentered historical trajectory.

- In the third column, on the right, we find catchwords for the process that attempts to reconnect with indigenous roots (one of the contemporary postmodern choices). This critique of modernity is distinct from, and critical of, postmodern voices based in eurocentered traditions in that it finds its context with indigenous traditions and their critique of colonialism, eurocentrism, missionization, etc. Ethnoautobiographical inquiries can be understood as part of this consciousness process. Participants in these discourses can be considered “non-subjects of modernity” in the sense that they are outside agreement or disagreement with the discourse of modernity; it does not matter to their own discourse (if we don’t insist on certain notions of purity, then we can conceive of such a discourse, historically difficult as it is at the present time).
- And in the final column, on the far right, we find descriptors for the indigenous consciousness process.

The latter two columns are outside of the eurocentered process or attempt to be outside. The first two columns on the left, modernity and postmodernity, are part of the eurocentered process of dissociative consciousness, while the two columns on the right are part of the indigenous process of participatory consciousness. We may argue that these two pairs constitute different qualities of consciousness, dissociative versus integrative. Emphasizing such qualitative difference seems not only reasonable, but also useful given the differences in social practice, embodiment, and self narration.

It may be important to keep in mind that the following overview is provided from an indigenous perspective, the stance described, for example, by Dion-Buffalo and Mohawk (1994). Catchwords and overviews, it seems inevitably, make something seem simple or even simplistic, while in fact, there is neither a monolithic eurocentered nor a monolithic indigenous discourse and the plural use of discourse is intended to point to the presence of deviant and minority discourses. The imperative for critical deconstructive thinking applies to this particular presentation just as it applies in other arenas. Ethnoautobiography is an inquiry that facilitates personal healing as much as cultural critique.

| | |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| Eurocentered discourses | Indigenous discourses |
| dissociative consciousness | participatory or integrative consciousness |
| opposing pair | integrative pair |
| first and second process | third process |

| MODERN CONSCIOUSNESS | CRITIQUES OF MODERN CONSCIOUSNESS | RECOVERING INDIGENOUS CONSCIOUSNESS | INDIGENOUS CONSCIOUSNESS |
|---|--|--|---|
| “good subject” of modernity | “bad subject” of modernity | developing non-subject | non-subject of modernity |
| unconscious of participation in the phenomena | breakdown of un-conscious participation | regaining conscious participation in the phenomena | conscious participation (integrative states of consciousness) |
| singular Truth | multiple truths | re-contextualizing truths and Truth locally & historically | locally & narratively contextualized truths and Truth |
| his-story | her-stories story revealed as his-stories | recovering female aspects of stories; remembering multiformous gender identities | multiply engendered stories: Freyja-Freyr, Nerthus-Njörðr, twins, metamorphoses, spirit marriages |
| belief in objective reality | assertion of narrative realities | recovering ancestral narrative realities & anchoring them in present ecology & historical moment | communally & locally anchored narrative realities |
| emphasis on rationality (rationalism) & science (scientism) | recovery of reasonableness | reasonableness | reasonableness |
| imperial, masterful, | non-imperial self, | re-connecting self | connected self |

| | | | |
|--|--|---|---|
| bounded self | unbounding | | |
| individualism | individualism | intentional communities | natural communities |
| belief in progress | progress (albeit questioned in appearance) | linearity struggling for balance | belief in balancing, rather than progressing |
| emphasis on monocausal, linear explanations | variegated linearity, multicausal, systemic explanations | cyclical linearity | cyclical linearity as explanatory mode |
| dissociation from nature, community, integrative states of consciousness | suffering from dissociation | recovering participation in the phenomena | participation & integrative states of consciousness |
| colonialism, globalization, missionization | post-colonialism | decolonization | beside, outside & inside of colonization; sovereign imagination of self & community |
| MODERNITY | POSTMODERNITY | | INDIGENOUS |

In accordance with the phenomena alluded to in this table we can roughly distinguish three types of relationship to participation:

1) Unconsciousness of participation in the phenomena during modernity (left column); the splitting from nature, feminine, spirit(s), etc.; ongoing, thus pathological, cultural or normative dissociation.

