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**the mystic 'it' and the centre of culture:
an ethnographic experience with a women's drumming circle.**

Robert Offen

A thesis

in

The Department

of

Sociology and Anthropology

**Presented in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts at
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ABSTRACT

the mystic 'it' and the centre of culture:
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Robert Offen

This study is an ethnographic exploration of a women's drumming circle in Southwestern Ontario. The focus of the paper is to act as a conduit to open up a communication link between the women and their conceptions and perceptions of the multicultural construction of their ritual group; and a detailed reading of a few academic texts that are representative of the dominant discourse in their respective branches of the study of anthropology. The emphasis of the paper is on points of convergence and difference between academic theory and the ritual practice of the drumming group with the goal of opening avenues of research in the concrete reality of the imagination. Some of the issues that are to be developed are a working definition of the spiritual essence - the mystic 'it'- of culture; the structuring of the women's ritual around a feminine energy spirit and the organizing principle of consensus; as well as an examination of individuality and the process of group formation.

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Program Objectives

The program is designed to provide general training in social and cultural anthropology so that graduates will be qualified to pursue further studies in anthropology at the doctoral level, or in the alternative, have acquired the inter-cultural skills they need to work effectively as consultants or mediators in multi-cultural contexts. The program is specifically designed to sensitize students to their ethical responsibilities as anthropologists, provide them with a taste of field work, help them develop a critical understanding of anthropological theory, and encourage experimentation with the medium, form and style of ethnographic presentation. Students are invited to join with faculty in the reconstruction of the discipline of anthropology, and the promotion of inter-cultural communication and respect.

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The ultimate aim of this thesis is to create an architectural structure in which to display the ethnographic representation of what I experienced over the course of rendering this project. It can be perhaps viewed as a museum piece housing prosaic dioramas built from the ground up to seven stories. As such each chapter represents a temporal slice of the development of the thought process over the period of its conception to fruition. As it is written, the predominant structure reflects this time line and may appear to the reader as if the form subordinates the content of the paper because that formal structure of presentation is laid over top of the content of the analysis presented. However, as it is the same objective structure combined with differing subjective content the thesis fosters a communicative relationship between the two as equals as opposed to the dominant/subordinate relationship required to translate the objective into the subjective and vice versa. Instead of looking at different

objects through the same subjective lens the idea is to look at the same object through the eyes of different subjects. Therefore, the object and the subject are situated in relation to each other and not one opposed to the other.

In an effort to make this thesis, which is ostensibly an account of my experiences and thinking, more accessible to the reader I should take this opportunity to set the logical parameters of the chapters that follow. The object of the study is to ferret out what can be termed the mystic 'it' of culture, which is that unknowable essence at the centre of culture which bonds people together within 'it'. The subject of the study is to ascertain the collective limits of human knowledge regarding the mystic 'it' by placing the commentary of subjective agents around this central object. The literary device that is used to broach this communication is to posit a macrocosm along side a microcosm in the interest of describing how the individual fits into the collective and how the imaginary fits into the reality. For example, the discussion progresses from a macroscopic view of culture reflected in increasingly microscopic fashion as the essence is distilled into a general overview of ritual, to the specifics of this particular ritual, to the individual conceptions of the ritual participants. The four part process of inquiry runs continually throughout the paper being mapped over and over again throughout the structure and is perhaps the basis of its coherence.

If we consider these cognitive parameters as the building materials for the structure of the thesis, then we are just about ready to dig a hole to lay our foundations. It is in the ground work that Concordia University takes a place of preponderance as the program's above stated objectives are the foundational

object at the root of the paper. This program outline and the possibility of doing such an experimental form of ethnography was instrumental in my decision to attend Concordia. Within the first month of commencing my studies I was presented, via assigned readings, with the subjective foundation of the project:

We are therefore arguing for a re-energized research project, one that resituates the production of identities in the systematic investigation of power relations, that pays heed to discursive hegemonies but not at the expense of rigorous, empirically grounded analysis and an insistence on concrete social change (Talai and Knowles 1996:14).

For the purposes of this paper I have broken this sentence down into seven constituent parts which serve as chapter headings which encapsulate the subsequent discussion. As well each chapter begins with a quotation that serves to crystallize the dominant theme that will recur throughout the chapter.

The first chapter, entitled "We are therefore arguing...", begins by quoting Tzvetan Toderov's book *The Conquest of America* and seeks to heed his warnings regarding the political myth of equality. The chapter delves deeper into the work of Vared Amit-Talai, from which the project's outline was culled, in an effort to situate the project in her study of identity politics so as to remove it from those politics. I find her study to be limited by the focus on political issues and the requisite logical structure of an academic argument which is strained by her attempt to encode postmodernist subjectivity in place of modernist objectivity. For her study to reach its stated goal of inscribing inclusivity into the exclusive domain of political power it would require the political elites to transcend themselves which would hardly be in their best interests. The

underlying message of the chapter is perhaps that culture is not a political entity but anthropology is, with the aim of expanding the study of culture outside of the study of anthropology.

The next chapter, "...for a re-energized research project...", is prefaced with a segment of the poem "Carmel Point" by Robinson Jeffers, with sentiment being that we humans are only a part of this planet and are really just along for the ride around the sun. This chapter calls for a less humanocentric view of culture meaning that we have to expand our conceptions beyond current standards of human comprehension because the idea that the word culture represents is beyond human cognition. The attempt is to try and end the argument structure of academic discourse first objectively, by recognizing that we know too little about the object to understand what we are arguing about, and secondly by subjectively defining the word culture, at least for the purposes of this paper. Much of the thinking involved in this chapter was heavily influenced by reading the work of Walter Benjamin. His writing that is most germane to this paper is his unfinished Arcades Project that was completed in 1989 in Susan Buck-Morss' *The Dialectics of Seeing*, and concerns a four part process regarding the cyclical nature of time. In Benjaminian terms the structure involves the Fossil, the ur-form that is considered to be the pre-history of the current historical epoch; the Fetish, which revolves around the actualization of the past into current historical conceptions; the Wish Image, which contains the potential future of the present manifestations of fetishized history; and Ruin, which re-encodes the transiency of history in the decay of the dreamed potential of the

Wish Image as a corollary to the Fossil. Although Benjamin saw more contemporaneity to the process as if different times were occurring in the same space; I have bastardized it somewhat to fit it in as a model for the four part rhythmic structure of the thesis, and in an effort to demonstrate the same time occurring in different spaces.

