Chapter Five

Traditional Futures

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In his introduction to this volume, Mark Phillips proposes an 'enlarged conversation about tradition' that could 'dissolve the simple binary of tradition and modernity.' He argues that once we stop defining tradition as resistance to modernity, the term 'becomes again a means of raising essential questions about the ways in which we pass on the life of cultures – questions that necessarily include issues of authority as well as invention, practice as well as interpretation.' Tradition becomes a newly complex, open-ended subject.

The Western idea of tradition, at least since the early modern period, has typically been opposed to notions like progress, science, rationality, modernization, development, and now globalization – all terms associated with a dynamic future. Tradition is bound up in the past, the repetitive (Lévi-Strauss's 'cold' societies), the conservative, the religious, the native, the local, the nonrational, the non-Western. Always a foil to the modern, tradition cannot be transformative or forward-looking. Mark Phillips does the critical work, within Western intellectual history, of bringing into view understandings of tradition which question this constitutive opposition. He reminds us that a sense of dynamic process can be derived from Christian and Jewish sources: Newman's recognition that 'variation and development are part of any great idea' and Scholem's vision of productive 'commentary' and 'contradiction.' Gadamer's sense of a shared, inventive 'language' – rather than a Burkian 'inheritance,' or a nationalist quest for 'origin' – points in the same direction. And, finally, Kuhn's account of social, communal processes such as education and authority at the core of tradition's archetypal 'modern' opposite, the natural sciences, completes the deconstruction.

Newman, Scholem, and Gadamer, though rooted in the West, help us see every 'traditional' culture as potentially changing and dialectical. Moreover, Kuhn shows how abrupt, even revolutionary, shifts of consensus can signal not necessarily a loss of tradition, but a community's ability to confront anomaly and fashion new configurations of knowledge. Communal transmission, in this view, works through breaks, translating and overcoming contradictions. Of course any community's ability to persist, to innovate, to change on its own terms, is relative to its structural power. There are material, historical reasons why some societies have been relatively immobile, others more dynamic. But these are matters of politics, not of essence, and thus subject to contestation and change. In what follows I will be exploring some of the contemporary historical changes, open-ended futures, that must affect any 'enlarged conversation about tradition.'

Released from its binary fix, tradition is recast by Mark Phillips as 'the complex problem of cultural transmission.' The move is persuasive and indeed urgent. But why now? What historical developments make 'tradition' today a genuine problematic, a site for social negotiations, political claims, and fraught conversations? A newly complex view of 'tradition' is inseparable from the decentring, the wavering, of its binary term 'modernity.' Over the past half-century, diffusionist visions of progress have been challenged by two interrelated but distinct shifts: decolonization and globalization. Both unfinished changes, in different, interconnected ways, displace the coherent subject of a singular modernity.

The anti-colonial struggles of the 'long sixties'[1] loosened the West from its self-appointed location at the progressive end and cutting edge of history. In this period, many so-called backward, traditional, or underdeveloped societies made strong claims to historical agency and a distinctive modern destiny. Of course it was not simply a matter of peripheral peoples suddenly emerging from repetitive traditions and finally, irreversibly, entering the modern world. Rather the whole 'allochronic' arrangement which had sorted the world's peoples into fundamentally different times was thrown into question.[2] People from the margins – ex-'primitives,' women, racialized minorities – made claims for equality, for a public voice, for room to manoeuvre in contemporary settings. In response to these pressures, theorists have begun to recognize different inflections, articulations of a modernity fracturing into 'modernities.'[3]