2) Awakening to the awareness of participation in the phenomena in postmodern, deconstructivist, and systems theories as well as in the recovery of indigenous mind process (middle two columns). This includes the various oppositional movements such as the human potential movement, feminism, the ecological movement, transpersonal psychology, neo-shamanism, decolonization, critical theory, etc. (discourses that are obviously in disagreement about how to oppose, overcome or sublimate the limitations and possibilities of modernity). Ethnoautobiography is a process to develop a larger sense of self with greater awareness of its participation in the phenomena, not solely as psychological narrative, but also as political and moral discourse.

3) Continuing awareness, observation, and celebration of participation in the phenomena among people in their indigenous mind (right column). This discourse addresses issues

such as genocide and imperialism, or eurocentered notions of democracy and human rights based on a participatory discourse.

These three qualities of participation in the phenomena constitute, so to speak, meta-horizons within which the variety of social and individual horizons are constituted.

It may be important to recall that the modern self that we are so familiar with is of rather recent origin and probably only two hundred or so years old. The masterful, bounded self of our individualistic social landscape is a white social construction that serves the consumerist needs of the current market economy. Its vacuity emerged from the more community oriented earliest settlers and into contradistinction to the “wild” selves of Native American and the African American slave selves (cf. Cushman, 1995). The earliest origins of this dissociative schismogenesis of the self can be traced to Indo-European early history, the agricultural developments in the fertile crescent, and an increasingly abstracting ideology that developed with the help of Christianity and the rise of Enlightenment Philosophy (to give a complex story in a nutshell; see Kremer 2000 for further detail; see also Diamond 1999). The historical contingency of who we understand ourselves to be is inevitably a central factor in ethnoautobiographical inquiries.

As the various postmodern challenges (crises of identity and motivation as well as economics and politics) result in the beginning breakdown of eurocentered confidence and hubris a twofold recognition emerges: the realization that indigenous peoples continue to exist contemporaneously without ever succumbing entirely to the colonial forces arising from the grand narrative; and secondly, that locality, historical moment, cultural roots may matter more than Enlightenment Philosophy allowed us to acknowledge. The critical power of indigenous discourses emerges both from implicit and explicit notions of knowledge trade (cross-cultural exchange) and its communal nature (different from the relativism so feared in eurocentered thinking and so often projected onto qualitatively different knowledge systems).

All peoples have indigenous roots that may matter more at this historical juncture than even the various postmodern strands are able to see or are willing to admit. Inquiring into the fertile plurality of our roots is always also critical moral discourse. Instead of “linking origin to authoritarianism, univocalism, and the suppression of alterity,” we need to recognize that “authentic origins are inherently plural and divergent, and an extended meditation upon them reinvigorates attention to history and subverts supremacist claims of particular groups by showing that their ethnicity, religion, or discipline is ‘always already’ – from the origin – entangled with others” (Pizer 1995, pp. 13 & 14).

Krupat’s notion of the synecdochic self, self narratives grounded in community and its stories, *ethnoautobiographical* stories and autoethnographic reflections continue to be options that enable us to dwell in plurality. Indigenous consciousness has always been there. It is a continuing process. Its presentday practitioners presumably see themselves neither as members of the Eurocentered Enlightenment traditions, nor in postmodern or other opposition to the discursive practices of modernity; instead, they assert the sovereignty of their discourse in the face of ongoing colonial pressures. Eurocentered traditions would like to privilege notions of “seeing ourselves” as a modern achievement of critical self reflexivity, however, Indigenous conceptions of history also present self-reflective notions. Interpretations of historical obligations might

arise from communal moral interpretations of creation stories (often connected with ceremonial proceedings) and an understanding of time cycles. The stories of obligations any Indigenous discourse bears can be told, and the fulfillment of the prerequisite personal and collective ceremonial and nonceremonial endeavors can be shown and shared. While such endeavors are also deep knowing activities, they are far removed from the pursuit of knowledge for knowledge's sake. Here we find ethnicity, ceremonial spirituality, place, and history interwoven. (Modernity emerged out of the critique of such entwinement, however, it was primarily fuelled by the critique of the Christian churches rather than indigenous traditions per se; natives had previously been demonized by Christian ideology (or, the other side of the same coin, idealized by Rousseau and the Romantics), and notions of "the primitives" substantially made their way into social evolutionary thinking, a central development in modern thought.)