At about the same time as I was beginning to explore Benjamin, a year ago last February, ritual drumming was introduced into a prayer group in London, Ontario. The prayer group had been started in 1993 and was centred around weekly gatherings, that have since become monthly, designed to explore different expressions of spirituality. The group was structured around a "core" group of about six women who rotated the "leadership" of the ritual amongst themselves. While there were no set rules or format the leader's general responsibility was to choose the particular activity and host the session. While experiencing these forms of expression the group eventually hit on drumming and decided to stick with it. This has caused a transitional period, with some members joining and others dropping out, that has seemed to stabilize around about five Drummers who comprise the "core." Three of these women are originals from the old prayer group while two have joined since the drumming was started. Leadership is still rotated as before with the designate being responsible for framing the session and giving it a focus. While this often involves borrowing ideas from other cultures and religious traditions, sessions have also been designed around different spiritual pretexts such as the celebration of the Equinox and a visualization exercise which will be described

later. As the group is pretty open and fluid, membership is difficult to pin down regarding numbers. Since February 1997 there have been about twelve women who have attended at least one session but there have never been more than seven or less than four at any one session. The women tend to fit within the middle class socio-economic strata, all are employed and tend to be well educated (three of the Drummers I interviewed hold Master's degrees). While a Christian religious background is predominant the group is more concerned with spiritual, rather than religious, forms of expression emphasizing more feminine aspects of worship. This is about as far as we can go drawing out the similarities between the Drummers and their motivations. I was continuously struck by the strong sense of individuality maintained by the women within their collective expression of spirituality.

This theme is continued in the third chapter, "...one that resituates the production of identities...". The reader will notice throughout this chapter, and the rest of the thesis, the switching of fonts as each Drummer was assigned a different type-face to try and maintain that sense of individuality within an anonymous group expression. The focus of this chapter is to illustrate how the Drummers conceive themselves regarding issues such as ethnicity, religion, and gender so as to remove such constructs from the political arena. This is realized in two fashions the first being that the Drummers have never really consciously formed an identity around the ritual and were doing so at my request; and by the group focus on fetishized spiritual energy rather than the political fetish of power.

We continue our inquiry "...in the systematic investigation of power relations...". The quotation is from Mickey Hart, former percussionist for the Grateful Dead, and author of the books *Planet Drum* and *Drumming at the Edge of Magic*; and it is trying to communicate the power relationship within music as different rhythms are brought together in equality. The rest of the chapter centres on the work of Richard Schechner who studies traditional cultural theatre and ritual performance and his work is closely associated with both Victor Turner and Michael Taussig. The focus of the chapter is setting up a dialogue between Schechner's written words and knowledge of ritual in general and the Drummer's spoken words and experiences of this particular ritual. It culminates in a discussion of issues such as cultural appropriation, commodification, and marketing demonstrating these as avenues that also help foster inter-cultural communication.

Those issues are a bridge into the next chapter "...that pays heed to discursive hegemonies...". Quoted is Babatunde Olatunji a Nigerian drummer, taken from the liner notes of one of his recordings, to illustrate the force of the drum beat compelling one to dance. It explores further the issue of commodification in the form of recorded music and popular fads as a means of increasing exposure for the power of drumming by allowing larger groups of people to experience the voice of the drum. The chapter continues by focusing on the voice of the drum as a means of communication between the Drummers as they create rhythms together noting a curious fragile strength of the drumming as they learn to trust their collective spirituality.

The thesis continues "...but not at the expense of rigorous, empirically grounded analysis..." by reproducing a poem that was read by the Drummer leading one of the sessions that I attended. This is followed by a recounting of what I observed and experienced as I worked my way through a session as an inexperienced drummer, a novice Drummer, and a neophyte anthropologist. This leads into a more detailed discussion of one of the Drummer's personal spiritual life exploring the reality of the imagination as an important part of human existence. We then move into an examination of the concepts of synchronicity and syncretism as the Drummers not only incorporate other traditions and world views into their ritual, but discuss how drumming relates to different forms of spiritual expression they have encountered in the past.

This leads us to the final chapter "...and an insistence on concrete social change." which calls on anthropologists to insist on such change by finding other ways of producing ethnographic representations besides the traditional academic argument. The quotation is once again by Mickey Hart and sets up the metaphor that is used as a cognitive tool to explain the over riding structure of the paper. The thesis concludes by illustrating the concrete social change fostered within the collectivity as the Drummers come together as individuals in the self-conscious formation of a community.

The main goal of the literary style of the form and content of the thesis was to capture in a readable, if somewhat confused, fashion a sense of the experience of drumming. I was trying to represent the impact that is felt when a cacophony of divergent voices finally come together and sync up in an entrained

synthesis. I hope that this introduction serves to provide some direction for the reader to approach the paper so that impact may be more fully appreciated in the end.

I
We are therefore arguing . . .

"If it is incontestable that the prejudice of superiority is an obstacle in the road to knowledge, we must also admit that the prejudice of equality is still a greater one, for it consists in identifying the other purely and simply with one's own "ego ideal" (or with oneself)" (Todorov 1984:165).

Ethnography is perched in a precarious position between anthropology, the study of culture, and culture, the study of anthropology. The liminoid state of the ethnography¹ allows the practice to mediate the gap between the study and the culture by providing it with logic. The role of logic is to make sense of the conditions that reality has set before us but this task is somewhat limited by the conditions of the project which requires us to make sense of the logical conditions rather than the reality as it lies before us. One of the essential realizations of postmodernism, tediously mined like gold from our reflexivity, is the fundamental opposition between the study of anthropology and the study of culture. Like the countless voices we have vainly tried to place and to hear and to privilege in our ethnographies, the issue is one of exclusivity.

Anthropology was once the sole provider of knowledge regarding the study of culture but this position has been challenged. Ironically this challenge to anthropology's throne is chiefly due to the changing conditions of reality fostered by the success of the anthropological project.