J.M. Blaut has trenchantly argued that progressive, Eurocentric

world-views are based on a diffusionist myth.[4] According to this 'colonizers' model of the world' only a very limited number of communities are inventive, and over the past millennium, the inventions that have counted historically have originated from Europe: medieval technologies, the state, capitalism, world discovery, the first industrial revolution. In this 'tunnel history,' everything dynamic comes from 'inside' Europe and the West. The 'outside' is passive and inert – traditional. Blaut challenges this world history, both conceptually and empirically, drawing on a growing body of scholarship. The myth is, of course, still very much with us: in post–Second World War 'development' or 'modernization' thinking. It also persists in (both utopic and dystopic) projections of the homogenizing juggernaut of Westernization – a process reductively condensed in symbols such as Coke, McDonald's, the Internet, the free market, or simply 'America.' In this view, modernity is still a one-way street, or perhaps better, a multi-lane superhighway with only entry ramps. Critiques such as Blaut's project a modernity that is contradictory, layered, and multidirectional.

Decolonization, always shadowed by neocolonization, is a catch-all term for many incomplete, diverse and uneven, processes. Continuously embattled, stymied, deflected, decolonization nonetheless names persistent, cumulative challenges to the political and ideological hegemony of the West. The end of Europe's high colonial period after the Second World War has been marked by wars of national liberation and the significant entry of non-Western and subaltern peoples into a range of public spheres and institutions. There have been surprises (from the standpoint of both the 'progressive' Left and 'liberal' Right). Perhaps most striking, in recent decades, has been the widespread resurgence of 'indigenous' movements (Hawaiian, Maori, Pan-Indian, African, Arctic, etc.). I will focus below on a few of these contemporary mobilizations of 'tradition' as seen in the present volume's chapters by Andrea Laforet, Ruth Phillips, and Christopher Steiner – as well as in the complex 'indigenous' meditation offered by Mieke Bal.

A second set of historic changes needs to be tracked alongside, and intertwined with, movements of decolonization: the post-sixties recomposition of modernization as globalization. Globalization, as I understand it, is not simply another word for imperialism, neocolonialism, or Americanization. One can plausibly say 'globalization from below,'[5] but not 'imperialism from below.' Unlike those who see a new 'stage' of capitalist modernity, I invoke 'globalization' as a stopgap label for unfinished processes which are profoundly ambiguous, both system-

atic and anarchic. What John Tomlinson calls the 'complex connectivities' gathered up in the term exceed any top-down, systemic projection.[6] When seen as an essentially economic phenomenon, globalization readily falls into the old diffusionism – albeit now sometimes spatialized in multiple, networked centres, for example, the ' global cities' analysed by Saskia Sassen.[7] But it is increasingly evident that mobile capitalism exists concretely only as it is articulated locally, at political, social, and cultural levels. Moreover, any account of the contemporary world must include a broad range of emergent social and cultural movements which mobilize discrepant 'traditions' in struggles around identity and place. These unstable movements disrupt the binaries of any simply progressive, 'Westernizing,' world map. We cannot therefore conclude, with optimists on the Right and pessimists on the Left, that postwar decolonization movements have now been defeated or absorbed by a neoliberal hegemony. The contemporary world economic system, centred in North America, Europe, and parts of Asia, does have enormous power to coerce and stimulate. But its effects remain very unevenly distributed, its 'triumph' insecure. Contradictory processes of decolonizing/neocolonizing, contestation/co-optation exist in dialectical tension and sometimes open struggle.

Globalization thus cannot be merely a more flexible form of Westernization. Cultural hegemony, the imperial 'civilizing mission,' is no longer an essential goal. Non-Western traditions like Confucianism or Islam can, with appropriate modifications, be articulated with capitalism or modern media – as can a wide range of local customs. It is now abundantly clear that transnational contacts differentiate as much as they homogenize, producing composite forms, 'aposteriori differences,' in Daniel Miller's phrase, created through inventive interaction.[8] Thus the cultures and identities that have both resisted and been created by ongoing local/global contacts hold the seeds of distinct, if entangled, futures. These historical vectors cannot be mapped from a single 'advanced' point of historical prophecy or objective overview. Diverse forms of cultural transmission (Newman's variations, Scholem's reinterpretations, Gadamer's translations) that have been historically immobilized, and distanced, as local 'traditions' can be recognized as conservative/inventive ingredients of what might be called an 'aprogressive modernity.'