This is some of the larger context for ethnoautobiographical discourses and inquiries. This work entails the spiritual recovery and practice of transpersonal, integrative or participatory consciousness processes as well as the trans-personal recovery of connections to dreams, visions, community, time, and place that have disappeared behind the veil of rationalistic process, a continuous historic dissociation. The exploration of ethnic connections, ancestral roots, or the recovery of indigenous mind requires a rational and critical discourse that is integrated with emotional, somatic, spiritual, and other alternate ways of knowing. This is considered alternate or alternative within a rationalistic framework, yet integral and mandatory within an indigenous framework.

Nostalgia and romanticism lose their dissociative power once we begin to acknowledge that history is multiple. Concurrent to the historical lines identified in eurocentered academe we find a multiplicity of other histories (oftentimes de-valued as 'stories' or 'folklore' or 'legends,' mere oral history) that enriches and/or questions the dominant story. History is not a unitary phenomenon, but a weaving of a multiplicity of stories. "The ideal of multiple viewpoints challenges the very idea of representation as mimesis, for it substitutes a kaleidoscope for a telescope or microscope. Most certainly, it repudiates the omniscience of a Panopticon for the particular perspectives of situated viewpoints" (Berkhofer 1995, p. 269). For example: Concurrent with the historical lines of the Russian, Spanish, and other settlers and colonizers in California, the dominant telling of the story, we have to acknowledge the stories of the abundant cultural diversity of her native peoples and their destruction. The stories of the Spanish missions have a genocidal corollary. Christian representations of religion have a native corollary in roundhouse ceremonies, bear dances, and rock art. Denials of genocide, colonial occupations, slavery and other atrocities lead to one-sided supremacist stories. The struggle to acknowledge the multiplicity of (hi)stories is an antidote to romanticism and nostalgia. Witnessing the history, the stories of place, whether in the form of Native American or African American (hi)stories, facilitates initiation into a form of collective consciousness that supercedes facile and individualistic interpretations of the term. Self-actualization and altered states now not only include the integration of shamanic or meditative realms, but also the integration of suppressed human storylines. The depth of indigenous self representation in response to the question "Who am I?" can only be approximated by critical and emotionally integrative work with collective shadow

material and denied story lines. Otherwise we may lose ourselves in New Age identifications, a circus of shallow masquerades.

What is at times seen as the classical shamanic initiation can be described as a process in which the initiand is entirely picked apart, down to each single bone, before being put back together (cf. Eliade 1964). We could say that ethnoautobiography facilitates a contemporary shamanic initiation for people out of their Indigenous minds. It not only requires something of that sort, but also the prior dark night experience of our collective situation, past and present. Unless we allow ourselves to be picked apart by the monstrosities we have created in history we may not be able to re-create ourselves as human beings capable of a nurturing conversation without significant splits while holding those splits that seem inevitable for the moment in compassionate awareness. The spirits that lurk in the shadows are just as real as the spirit helpers a practitioner may wish to acquire. For me these issues became obvious as I was looking at the historical relationship between European and Indigenous peoples and as I was trying to understand what equitable knowledge exchange and a cross-cultural nurturing conversation might mean -- I could not conceive of it without becoming present to the violent events of colonization, Christianization, genocide, and internalized colonization. And with it I had to acknowledge the state of consciousness, the normative dissociation, that enabled such global violence. This type of split seems to be the psychological ingredient necessary for the scale of violence we are faced with. Painful awareness of historical shadow material started a slow healing process.

The Chukchi writer Juri Rytcheu, in an article on *The future of memory* (1999), reports a conversation with the Inuit singer and dancer Nutetein, in which he told him that human beings are not merely to be measured in height and width, but also in terms of their depth of memory, since only that is what makes them spatially real, graspable, and visible. He continues: "Nutetein's words admirably connect the human memory of tradition and cultural inheritance with the coming-to-consciousness of individuality and irrepeatability. Because a human being without roots and without acknowledgment of the ancestral cultural inheritance is -- as Herbert Marcuse said previously -- flat and one-dimensional, even if s/he claims to be a person of all the world cultures."