"If radical alterity did not exist, it would be anthropology's project to invent it" (Keesing, 1994:301). But the "invention" is now yielding a harvest of exquisite poetic irony. Anthropologists, Keesing argued, pursued and perpetuated the construction of fundamental and extreme Otherness within a conceptual framework that construed cultures as "bounded", "self-reproducing" and "unique

experiments" in human possibility (ibid.). It is a conception of culture which has been adopted by Third World nationalist elites and turned as a weapon: "against foreign researchers, who can be pilloried for having stolen 'it', having sold 'it' for profit in the academic marketplace, or simply (as outsiders seeking to interpret someone else's mystic essence) having misunderstood and misrepresented 'it.'" (ibid:303) (in Talai 1995:2).

This quotation appears in the introductory section of Vered Amit-Talai's *Anthropology, Multiculturalism, and the Concept of Culture* (1995). On the page after its insertion Talai bears witness to Keesing's argument as if it was prophesy:

To the extent that it exists, the divide between contemporary anthropology and multiculturalism arose not because anthropology failed to develop beyond a functionalist, uncritical view of culture but precisely because it has been able to move on. What is frustrating for many contemporary anthropologists is that while we have struggled to supersede the distortions of earlier renderings of cultures as homogeneous, bounded and distinct entities, this conception has gained popularity not only in the more vulgar forms of identity politics but in some of the most erudite discussions of multiculturalism (ibid:3-4).

On some level we must consider that at least within the academic realm of culture, anthropologists are still the Third World elites who can turn that status as a cultural weapon "against foreign researchers, who can be pilloried for having stolen 'it', having sold 'it' for profit in the academic marketplace, or simply (as outsiders seeking to interpret someone else's mystic essence) having misunderstood and misrepresented 'it.'" Perhaps buried somewhere in anthropology's mystic essence we will find the secret of our success.

If we assume that what is defined by the terms "culture" and "radical alterity" pre-existed such definitions the project of anthropology is poised to invent nothing. If anthropology created such concepts it implies that before anthropology humanity was absurdly homogeneous. We can also assume that western Europeans and their descendants are not the first people to ever run across different cultures and radical alterity, so what of the project to invent anthropology? Is it not anthropology that has been invented as "bounded", "self-reproducing" and a "unique experiment" in human possibility?

Thus anthropology was invented as a functionalist project with the objective to prove that cultures were in fact reified as such. The underlying premise of the study being that if "their" culture was not bounded and self-reproducing then neither was "ours". This functionalist project fit the colonial mandate subjectively because it justified our dominating position, and objectively because our culture seemed to be bounded and self-reproducing.

The project worked because the dominant society set the standards for which discussions of cultural matters would take place. If we are concerned with the politics of culture or cultural politics (they are not the same) the privilege of power is to define the terms. Thus the Other is forced to translate its terms and conditions into those of democracy if they are to legally share in their inalienable rights to autonomy and self government. Politically speaking then the inalienable right is that of democracy, which is itself a functionalist project, providing a global climate in which:

It is not as redundant as we would have hoped to state the following obvious points. States are not political actors. Ethnic and racial groups are not political actors. Ethnic and racial categories are not political actors. People are political actors who mediate, contest, and experience the outcomes of racial and ethnic distinctions (Talai and Knowles 1996:14).

The redundancy of this statement not only confirms the efficacy of the functionalist project in defining the terms of legitimacy, it also signals the end of functionalism. The school of multiculturalism that Talai criticizes is a postmodernist remnant of a modernist fragment that spells the functionalist project's logical conclusion. The political object is no longer the demonstration of reification because the political subject is now displaying it.

Besides redundancy is not necessarily a bad thing being a fail safe to fall back on providing fodder for our continuing existence as anthropologists. However, I am troubled by certain aspects of Talai and Knowles's argument in "Against Parochialism and Fragmentation" (1996) dealing with the intricacies of the study of identity politics. My concern lies less with their project than with politics, as it has been formalized as a static concept such as democracy, which causes parochialization and fragmentation as a particularly endemic effect. How do you argue for change? If people from Other cultures act and react in a different way from Our culture can we expect Our culture to act and react in a fashion that is other to ourselves? The colonial project has shown us the painstaking difficulties involved in trying to convince and coerce members of subordinate classes to give up that status and those symbols that made them subordinate. Can we expect the dominant to give up their status and symbols

without a fight? People from Other cultures inhabiting western concepts while perhaps changing the notions of the dominant culture, have retained the order of the dominant society. The divide and conquer mentality is not so redundant to appear when people act on behalf of states, ethnic, and racial categories:

...social categories disadvantaged by the symbolic order [...] cannot but recognize the legitimacy of the dominant classification in the very fact that their only chance of neutralizing those of its effects most contrary to their own interests lies in submitting to them in order to make use of them (Bourdieu 1994:160).

Herein lies the secret of the success of the functionalist project of both anthropology and politics, as objectively devised to prove that its subject is really an object, enjoying the advantage that the subject must be recognized as an object before it can be subjective.

If the successes of functionalism are measured objectively the success of the secret remains subjective implying the admission that we are no closer to defining what 'it' really is than we were when we started. However I do not see this as a function of bad science or a misconceived project as all indications point to its precision. The problem lies in the study of people, the majority of whom are for all intents and purposes largely ignorant of the subject of social science and therefore do not act like scientific objects. If we want people to act like such the new project should be to teach people to behave scientifically. However I am willing to bet that such a project would be a dismal failure, but at least we would then know what 'it' is.

If the 'it' in question is the mystic essence of the discipline of anthropology we are forced into a discussion of the complexities obscured in the invocation of

the simplicity of 'it'. For such an understanding of 'it' we must delve further into the anthropological theoretical conceptions of the objective beyond functionalism. The focus of the literature now surrounds the study of the cultural as a group of individuals instead of as an individual group:

In developing cultural strategies, individuals have to cope on the one hand with the divergent exigencies of numerous situations and on the other with the contradictions and conflicts which can be engendered by over laps in time, space and personnel as they move from one activity to the other. In each situation, they have to negotiate expectations and protocols with people whose vantage points and understandings may be quite different. It is difficult to see how cultural production viewed in this light can be automatic or straightforward. [...] I want to argue therefore that a logical extension of a distributionist perspective is a view of cultural agency as purposive and self-conscious (Talai 1995:9-10).