One post-1960s sign that peripheral 'traditions' were not going to stay put was the moment when the widely accepted notion of 'invented' traditions began to run afoul of contemporary indigenous politics. Even as

anthropologists spoke of invented traditions or cultures in nonjudgmental ways,[9] the taint of inauthenticity (explicit in Hobsbawm and Ranger's influential definition) clung to the term.[10] Indigenous intellectuals rejected the implication that dynamic traditions were merely political, contrived for current purposes. There was residual imperialism in the outside expert's claim to distinguish between invented tradition and organic custom, between conscious fabrication and the constant recombination or bricolage of any society in transition. Definitions of 'traditional' authenticity became sites of struggle.[11]

Indigenous authorities, speaking out of distinct community attachments, have worked to both loosen and reclaim the notion of authenticity. When attributed to colonial 'natives,' or romantic 'primitives,' authenticity could be a straitjacket, making every engagement with modernity (religions, technologies, knowledges, markets, or media) a contamination, a 'loss' of true selfhood.[12] Post-1960s indigenous movements – reoccupying lands, asserting and updating old ways, relearning languages, articulating larger tribal coalitions, rewriting colonial histories and ethnographies, filing legal briefs, making films – have pragmatically asserted a wide freedom of manoeuvre. Authenticity thus becomes a process – the open-ended work of preservation and transformation. Living traditions must be selectively pure: mixing, matching, remembering, forgetting, sustaining, transforming their senses of communal continuity. The sharp antinomies of progress – before/after histories of colonial impact, acculturation, commodification – are frequently blurred, their vectors reversed. Moreover, in a context of decolonizing tribal activism, it becomes easier to recognize that native societies have always been both backward and forward looking. Loyalty to a traditional past is, in practice, a way ahead, a distinct path in the present.

The Hawaiian historian Lilikala Kame'eleihiwa evokes this indigenous temporality:

> It is interesting to note that in Hawaiian, the past is referred to as *Ka wa mamua*, or 'the time in front or before.' Whereas the future, when thought of at all, is *Ka wa mahope*, or 'the time which comes after or behind.' It is as if the Hawaiian stands firmly in the present, with his back to the future, and his eyes fixed upon the past, seeking historical answers for present-day dilemmas. Such an orientation is to the Hawaiian an eminently practical one, for the future is always unknown, whereas the past is rich in glory and knowledge.[13]

The image of going backwards into the future recalls Walter Benjamin's famous 'Angel of History.'[14] But the differences are telling. Kame'eleihiwa's Hawaiian does not, like Benjamin's angel, confront the past as a ruin. Rather, she engages a generative, socio-mythic tradition, 'rich in glory and knowledge.' Most significantly, perhaps, there is no relentless 'wind' of Progress blowing the angel backwards. Time has no single, violent direction, but loops resourcefully between present dilemmas and remembered answers: a pragmatic, not a messianic orientation.

For the modern Hawaiian movement, a dynamic tradition includes many diverse activities: intensifying taro cultivation in rural enclaves, reviving and adapting hula, renewing native knowledge and language in charter schools (which also teach math and chemistry), mobilizing media for political actions, asserting a space for 'indigenous epistemologies' in the secular University, and connecting reggae rhythms with sovereignty lyrics. Tradition is not a wholesale return to past ways, but a practical selection and critical reweaving of roots. Changing gender roles show this clearly, as do engagements with Christianity, with national politics, with transnational indigenous coalitions. These and many other strategies are aligned through appeals to genealogy and grounded by attachment to land. In today's indigenous movements, some essentialisms are embraced while others are rejected. Practices of cultural/political struggle mediate differences of region, generation, gender, urban/rural location, and strategy. What is at stake is the power to define tradition and authenticity, to determine the relationships through which native identity is negotiated in a changing world.