Without sufficient depth and inclusiveness of memory we stand to individuate but insufficiently. There is now sufficient research to indicate not only *that*, but also *how*, trauma is passed on intergenerationally. Survivors of the Shoah as well as its perpetrators have passed on their unspoken experiences to subsequent generations (cf. Bar-On et al. 1993). The denial of the Native American genocide and slavery or the unacknowledged involvement of spiritual traditions with fascism (e.g., Zen Buddhism in Japan) leave traces in subsequent generations. Sovereignty and freedom necessitate, *contra* Nietzsche's injunction to actively forget for the sake of the will to power, that we narrate ourselves not merely in the mirror of the dominant stories, but as an inquiry into what may be difficult to recover and shameful to remember. We can read Faulkner's dictum "*The past is not dead. It is not even past.*" (1951) in this sense. Coming-to-presence then is not a nostalgic fantasy of an ego inflated beyond its customary proportions, but a painful and joyful remembrance of who we might have been and how we have become who we are. Integrative states result from such narrative return of lost stories and reconnection with suppressed human potential.

Romanticism and nostalgia kill because of the ways in which they take the unfolding life out of any culture, but native cultures and so-called pre-historical cultures in particular. Anthropology frequently has been part of such necrophilia: the oral traditions of living indigenous cultures suffocate under the righteous investigative authority of eurocentered academics; the remains are the object of its autopsies. “When the ‘sun’ of civilization dawns on the virgin forest of the Other, instead of nourishing him, it chars and blackens him ... *At the very instant (primitive societies) become known to us they are doomed*” (MacGrane 1989, 108, last sentence quoted from Bastian). In public awareness what is tradition and what is the truth about a tradition is now largely determined by dissociative methods and people with a sense of self entirely differently constructed from the native sense of self that is under colonial or appropriative inspection (with internalized colonization as a native corollary). Defining any tradition as unitary or singular or monolithic relegates it to a terminal state.

“To heal rather than steal tribal cultures”

Rather than sharing Habermas’ sentiment that, sad as it may be, the cause of indigenous peoples is a lost one, we may instead celebrate with Vizenor and many others their vitality and “survivance.” This is a vitality that refers not to a retro-romantic continuance of an anthropologically imagined pure state of cultural traditions, but the vitality of sovereigns who, from a crossblood woodland native perspective, might say, “I touch myself into being with my own dreams and with my imagination ... I gather all those words that feed and nurture my imagination about my being” (Vizenor in Coltelli 1990, p. 159/160). Indigenous peoples, whether on the reservation, in the cities, or on other margins of the globalizing forces, usually continue to imagine themselves with ancestry, time, place, and community (however flawed or incomplete the reach of such imagination may be). The forces of colonialism and genocide are continuing their assaults, yet many tribal minds do not succumb to victimry but assert their rights, now within the framework of human rights, to a different type of discourse and imagination, together with the freedom to narrate themselves in the language of their choice. Members of dominant societies may make a choice similarly courageous: they may imagine themselves with their dreams in a particular time, place, and community, recollect their ancestral lines, and confront histories of supremacy. As they inquire about this potential they may confront generational traumas, denials, and collective shadow material. Instead of the individualistic master self we may thus experience our selves not as a void to be filled, but as part of a communal endeavor to constitute rich moral, political, historical, psychological, or spiritual discourses and presences.

Paula Gunn Allen (1998, p. 177) reminds us:

The concept in relation or, more “nativistically,” the understanding that the individualized – as distinct from individualistic – *sense of self* accrues only within the context of community, which includes the nonvisible world of ancestors, spirits, and gods, provides a secure grounding for a criticism that can reach beyond the politicized, deterministic confines of progressive approaches, as well as beyond the neurotic diminishment of self-reflexiveness. [Emphasis added.]

Ethnoautobiography is also spiritual inquiry in which what is *trans* is in the personal as the personal extends into the *trans*. From an Indigenous perspective this is an investigation and questioning that is, on the one hand, engaged in by an individual with imagination and humor, but is, on the other hand, contextualized not just by history, time,

place, or culture, but also by the presence of ancestral spirits (often revealing themselves in visions and dreams). In this participatory worldview the inquirer or the community of inquirers are not alone; on the contrary, they are responded to by ancestral spirits. Native elders have told me: “You are not alone. The power is not lost, you are. Ask the question about who you are and make an offering. Ancestors will respond from the other side and help.” Memory is ancestral presence. A task that may seem overwhelming in scope may thus find a container that holds at least a little bit of reassurance. It is important to note that ancestors always seem to play a significant role in indigenous traditions, although understood differently in different places. The loss of ancestral connections and memory shows itself in eurocentered cultures in such difficulties as facing death or respecting graves (regularly “bones of contention” between native peoples and dominant societies).