This certainly closes the research of the functionalist project but I am dubious about the prospects of self-conscious cultural agency as a theoretical concept. Is it any more realistic to counter the quest for objective reality with that of subjective reality? This question is not so problematic in and of itself but when it is coupled with politics it slams into the implicit paradox in a world where all things are not equal, especially regarding political power. How do you give agency to people who do not want it, and conversely how do you take agency from people who will not give it up?

This is similar to the old colonial conundrum of power. Its concepts have merely been inverted, the opposite side of the same coin, so to speak. Perhaps we can consider this to be the head of the functionalist tale weaving its way through the course of human history. While the project has a new and improved subject it still has the same object. And the object is power.

As such the analysis of the theoretical concepts, and even the collection of the data that produced them, is mired in the realm of the politics of culture. Through the logic of the language of our discourse this is always the domain of the dominant culture, and is a function of the practicalities involved with how we define our object. Through the logic of the discourse of our language, this is always a certain politics involved in why we define our subject. In the mystic essence of the discipline of anthropology 'it' has a dominant discourse, despite the subjectivity of "its" object.

While it is this discourse that Talai and Knowles are trying to deflect and redirect, the study has an inherent redundancy stemming from the fail safe of political power linked as it is to the construction of personal identity in the realm of formalized politics. If you are going to study politics, no matter how unfunctional your project's design, it will tend to be parochial and fragmented because politics, at least as liberal democracy has evolved, has a functional objective that is designed to parochialize and fragment the subject. This is the postmodern guise of the colonial divide and conquer mechanism updated to neocolonial standards.

You can do the study and demonstrate that neocolonialism is sweeping the world at a much faster rate than its colonial prototype and discuss the implications of such. But the inventions are still considerable and considered among the discourses of the powerful elites and reflected in their electoral politics and its parochial fragments. While such conceptions cannot be considered intentional efforts of western hegemony to re-colonize or

neocolonialize in a kinder, gentler fashion; they are hardly intellectual efforts to decolonize and define other alternatives instead of describing alternative others.

There is an inclusivity to politics that goes beyond the formal institutions of politics themselves and not just the assumptions and inventions they activate. Thus political inclusivity connotes, especially in theory, a recognition of the political right to be apolitical, or at least the anti-democracy, which is the nation-state's transcendental Other. To be sure the debate is purely academic because people tend to act under the auspices of states, and ethnic and racial categories as the static concepts from which they base the identities that they construct concerning nations, and ethnic and racial categories. If you ask a political question you will get a political answer and whatever the response it must be acknowledged that:

To effectively handle the multi cultural of daily life necessarily requires a certain level of pragmatic, comparative consciousness. We are constantly comparing, exploring, pressing and remaking the convergences and distinctions between the activities in which we participate (Talai 1995:10).

While we are still talking about levels, and certain ones at that, what is being noticed now is that people are changing identities more than identities are changing people. Conceptions are beginning to be less compartmentalized, by being contextualized in a more flexible fashion:

The articulations which functionalists assumed came as ready made and automatically reproducible functions of social organization are rather a product of prodigious intellectual effort individuals apply to making sense of the almost impossible complexity of their lives. It is this effort which keeps life from feeling utterly fragmented even in the most dispersed, compartmentalized, anonymous metropolitan setting (ibid).

This is a function of either humans changing their behaviour, attitude, mindset, world view, and cognitive process en masse, or one in which humans beings are fairly consistent and scholars are beginning to broaden the scope of research to a more expansive forum. But it is probably a little of both- a function of the relation between the two.

And it is this effort that allows us to argue along with Seyla Benhabib that "we are not merely extensions of our histories, that vis-a-vis our own stories we are in the position of author and character at once" (1992:214) (ibid).

This is, of course, the simple realization that people actually live their lives. So how do we relate? By constructing identities, both in theory and in practice.

At this point in my analysis I would like to state that this is not intended as a critique of Talai and Knowles's work, indeed I have stolen their outline of a research project to structure this paper. My point is that if we take their ideas and apply them to politics we will see little change measured in increments, but if we take them out of politics whole worlds begin to open up. Nor do I wish to imply that analysis of politics is dated or worthless and that there is no necessity to examine the power relations that govern certain aspects of people's lives and the conditions they live with. However such a project will ignore those people who do not construct their identities around static, or even dynamic, political concepts. And it is perhaps these people who are on the cutting edge of social change.

II

. . . for a re-energized research project . . .

. . . Meanwhile the image of pristine beauty
Lives in the very grain of granite,
Safe as the endless ocean that climbs our cliff. -As for us:
We must uncenter our minds from ourselves;
We must unhumanize our views a little, and become confident
As the rock and ocean that we were made from.

Robinson Jeffers

As the years mount since the scientific revolution known now as the Enlightenment we can take pause to ponder why the road to knowledge leads to so much ignorance. Perhaps it is just part of the process. I have already indicated that for the study of anthropology to move beyond its functionalism born in the Enlightenment part of the process is encoding subjectivity in place of the former objectivity. However, this leads us into an entirely different set of problems:

If we celebrate fragmentation as not only insurmountable but ethically virtuous, how can intellectuals speak to each other across the specificity of their research projects, across disciplines and countries? If we give into the seduction of local incommensurabilities, then we negate our capacity and accountability as political agents and doom any possibility of new alliances (Talai and Knowles 1996:14).

While I am obviously unconcerned by political agency or its accountability (or lack there of) I do share some of the concerns of our commentators. However my interests are more epistemological. I notice a disturbing unwillingness among scholars to grapple with culture head on. If you want to see a human waffle ask an anthropologist to define culture. This timidity is understandable given the excesses of our functionalist forbearers, but do we need to give into

the excesses of postmodernism? While such a definition may or may not be impossible the quest is the responsibility of the academy's official representatives in charge of the study of culture.