Contemporary indigenous movements have dramatically reversed the modernist binary, giving new dynamism to its 'backward' part. Ultimately, perhaps the two terms modernity and tradition can be left behind. But for such a transcendence to be more than theoretical would require a real alteration in the material power relations which sustain the dominant, globalizing, 'modern' pole. People think and act in ambiguous post/neocolonial situations, in the tension – both contradiction and synergy – of decolonization and globalization. Reopening the lived problematic of tradition is crucial to understanding this predicament: a messy world in which fundamentalisms, ethnic chauvinisms, and tourist displays flourish alongside First Nations revivals and the mobilization of local communities against environmental devastation or invasive development.

As the history of social movements shows, people are generally

more ready to organize in defence of customary rights and local traditions than they are on behalf of more universal class solidarities or human rights. At another scale, national ideologies express a sense of loyalty to a wider community. The articulation of local attachments with national mobilizations is, of course, complex and always, to a degree, unstable. While prophecies of the nation-state's demise in the face of globalization are clearly premature, there has been a wavering of the assumed hierarchies of the 'nation-building' period: nationalism vs. tribalism, large-scale 'invented' traditions vs. local, supposedly repetitive, custom. The making, contesting, unmaking, and remaking of traditions now appear as a permanent source of innovation and instability at all political levels and spatial scales. This volume's reopening of 'the problem of tradition' responds to the partial dis-articulating (not the disappearance) of modernizing nation-state projects at global, regional, and local scales.

The language of 'articulation,' I have argued elsewhere, gets at the practical deconstructive, *and* reconstructive, activities of indigenous traditionalisms better than the demystifying discourse of 'invention.'[15] Indigenous movements cannot be reduced to just another (micro) nationalism. Put another way, as nationalisms proliferate, within and across state boundaries, the term 'nation' slips from its European moorings. This is apparent in the many, and diverse, current invocations of the Western term 'sovereignty' by tribal and First Nations groups. 'Applied sovereignty'[16] – for an Australian Aboriginal group's 'country,' for a California tribe's casino, for a vast new territory such as Nunavut – involves pragmatic control over key elements of culture and economy, not the establishment of a state on the model of Bonaparte's France. Articulated sites of indigeneity form a continuum, from declarations of 'national' independence (always a relative term) to control over reservations, to negotiated regional autonomies, to forms of 'cultural citizenship' within pluralist polities.[17]

Articulated indigenous traditions include institutions like the innovative North American 'pow wow,' a pan-Indian circuit that reworks and hybridizes Plains dances and regalia in a variety of local contexts: tribal reservations, rodeos, college campuses. Differently positioned participants and audiences are brought together in such performances, and it is important to distinguish among the various levels, relative 'insides' and 'outsides,' that are at play. The same can be said for the new tribal museums and cultural centres flourishing throughout the world today, simultaneously expressions of local pride and heritage,

sites for oral history and language-reclamation projects, and destinations in a spreading cultural tourism network. Revived, adapted forms of indigenous art show the same multidimensional complexities. Indeed the term 'art' is a site of ongoing translations and articulations (including dis-articulations, as we shall see in a moment; for not every tribal mask or image can now be freely promoted in this aesthetic context). Native artists exploit, and are exploited by, new markets, while also creating works for family and ceremonial contexts. And given the value increasingly accorded to their cultural productions in national and international contexts, tribal authorities find themselves struggling against misappropriations, asserting 'sovereignty' over elements of their heritage held by others. Often this involves a process of forcefully detaching and reattaching artifacts and their meanings: projects of a dynamic tradition critically reworking its colonial history.

Andrea Laforet, in chapter 1 of this volume, focuses on current negotiations between Canadian First Nations and museums over the proper ownership, preservation, and display of tribal artifacts. She shows how indigenous understandings of the relation between stories and things differ from the conceptions governing Western scientific collecting, curating, and interpreting. It is not so much that stories are told about artifacts as that artifacts are performative instances of stories. In this ontology, stories (reframed and retold) are permanent, objects transient. Thus for people like the Nisga'a of northern British Columbia the idea that a collection of things could represent, in any fixed or permanent way, a past culture or its tradition, makes little sense. Objects have meaning for living, changing societies.