The word “spirit” means different things to different people.

Ethnoautobiographical inquirers are encouraged to research how their various ancestors used the term and which terms they used. It is important to resist psychologizing spirit and not to make it part of an individualistic paradigm. Who are these spirits or what is spirit? One simple way to take this term is as a signifier for connective knowing or as an entry to finding connections hidden from a well bounded self. Within indigenous worlds, generally speaking, everything has spirit – whether mountain, computer, deer, ancestor, place, tree, story, song, or car. If I were to make a generalizing statement I would offer this as a beginning point for inquiry: *Remember what you see at times out of the corner of your eye, the images and darting presences that are ever so ephemeral, yet real. Remember the times when a trapdoor seemed to open under you, when an accident, illness, mountain high brought you into presence. And then there are the metaphors in poetry and other writing, crafty words that trick the mind into presence, into dream and vision.* Any understanding of this kind is counter to an individualistic understanding and engagement with an objective reality. However, it is not counter to critical reflection or the realities of psychoneuronal processes.

There are many ways of talking about the process of ethnoautobiography. One would be to find a writing (or speaking) voice that creates presence (to ancestors, to history, to community, to place) and that includes the presence of these spirits. Ethnoautobiography uses at least one tool, and frequently two tools to facilitate such presence. Importantly, ethnoautobiographical writing is creative writing; it aspires to literature, so to speak. It uses conventions of poetry and prose that we commonly do not find in psychological writing (while Freud received the Goethe prize, few psychologists have succeeded him in his literary aspirations). As we inquire we create. Our creations can be imagined in such a way that they evoke a related presence in the reader. In some important sense the truth or authenticity of voice inevitably approaches beauty (in an aesthetic that may be different from dominant forms of aestheticism). Masterful writers like Leslie Marmon Silko or Toni Morrison do just that. The work of crafting self narratives that are imaginative, poetic, and evocative is a way of creating presence. Rather than stopping with a mere self-report of an experience or memory, ethnoautobiographical writing calls for a quality of literary precision that connects author and reader amidst imaginal realms that open toward new moral and politico-historical inquiries.

The second tool to effect the sense of presence described above is co-operative inquiry. While it works very well to conduct ethnoautobiographical explorations

individually, the presence of other listeners and readers seems to be very helpful. On the whole it seems to be preferable to conduct ethnoautobiographical inquiries with a partner or in a small group. The cycles of immersion and reflection defined by the co-operative inquiry methodology help to deepen questioning and presence as mutual encouragement helps participants to have the heart to step into unknown realms that may be both rewarding and scary.

Ethnoautobiography can probably be best understood as a form of spiritual inquiry, however, with a clear emphasis on storying the process and results of the questioning. It is a form of transformative investigation involving the forms of knowing identified by Heron (1996) as practical, propositional, presentational, and experiential. Different ethnoautobiographical endeavors may emphasize these aspects to varying degrees, yet their integrative function is always relevant. Rothberg has stated that spiritual inquiry suggests “the possibility of an integrative vision of the different modes of inquiry” (1991, 133). Ethnoautobiography seeks to contribute new knowledge as to how the white eurocentered selves might narrate themselves in ways that address deficiencies or pathologies of modern paradigmatic assumptions. This is ground-breaking research that explores and documents the boundary of who we are as individuals, researchers, or graduate students. If used in a co-operative inquiry format (as described by Heron, 1996, and Reason (ed.), 1988 & 1994), then the communal or social aspect of ethnoautobiographical investigations finds its appropriate outlet in accordance with the definition given initially. Individuality and individual new knowledge and insight arise in dialogue in a community of co-investigators; it can thus be properly questioned and validated.