This celebration of difference stems from a disproportionate emphasis on the mystic 'it' of anthropology, trying to establish "its" legitimacy, with an inverse focus on the mystic 'it' of culture. While the functionalist school of thought being somewhat unsophisticated was unconsciously self-referential in its world view, being consciously self-referential will not enable us to speak to the world or its global realities. Without a working definition of culture on which to base the study of anthropology how can intellectuals speak to each other, let alone governments? Such localized incommensurability taken to its logical conclusion indicates that culture just may be the only difference between people, especially as they form groups and societies. While people live within and throughout their cultures on a daily basis, it is academics who are paid to think about it on a daily basis. We cannot ask our subjects to define our object. If we are incapable of such articulation, how can they?

The functionalism of anthropology has left us at a curious cross roads in our episteme, as the invented concepts have taken on a life of their own so to speak. Ethnocentricity has an irony of its own in that often times, especially on a political level, the other is the Other because of their own ethnocentricity. This is not to blame the victim but to be explicitly blunt in saying that the celebration of difference necessitates an acceptance of ethnocentricity. I wonder how much western cognitive conservatism can be liberalized with appeals to the "rest's"

own conservatism. It is still the "us and them" debate no matter how multiculturally it is framed. We must begin with the admission that through no fault of our own we are all ethnocentric. This is perhaps the original sin of the teleology of anthropology after the fall from positivistic Edenic grace.

At any rate we have been forced, again through no fault of our own, to face up to our functionalist past and our colonial roots. If we are ever going to deal with such a shattered mess of ideas it is not going to be by deconstructing our concepts but by decolonizing our minds. This could be made possible by demonstrating with similar functionalist efficacy that culture does not in fact exist except in our imaginations. This task will be difficult considering the seeming willingness of people to inhabit imagined communities. As such we are obliged to recognize the very real existence of the imaginary as the basis for any culture's mystic 'it'. It is to imagination that we are going to look to reconstruct rather than deconstruct our project's object. If there is one valuable lesson of functionalism it is that we can actively engage our imaginations in such a thing.

We must be concerned with not throwing the epistemological baby out with the colonial bath water. The scientific quest is for knowledge to examine, not falsehoods to purge nor ignorance to eradicate. This causes a fundamental rereading of the history of our discipline to learn from our present experience of culture and not to critique our lack of it in the past. While we still need to study the continuing colonial and neocolonial power relations in operation around the world, there must be a place, especially within the cosy confines of tenured academia, to go beyond such a project. If we cannot conceive of a world without

colonialism we will never be able to make it happen. We can bet our politicians and captains of industry will not make it happen.

What I am driving at is the paradoxical proposition that in order to decolonize our minds, and thus its inventions and conventions, we need to take a less humanocentric view of the culture we study. But this is not mere mental geometry or a diversionary thought experiment. It is the admission that whether or not we can define, or even describe 'it', there is an objective reality. The human species is but a small portion of this planet which is but a small portion of the universe, both of which impact human existence far more than humans impact either. Once we stop the quest to understand objective reality we end science; once we end science anthropologists become superfluous art critics judging the construction of an ivory tower of Babel. This is true whether or not the rest of the world abandons science. However, it is a betrayal if the rest of the world does not. No human culture has given any indication that it has ever given up the quest to understand objective reality. The postmodern rebellion in anthropology has come perilously close to abdicating that responsibility in favour of self reflection, satire, and self-parody.

As anthropologists we do not study humans we study their culture. As people have come to be defined by their culture there is posed a fundamental opposition between people and humans, but it all depends on how we as humans define us as people. Culture is something that appears to be innate, or at least inherent, in humans while being endemic to a particular people. The challenge of anthropology is not to set criteria or narrow the parameters of

culture but to expand them to compel us to take more knowledge of humanity into account for the people we question.

Therefore I welcome Talai's inclusion of self-consciousness into her repertoire of academic tropes, but not her reservations. Somewhat like politics there is an inclusiveness to self-consciousness that cuts like a double edged sword. It connotes both self construction and destruction, it is at once empowerment and self censor, but not necessarily awareness. We must be aware that those in power will not accept a self-consciousness that excludes themselves. The secret of the mystic 'it' of culture must be examined giving consideration to the power of consciousness rather than to the consciousness of power.

But we are still left with the problem of trying to instill, rather than install, consciousness into our working definition of culture. The adjective working does have a functionalist connotation, but functionalism in and of itself is nothing to be afraid of. Besides when going into the realm of the unknown consciousness I would rather step on the modernists's back than the postmodern front. As such I take Walter Benjamin as my guide to lay the foundations on which this theory of culture rests. Ironically, the footings come from his *Passagen-Werk* (Arcades Project) left unfinished when the Nazis chased him to suicide. Our only commentator is Susan Buck-Morss who reconstructed his notes and manuscripts into her book *The Dialectics of Seeing* :

... Benjamin attempted to construct a counter-discourse by unearthing buried markers that expose "progress" as the fetishization of modern temporality, which is an endless repetition

of the "new" as the "always-the-same" [...] and suggests criteria for distinguishing authentic from pseudo- "sublations" of these polarities, which allow us to identify as progressive those cultural forms that do not repeat the old, but *Redeem* it (1989:56-7).

As it were Benjamin poised himself to watch history as it circulated straight towards him, theorizing that the historical object spanned a four part dialectical process involving a transitive object fashioned from a "Fossil" to a "Fetish" to a "Wish Image" to "Ruin". While space prohibits a detailed exegesis of Benjamin's intellectual richness, the key to its movement is that the fragments of Ruin are collected as Fossils. Suffice it to say for our present purposes that postmodernism is our Ruin, Benjamin is our Fossil, culture is our Fetish, and its definition our Wish Image.

When seeking a definition it is perhaps wise to at first look to the recognized experts and start with what they know. So let's take the word "old" as an example. Trusty Mr. Webster tells me it entered the language before the twelfth century, and lists nine definitions, fourteen sub-meanings, and six synonyms. What I find interesting is that it is a simple word with several synonyms each adding more complexity to the original concept, yet each has a more simple definition referring to a part of the whole. The complex simplicity of ancient, venerable, antique, antiquated, archaic, and obsolete come together to create the simple complexity encompassed by the word "old." Our working definition of culture requires as much simple complexity as our language will allow. The empirical evidence supporting such a claim can be observed in the academic transition from modern functionalism to unfunctional postmodernism

showing that if you give people simple concepts they will begin to make them more complex all by themselves.