Tradition, in Laforet's terms, is redefined as 'historical practice.' The word 'historical' as she uses it frees Nisga'a tradition from its association with a mythic and ritualized past, bringing it into the ontological frame of 'what really happened and is happening' – what Westerners call 'historical reality.' But, as she acutely shows, the translation in question is itself historical, a matter of practical, cross-cultural negotiation and struggle. Whether in the land claims courtroom, in repatriation negotiations, or in collaborative discussions about the ways objects in museum collections can be interpreted, a process of learning and unlearning is underway. Words like tradition and history lose their accepted meanings and function as 'translation terms.'[18] The crucial *Delgamuukw* decision by the Supreme Court of Canada, giving indigenous oral histories equal footing with other documentary evidence, is

paradigmatic. In Australia and Aotearoa/New Zealand, similar developments make courtrooms into sites of practical translation. Fundamental Western notions of objectivity, fact, property, and linear time begin to make room for, to overlap and coexist with, understandings of a different, but equivalent, epistemological validity.[19]

In the process of translation and negotiation, both indigenous and Western traditions articulate new domains of practice. And while there is a real sense in which the return of tribal lands or repatriation of human remains and cultural artifacts is a reversal of the linear, progressive/destructive history of colonialism and modernization, these 'historical practices' do not turn back the clock. They revisit and retell traumatic pasts to (partly) make them right. Reburials heal the survivors, who must get on with their version of a modern life. Likewise, bringing distant clan and tribal artifacts 'home' marks a way forward. The planned construction of a 'Nisga'a common bowl,' a cultural centre in the Nass Valley to 'create a permanent public repository for what has been traditionally mandated to be known and handled by individuals or within lineages' shows the selective rearticuation of tradition in new 'tribal' forms which function within changing regional and national pubic spheres. Laforet's essay glimpses a post-assimilationist modus vivendi: practices of translation, live and let live, linked and separate traditions. The fact that Native societies in Canada are exerting real pressure in the courts, the national museums, and other public arenas clearly signals the dynamism of discrepant 'historical practices' in a complex modernity. This is not a return to atavistic 'tribalism,' nor is it a matter of acculturation or, as critical analysts of postmodernity tend to argue, of tribal societies getting with the neoliberal, multicultural, ethnic program. Both views gloss over the dynamic politics of contestation, translation, and articulation that Laforet describes – historical practices that reconnect the very new with the very old.

In her contribution to this volume – as in her seminal work, *Trading Identities* – Ruth Phillips gives temporal depth to messy and unfinished contact relations.[20] Like Laforet, she writes from within contemporary struggles over cross-cultural collecting, display, and possession. Museums have long been machines for producing the tradition/modernity opposition, as (particular) artifacts are recontextualized in terms of (universal) taxonomies and aesthetic principles. But when 'episodes of museum contestation are examined in detail, the cases, the labels, the lights, the taxonomies, and the security systems of museums come to be seen as integral to traditions as culturally specific as are those of the

Iroquois.' The colonial West and its universalizing, scientific/aesthetic institutions appear, in this contact perspective, as specific traditions. As Dipesh Chakrabarty puts it, they are 'provincialized.'[21] This recognition does not entail, I would insist, their refutation or degradation – though it may seem that way to people used to occupying the universal end of the tradition/modern binary. Seeing museums as 'contact zones,' sites where different historical practices clash and collaborate, merely specifies knowledges, always open to revision since history itself is open ended.[22]