Finding the courage to narrate in and for freedom leads us back to one of the themes woven throughout these reflections in answer to the question: *Why write ethnoautobiography?* As mentioned above, Gerald Vizenor has developed a discourse of sovereignty that transgresses beyond notions of inheritance and tenure of territory. In his discussions sovereignty appears as transmotion, as vision moving in imagination, as the substantive right of motion. Ethnoautobiography is an imaginative and decolonizing form of inquiry dedicated to the remembrance of sovereignty as motion and transmotion among people of eurocentered mind, whatever their ethnic roots. It hails the end of Whiteness. By narrating ourselves freely and for the sake of freedom and egalitarian knowledge exchange we may overcome pernicious identity politics and constructs that limit who we are as inquirers and storytellers. This is inevitably an imaginative and creative act, yet it needs to find its grounding in various tests and trials. Shamanic skills need to find their affirmation in the results – did healing occur? The imaginal realm needs to find anchors in archaeological, ecological, historical, and other forms of knowledge as well as the critical reflection, ethical and political considerations. Transpersonal or integrative states of consciousness are required to find their affirmations in the various trans-personal domains of ecology, history, myth, gender, and more – domains which consciously constitute individuals who work to see themselves as more than the masterful, bounded self of modernity. This is the imaginal space where indigenous people and their modern significance may meet enquiring White minds to liberate and renew their stories from creation.

In the novel *The Heirs of Columbus*, Gerald Vizenor writes about his main character Stone Columbus that “he would accept anyone who wanted to be tribal, ‘no

blood attached or scratched,'... His point is to make the world tribal, a universal identity, and return to other values as measures of human worth, such as the dedication to heal rather than steal tribal cultures" (1991, 162). It is only in the context of such healing, a tall order to be sure, that ethnoautobiographical inquiries by non-natives may make a contribution to decolonization and end the stealing and superficial imitation of tribal cultures. Now the postmodern situation of Whiteness and Eurocentrism can, conceivably, encounter the postmodern condition that "oral cultures have never been without," the "trickster signatures and discourse on narrative chance" of native presence, and thus liberate an emancipatory and restorative imagination that facilitates egalitarian knowledge exchange. It would engender a socially engaged practice that is spiritual not in any sense that narcissistic and masterful selves might demand, but that instead arises from the cessation of imperial and imperialistic manoeuvres on anything trans-personal. What is commonly called transpersonal psychology would thus be securely severed from its colonial streaks and appropriative habits and surrender to the presence of the imaginal, the fleeting movements of spirit(s) inside/outside – what is labeled *trans* now appears in the personal, and what is personal now appears in the *trans*. This is an immanent conversation in which we, spirit, and spirits enact creatively participatory phenomena that relinquish ethereal notions of transcendence in a critical celebration of presence. Many transpersonal psychologists and theorists seem to be drawn to the lure of modernist security elaborate categorical schemata appear to offer, and some like to heap ridicule on those unwilling to participate in this imperial dance. Yet, others may delight in the compassionate telling of their trans-personal, imaginal stories in the fissures and cracks of our hybrid origins and presences, a storytelling that humbly and ferociously resists the totalizing impetus of grander schemes. It is from these stories that peace can be created as different and contradictory memories arise amidst the spirits of place and ancestors beckoning, an agonistic play of caring imagination that makes ancient presences new, each story a world renewal in its own way. Participatory visions of the trans-personal are ancient, as Bastien's contribution in this issue illustrates. Envisioning them for today makes for a different quality of psychology, inevitably an interdisciplinary endeavor – altogether another story that deconstructs Whiteness and Eurocentrism and the transcendent in social engagement dedicated to the emancipatory and egalitarian restoration and the balancing play of visionary sovereignty of diverse human presences.

Nobel Laureat Nelly Sachs, German, Jewish, Swedish and more by turns of persecution, investigates her right to *Heimat* as one of her *Glowing Enigmas*, the collection from which this poem is taken :

*Ich bin meinem Heimatrecht auf der Spur
dieser Geographie nächtlicher Länder
wo die zur Liebe geöffneten Arme
gekreuzigt an den Breitengraden hängen
bodenlos in Erwartung –*

I am on the tracks of my rights of domicile
this geography of nocturnal countries
where the arms opened for love
hang crucified on the degrees of latitude
groundless in expectation –
(Sachs 1970, p. 395; transl. Michael Hamburger)

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