It is in trusting that trend that we push ahead into consciousness which connotes knowledge and experience and denotes awareness. This has to be something more than self-consciousness because the word we are (re)defining is culture, not cult. Culture is not a singular or individual phenomenon and is known and experienced, albeit by each person, as a collectivity. This brings us to the next criterion which is conditionality. Our definition must be unconditional, for two reasons: the quest for knowledge must be unconditional to guard against being the quest for ignorance; and secondly it must be applicable to differing situations regarding human contextuality. This is perhaps also a leap of faith in consideration of apparent human nature that strolls far out on a limb of the Benjaminian tree of knowledge rooted in the premise that human production and reproduction creates nothing but the conditions for creation to happen by 'it'-self.

CULTURE \cult-ur\ n (1998) : the collective edge of human consciousness.

While I still pronounce the word \kel-cher\ like everyone else, I like the inference of the ur-form, not as something primitive but as something elemental either to humans in general or people in particular. Culture is elemental to the recognition of each. I also think the image of the edge is especially apropos. An edge can be fixed like a bayonet, guarded like a border, shifting like a boundary, cutting like a blade, and limited like a frontier. One can be edgy, or be edged like a fringe. One can go over the edge, or under it, or sit right on it, or even

straddle it; but we cannot get beyond it. Culture has an edge and it is your consciousness. What I particularly like about the definition is that it is specifically vague, and imbues a sense of wonder into the study.

So culture is at the edge of my consciousness as I begin in earnest my ethnographic representation combining my knowledge of anthropology with my experience of the Drummers as they create the conditions for culture to create 'it'-self. However, I do not think of this as an argument attempting to demonstrate the efficacy of my point of view, because when arguing it is better not to be wondering what you are writing about. I have only a vague idea, a couple of big clues, and a few good leads garnered with the help of some friends. The intended goal perhaps being to test the definition, to see how it works, rather than to question the people making it work so that my object may remain objective and my subject subjective, allowing my ethnography to self-consciously mingle the study of the mystic 'it' of anthropology with the study of the mystic 'it' of drumming to see what culture emerges.

III

. . . one that resituates the production of identities . . .

"I don't know what you mean by ethnography, the word makes no sense to me..."

While making sense and making logic are sometimes two different things, we must make sense before we make logic; and we begin making sense by ourselves. This being my first ethnographic project I was not quite sure how to logically go about it. Up until now anthropology was something I read about in books, so it was with some trepidation that I began my interviews. Luckily the women I interviewed seemed to have a better sense of who I was than I did as we constructed our identities around each other in this context. It soon began to feel like we were co-workers on the same project, trying together to figure out what 'it' was that was going on here. I had offered them the opportunity to cognate and articulate what the drumming and the group meant to them; an idea that had never occurred to some. So many of my questions were met with "... I never really thought about it before...", but also with enthusiasm and openness. It was a tremendous support when in the end they were as interested in reading the thesis as I was in writing it.

The Drummers individually and as a group lessened the impact of my identity crisis as I fashioned myself as a neophyte anthropologist. Part of my insecurities stemmed from the fact that the Drummers are not exactly a traditional anthropological subject for my ritual first fieldwork. While this is part of what made this project interesting and attractive, it meant I had little literature to fall back on, requiring a large degree of cross-reading to make logic out of

what I sensed was happening. As such I have chosen to read the scholarly literature into the Drummers as opposed to reading the Drummers into the literature. At any rate it is largely a square peg/round hole debate in trying to open up a line of communication between the two.

So I start in an obvious place and look to the intellectual experts on the subject of identity construction and once again lean heavily on Talai:

...what makes ethnicity often such an effective basis for collective mobilization is its brutal selectiveness. [...] The rhetorical emphasis on descent and continuity which are a feature in most ethnic charters provides for an affiliation which, in principle, precedes actual interaction and performance. I don't necessarily need to know someone, like them, understand what they are doing or act in concert with them to be able to recognize them as sharing my ethnic identity (1995:13-4).

Talai's third point will be borne out throughout the paper to an extent that for now we can just accept it as empirically valid. This of course may stem from the fact that by most sociological indicators the women fall under the category that can be characterized as the dominant majority of mainstream Canadian society. This is a shorthand reference for middle class and European descent, which when added to the observation that the women are in their 40s and 50s, makes them of the generation commonly referred to by the sociological colloquialism 'Baby Boomers'. That is to say they are of the same ethnicity, and one whose legitimacy is not in doubt. The study of sociology by definition makes this dominant ethnicity the most reified from which all others are based, including anthropology.

Interestingly when ethnic ancestry was mentioned it was stated as if a matter of fact, that could only be construed as political because the political lens can focus any where; and only as a justified birth right in that explanation is devoted to rationalization:

"There is ancestry from Ireland and I remember my mom saying that when she went to Ireland she could just feel the difference when she was near where her ancestors came from; and she felt a real kinship in that. So maybe that's why I chose the [Celtic] drum over the [more local] Native drums ... although there was some Native background too, though not very strong. More closer to the Irish, a lot of Irish."

Here we can begin to see the first indication of the Drummers as they speak of the drum has having an almost inborn genetic connection to their understanding of its place in their lives. As other voices progressively corroborate:

"I've never felt any particular connection to Native American tradition, or African tradition, but there's just something about the drumming that goes way back beyond programming ... I guess that's the only connection I can see in it. (DNA). It's in the genes."

"... to me the rhythm of the drum is the most natural inner rhythm. I think that's why drums are so common. It doesn't matter where you go in the world, somebody's going to play a drum. It doesn't matter what culture you are looking at, they'll have a drum of some sort. May be it goes back to the heartbeat. May be it goes back to the womb where the heartbeat plays to the child. I don't know, it's just so natural."