Ruth Phillips shows how the changing meanings of Iroquois False Face masks (*Ga:goh:sah*) are part of an ongoing colonial/postcolonial contact relationship. And her history firmly locates museums within a broader popular culture of exoticism, surrealism, and commodification. She focuses on a critical moment of indigenous articulation-politics: acts of dis-connection and de-linking, and the maintenance of domains of secrecy, sacredness, and sociocultural knowledge which must not be universally shared. These are acts of power which refute museum and popular-cultural representations, whether they be primitivist stereotypes or modernist views of *Ga:goh:sah* as surrealist 'art.' As a consequence of legal and informal pressure during the past decade, the withdrawal of once highly popular False Face masks from North American public display has been virtually complete. And while, as Phillips makes clear, there is disagreement among Iroquois about the status of replicas and versions made for commercial purposes, the possibility of a complete 'disappearing act' from non-Iroquois public arenas (including the intertribal American Museum of the American Indian on the Mall in Washington) has been established. By calling this removal an 'act' Ruth Phillips signals its performative nature, a relational gesture and moment of empowerment in the current politics of tribal sovereignty and re-traditionalization.

To speak in this way of acts, gestures, or moments should not (in an articulation perspective) imply superficiality or a narrowly political agency. Repatriation claims, particularly when they assume an assertive, across-the-board nature, are manifestly claims to power – acts of reappropriation. But the empowerment goes much deeper than Western notions of ownership imply. For the emotional impact of return and reconnection – the healing and renewal felt by people repossessing traditional things and reburying lost ancestors – is profound. Iroquois *Ga:goh:sah* have strong tribal meanings today, both because they are used in traditional, secret ways by qualified individuals and because

they can no longer be freely used by others, especially the non-Indians who have so long stereotyped and translated them. Removal of certain objects and images from intertribal, national, and international public spheres is critical to the maintenance of a 'we,' with significant degrees of 'sovereign' control over the interactions and interdependencies that are part of contemporary life everywhere. While Iroquois, as Phillips shows, may dis-articulate their tribal identity from larger contexts of representation in the case of the *Ga:goh:sah*, in other contexts they find ways to connect with the profitable Indian art market, or the multi-audienced 'appearing-acts' (if I may put it thus) of pow wows, cultural festivals, and other sites of tribal self-representation. Thus traditionalism, even in its moments of disengagement and secrecy, is part of a complexly articulated, changing relationship of inside and outside, past and future.

Christopher Steiner's discussion of the Kalabari of Nigeria provides another example of tradition as dis- and re-articulation. The customizing of imported cloth according to firm aesthetic rules shows a historical practice of conservative traditionalism resisting national and transnational norms of acculturation and commodification. Steiner writes of a 'calculated lack of innovation,' and sees the Kalabari's intriguing practice of 'subtractively' altering cloth made in India as a 'currency of cultural autonomy in defiance of outside pressures.' 'Conservatism and restraint,' he argues, act as 'signs' of 'social identity.' Steiner does not discuss other historical practices of the Kalabari, which no doubt are less immobile. One assumes that they, like other local and tribal people under pressure to change and adapt, are innovating and preserving their identities in constrained ways. Customizing imported cloth functions, then, as a relatively 'cold' area of Kalabari culture, actively sustained in relation to other 'hot' domains of change. Moreover, this work with an *imported* commodity is, by definition, a traditionalism operating within relations of commercial and cultural contact. One is left with crucial questions about the nature of its 'conservatism.' Is this activity primarily a (relatively recent) ethnic boundary marker of the sort Fredrik Barth so lucidly analysed, or is it a transformational practice continuous with older Kalabari ideological/ social forms – the sort of dynamic structures Sahlins has theorized for the Pacific?[23] The two functions are, of course, not mutually exclusive, and indeed are both necessary for sociocultural survival. But weighing their relative importance at specific moments, in the continuum of articulations covered by an elastic term like 'tradition,' is critical for

grasping the ongoing negotiation of collective insides and outsides, pasts and futures.[24]

Steiner is certainly right to reject all-or-nothing norms that pit tradition against change. Criticizing an academic 'postmodern' sensibility that, he argues, 'disparages tradition in favour of anything new or different,' he supplies a cogent baby/bathwater correction. The sensibility he questions has a specific history, however, which only partially overlaps with 'postmodernism.' The suspicion of any linking of 'tradition,' 'conservatism,' or 'immobility' with non-Western peoples is rooted in the current of 'colonial discourse critique' which flourished in the 1980s.[25] Colonial assumptions and institutions, Arjun Appadurai dramatically observed, 'imprisoned' subaltern natives, keeping them 'in their place.' Indeed, as Mani showed, purportedly ancient traditions were, in fact, inscribed and reified in the interests of imperial rule. A recognition of cultural dynamism was the antidote, signalled by titles such as Appadurai's *Modernity at Large*, Susan Vogel's *Africa Explores*, or Steiner's *African Art in Transit*.[26] In tandem with this trend, 'postcolonial theory' probed the transgressive and resistant possibilities of syncretic or hybrid cultural strategies, the unexpected ways 'newness enters the world.'[27] Many hierarchical, binary structures supporting colonial projections of progress and modernization were destabilized, at least conceptually.

However, to the extent that postcolonial theory's mixed and entangled tactics became identified with 'postmodern' visions of nomadism, flexibility, mix-and-match, a certain normativity took shape favouring mobility and innovation. The apogee of academic anti-traditionalism is perhaps visible in Steiner's opening anecdote about his difficulty getting a scholarly audience to take seriously 'conservative' African practices. The reverse trend is now well underway as cultural theorists register the return of the 'native,' the baby thrown out with the 'post' bathwaters.[28] Steiner's corrective essay is a sign of these times. But of course all returns mark a difference: contemporary indigenous subjects are no longer simply localized natives, the archaic homebodies of colonial discourses. Steiner's 'conservative' Kalabari – like the artists 'in transit' of his earlier work – are struggling for identity and control in historical import/export relations. As we have seen, diverse traditionalists today search for ways to move ahead, or sideways, in a discrepantly rooted/routed modernity.

Connections with tradition are seldom uncritical. Mieke Bal, writing as an 'indigenous' intellectual, provides a poignant example of

ambivalent loyalty to a Dutch tradition which touches her deeply. Bal writes of Zwarte Piets – blackface, devilish clowns that frighten children – as someone who has herself been in their power. An adult, she finds herself repelled by the racist and colonialist legacies of the black/white imagery with its invocation of savagery. Class connotations, and the gender-transgressive possibilities of the performances, complicate her attitude. Is this a tradition that can be reformed? Simply re-colouring the faces blue, red, or green, in an effort to purge Zwarte Piet's racism for a progressive multiculturalism, will not do, she says, unless the changes reflect a kind of organic decision by the society. An imposed, politically correct moralism would merely evade the deep historical problem. Bal suggests that living traditions cannot, indeed should not, be cleansed of their dissonant, painful elements. The questioning they persistently evoke is an element in the critical, hermeneutic process of cultural transformation. Drawing an analogy with current contestations of revered museum displays (one thinks of the work of Fred Wilson, for example, introducing artifacts of slavery into a sanitized historical exhibit),[29] she argues that while 'the Dutch don't like to be confronted with their inner contradictions ... they must be, forced by social reality and intellectual and moral debate.' Such processes of difficult self-examination can contribute to a genuine 'working through' of a past, 'bringing that work to bear on today's ambivalences.'

Mieke Bal's reckoning with these darkened Dutch faces is subtle and multidimensional in ways I cannot adequately summarize here. It includes a 'native's' self-conscious engagement with an outside 'ethnographic' gaze: the provocative mirror provided by British photographer Anna Fox's photographic series on Zwarte Piet. We see the critical performativity of Bal's self-construction through engagement with a defamiliarizing 'outside.' The often overgeneralized 'indigenous' position is specified by gender, race, and class – salient points of tension and struggle in the process of displacing and remaking any tradition. Her work of 'insider' cultural critique is relevant to that of women in particular contexts of sociocultural change around the world – simultaneously invoking and criticizing tradition, *kastom, coutume, costumbre,* and so on.[30] In engagements with local, ethnic, religious, and national identifications women selectively rearticulate (in Bal's terms 'work through') past elements, actively forgetting those most hostile, emphasizing sites of female power and agency. This may involve creative engagements with world religions, new nationalist projects, migration, feminism, and other 'modernizing' ideologies. Struggles over tradi-

tion, by differently empowered insiders and outsiders, are integral to a relational politics of identity.