Now we are beginning to approach the mystic 'it' of culture and its description seems to be revolving around several fetishes not the least of which is a drum, linked to their (and perhaps our) very lives from time immemorial, or at least from birth. We can tentatively say that the drum holds a place of continuance for the Drummers as they piece together the different facets of reality that life presents. This can be illustrated by letting our first commentator continue with her response to the question that followed the above quotation:

"But as you said before you picked that drum because of its sound?"

"Yeah, and the price. The Native drums [in the shop] were 10 inches, if that, and were around \$100. And of course the smaller the drum gets the less sound it gets. [...] Whereas this drum was about \$60 and it's a 16 inch and with it being bigger I can get different sounds ... at the centre and going up the sides and stuff like that. I keep telling myself I'm going to play around more with it, but ..."

I will discuss the implications of the market and commodification later, but here I should like to point out that objectively in time (our history) and subjectively in space (our field) that marketing has a more direct effect on many people's lives and intellectual efforts than politicking.

The next time a Drummer I interviewed placed rhetorical emphasis on descent and ethnicity it once again speaks to Talai's assertions as to the multicultural reality that were discussed previously:

"I find I really have to struggle with- 'what is my own tradition and how does that relate to drumming?' And maybe that's why I'm drawn to Irish drums because at least that's border line connected- the Scots didn't drum much I guess. Maybe it's part of the sort of multiculturalism that we're all finding around us more; and it's recognizing we're not the only people here, and we're the minority overall; and trying to learn from other people's traditions and borrow what works for us, and in a respectful manner."

While we can notice a personal identification of an affiliation with the mainstream Canadian ethnic group, but from a point of view that is hardly dominant, that casts a long shadow over future political engagement, at least as far as politics are presently practiced.

This long shadow can be further illustrated by the Drummers when questioned about the brutal selectiveness required to initiate a women's drumming circle, with gender and especially the female gender, presently being

a potent political signifier². The question being put to the Drummers concerns the importance of it being a women's drumming circle:

"There's been a great, in a sense, a coming home. I can remember once speaking to someone about the Native people, for instance, coming back to their heritage as Natives; and I guess for me reclaiming being female, and honouring that after growing up in a patriarchal society in a very patriarchal religion, has really been monumental for me, it's just been monumental."

"I don't think I can say that I've always been a feminist in the sense of the radical term of the word. But I discovered feminism, that very feminine energy that I don't think I understood was there before. So it's important to me that we're women because I think we do create a different kind of energy. I was part of a sacred circle dance group which was basically women, but a couple of times a couple of men came and it really did change the energy. It's not that it was bad or that I didn't get anything out of it, it was just very different. So being with the women, yeah, it's very important."

"When I started [drumming previously] the group was pretty mixed. It's really only been in the last few years that it's been women and that's kind of evolved and it hasn't really been intentional. I haven't been looking for solely women's circles because I kind of like the energy balanced a bit more than that. But I know based on discussions we've had with some of the people who are in the group that I drum with who, prefer to keep it that way. That's the way they see it-as a way of sharing feminine energy. [...] I think the idea that in some time beyond memory women were the drummers and then women weren't allowed to drum, so now were reclaiming- and I think 'O.K.', but that's not really part of my thinking when I go and do this."

"I've drummed with males and it's great. I don't have to be with women to drum. But that particular group of women are very, very spiritual, very aware of their feminine spirituality and I find that nurturing. [...] I tend to think that drumming, and ritual, and spirituality, is just more of a female thing. But then I haven't had contact with men who drum openly for the same reasons that I drum."

"And for me there's a lot more to the issue because it just sort of happens to be a women's group only because it's very difficult to get men to prayer groups. I can't even get the men in my family to do anything spiritual, everything I do is stark raving nuts. So it's not an issue it's just the way it evolved."

It is interesting that as we find gender to be an effective basis for collective mobilization, the Drummers speak of it as if it is in motion and an on going thing.

By this I mean that the (over)stated emphasis on energy, and curiously the feminine form of it, rather than power, hinges on a static concept of feminine energy. As such this common reification acts as a cognitive tool that is agreed upon to be in motion and unfixed. This is a universal understanding of the group's identity as we see some of the early beginnings of community formation that are moving beyond the political tradition as inherited. I am basing this statement on the observation that the group is organized around a central fetish object that is real because it is known to be imaginary. This enables the group through 'prodigious intellectual effort' to form a consensus without agreement. This is the exact opposite of the political model of power, like the democratic art of compromise, which is to form an agreement without consensus.

What I find interesting is the framing of the discourse in evolutionary, rather than revolutionary terms. This characterization is linked to the emphasis on energy and not power. The power by which the group bonds is the general agreement that the energy is feminine and will guide them to where they will find 'it'. As such leadership is a central issue in the quest for providing direction to where 'it' might be and, comes to be seen as a functional object, around which one can construct an identity. However, the power of leadership does not revolve around a political process but by demonstrating the capacity to move beyond such reified conceptions:

"...when you are working with people who haven't worked through their own issues, who are just operating out of ego; you get into all the power stuff we were talking about with politics and everything else. It's just to stroke your own ego, and make you feel better, and you don't care who you hurt. I mean, so you decide you heard a message

from God and you go and tell somebody this message, [though] it could cause great damage to them because you don't have any discernment."

There is a curious draining of power as well from the traditional fetish of God when constructing a spiritual collective to express the energy of 'it', brought forth by the drumming. This is in turn reflected in their cognitive response as they expressed the spirituality of the collective 'it' pertaining to the expression of an ethnographic question:

"I guess I kind of look at it as inseparable. I mean, I am spirit. So y'know ... everything is spiritual. I don't know if I've been drumming and felt - 'this is the way to get in touch with God.'"

"I think what you're asking me was: 'is that important to me if the whole group was tuned into Jesus or God? And for me it's not. For me that's what I'm getting out of it and the group is just adding to that part of it. It's almost like you're moving together in the experience but everyone's experience is still individual. So whatever it is that they are getting out of it is okay with me. And I don't care if they don't profess that God is present or not, but for me that's what it is."

Thus several of the concepts that have traditionally been static as if etched in stone, such as ethnicity, gender, power, and God, have been deconstructed to the point of being individual constants unfixed by the group's identification with the concepts and their identifications with each other.