Such struggles can be bitter and prolonged. Mieke Bal ends with a hopeful vision of a 'culture' (rather like a self-reflective, therapeutic individual) letting go of a negative pattern of behaviour. Critical attention keeps the wound (in this case Zwarte Piet's racism) open

> until ... one day, the culture concerned wakes up sick of the pain. Only then – perhaps – can this tradition be relinquished, wholeheartedly; not suppressed by moralism, but rejected for the pain it causes to all its members. By that time, another tradition will have been invented, one that fits the culture better – and that hurts less. Until it, too, becomes the culture's backlog, dragging behind the times.

While recognizing this open-ended process of transformation, I find myself returning to Bal's 'perhaps,' wondering about the healing process of change. The vision of tradition-as-process I have been sketching is more political than hermeneutic/therapeutic. Structured antagonisms, and successive realignments of self and other, play a greater role. Thus, moralistic suppressions, hostile disarticulations, will always be necessary parts of a process which produces cultural solutions that are less 'reasonable' than the one Bal projects. Of course she knows this very well and is writing primarily as a participant/reformer, expressing hope for the transformation of a specific Dutch legacy to which she remains complexly loyal.

For her connection to Zware Piet is not simply that of a (frightened) Dutch child or a champion of cultural distinction. It is also a commitment to grappling with negativity, a dedication to the principle of collectivities confronting and understanding the dark legacies of their pasts. This too is part of tradition, seen as critical 'historical practice' – whether the reckoning takes the form of truth and reconciliation commissions, the repatriation of bones and artifacts, or arguments over female circumcision. Mieke Bal leaves us, as do all the essays I have discussed, with a vision of traditions as unresolved and productive – ways into our different, interconnected futures.

NOTES

1 Fredric Jameson, 'Periodizing the Sixties,' in Sohnya Sayres et al., eds, *The 60s without Apology* (Minneapolis, 1984), 178–209.

2 Fabian, Johannes, *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes its Object* (New York, 1983).
3 For example: Mike Featherstone, *Undoing Culture* (London, 1995); Jonathan Friedman and James Carrier, eds, *Melanesian Modernities* (Lund, 1996); Lisa Rofel, *Other Modernities: Gendered Yearnings in China after Socialism* (Berkeley, 1999); Charles Taylor, 'Modernity and Difference,' in Paul Gilroy, Lawrence Grossberg, and Angela McRobbie, eds, *Without Guarantees: In Honour of Stuart Hall* (London, 2000), 364–74.
4 J.M. Blaut, *The Colonizer's View of the World: Geographical Diffusionism and Eurocentric History* (New York, 1993).
5 Jeremy Brecher, Tim Costello, and Brendan Smith, *Globalization from Below: The Power of Solidarity* (Boston, 2000).
6 John Tomlinson, *Globalization and Culture* (Chicago 1999), 1.
7 Saskia Sassen, *The Global City: New York, London, Tokyo*, rev. ed. (Princeton, 2000).
8 Daniel Miller, 'Introduction: Anthropology, Modernity and Consumption,' in Daniel Miller, ed., *Worlds Apart: Modernity through the Prism of the Local* (London 1995), 1–23.
9 Allan Hanson, 'The Making of the Maori: Cultural Invention and Its Logic,' *American Anthropologist*, 91 (Fall 1989): 890–902; Roy Wagner, *The Invention of Culture* (Chicago, 1980).
10 Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, eds, *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge, 1983).
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