As the Drummers construct a collective identity around a multicultural feminine energy spirit³, considered as a wish image for the future, they require a catalyst more than a fetish. As such it is around this catalyst object of the drum that each individual congeals to the philosophy of the group in the formation of a philosophical collective identity on which to focus their relationships with each other. The conceptual basis for such a collective identity therefore cannot be based on the expectation of similarity but on a receptivity to difference making

allowances for the conditions for 'it' to happen, rather than allowing 'it' to happen on condition. Perhaps in the future we will refer to it as the Philosophy of Receptivity:

"I've referred to [drumming] in the past as cheap therapy. [...] There is a kind of way of working stuff out. Again that's not sitting there thinking about what you have to do, but just giving yourself a break from things; and things do tend to work themselves out anyway. And maybe you're just more receptive to it once you've had a session..." [...] "... that's another thing- becoming more receptive. Your questions are making me aware that it sounds like you are asking me if you can make it happen? [...] And I would say an emphatic 'No!' and as I was thinking about that I was thinking: 'why am I saying no?' It's the same thing, like if you were going to work with healing energy, and you can't make healing happen; [and] if you try, in my mind, not only does it not work but all kinds of things happen."

Like the cognitive opposition we have encountered between power and energy, and fetish and catalyst, there are other implications for theoretical identity construction stemming from this principle of receptivity that specifically concerns anthropology and the practice of ethnography. The invented concepts that have become ironic after being cutting edge, become a moot point when people no longer empower static concepts but energize them. In considering their responses to my project in general and my questions in particular the Drummer's focus was on constructing their identities around the drumming sessions to devise a ritual format that worked for me and my logical structure. This fostered the intellectual effort to frame a working model despite the understanding that the model works for them more by constructing the drumming around their identities. It is the self that is the constant that provides the check on the balance of the energy. This allows the Drummers to weave their individual histories into their identification with the collective past while at the

same time weaving the collective history from their individual past. Some are into drumming because of the group and some are into the group because of the drumming.

This process can be illustrated by the evolution of the history of the collective from an institution to a prayer group to the institution of drumming into the prayer group as expressed by an individual Drummer's past experience:

"Well the spirituality group grew out of my experience at [university] where I was working on my Master of Divinity, and feeling very alone when it came to graduation time because everyone else was graduating to go into the church and I knew I was graduating to come out of the church. That I had gone into the studies to, in a sense, set myself free of them, not to become entrenched in them. And as I spoke to my therapist about this she said to me: 'if you want an experience of community, then start one.' Which I did. And initially I guess there were four of us, sort of core, with a couple of other people that came when they could. And so that was in the summer of '93, and we met in that point in time every Saturday with taking turns in leadership and experimenting in what we were doing. Whether we might have been dancing, singing, drawing, visualizing, meditating, laying on of hands, you know, we experimented and experienced different ways of being a prayerful community."

This Drummer can perhaps be characterized as a human catalyst for the drumming group and seemed to have a stronger sense of identity as if she had more personal investment of herself in the group, than many of the other Drummers. Some who have been members from the origins of the prayer group identified her as the individual responsible for initiating the group and introducing drumming. As I let this Drummer continue with her history of how the group began drumming I am struck by once again by the sense of individuality that has fostered the collective experience of the Drummers. The focus is ostensibly motivated by her needs as an individual rather than those of the collective:

"I attended a feminist spirituality conference, at which a large number of women brought drums, attended by about 750 women from all over Canada and the United States. It was my first experience with drumming and I was with another woman at the time and she said: 'Oh look, here's a drum,' and sat down and began drumming. And I said: 'But how can you do it, you don't know how?' And she said: 'I know that's why I'm going to do it.' So I chose at that particular time to dance to what they were drumming and chanting - and I knew the chant, so I sang along and danced. [She goes on to describe more of the process of her gradual discovery of drumming as it continued in fits and starts over about a nine month period.] So again this hunger to drum was still with me and the following January I decided that if I wanted an experience with drumming then maybe I was going to have to orchestrate it myself. and as it was my turn to lead the prayer group that I'm a part of - a women's spirituality group - whatever you want to name it - I decided that's what we would do. And when I began to call the people who were in the group to get together, one of the members said she was sorry but she couldn't do it that particular evening because she had already agreed to drum with three or four other women. I said to her: 'then why don't we put the two groups together and we'll drum?' Which is in fact what we did, and from then on the focus of the prayer slash spirituality group became drumming. And while we continue to focus as spiritual experience we have been drumming ever since, once a month, again taking turns as the leader."

As per the instructions in this passage I have named the group the Drummers.

As per the constructions in this passage it very nicely introduces many of the topics we will encounter as we enter the realm of the ritual of the Drummers.

IV

. . . in the systematic investigation of power relations . . .

"He beat out a count of ten and then called out a number, which I then tried to place on top of his next ten beats. For instance, when he called "twelve," I tried to lay twelve beats within the span of his ten, so that his last beat and my last beat would meet - at the One. With this simple game, Alla Rakha destroyed my beliefs about rhythm. *Rhythm is just time, and time can be carved up any way you want.* We played eleven over nine and twelve over eight and fifteen over thirteen. He showed me the obvious truth that twelve bars of eleven are the same as eleven bars of twelve" (Hart 1990:143).

The carving of time is the essence of the social function of ritual structuring the temporal modality of the space a culture inhabits. The obvious truth of humanity, and the ritual behaviour associated with people, is that everything occurs within the parameters of time and space. To have a space you need time to get there; to have a time you need the space for it to happen. Those of us presently living in Canada, and especially Quebec, are well aware that at any given time space can be carved up any way you want. But we are also aware that there are certain levels of analysis whereby twelve elevens are not the same as eleven twelves.

It is on these levels where one is apt to find academics, objectively charged with, or perhaps subjectively undertaking, the uncovering of truths that are not so obvious. As such the most obvious place to start the examination is by deconstructing such truth and uncovering its obvious falsehoods. This provides us with an opportunity to view some new exquisite ironies emerging as the postmodern project begins to draw its logical conclusions. Like the

functionalist object of the colonial era preceding it the neocolonial postmodern subject will become obsolete as we decolonize our analysis; even (especially?) if only to recolonize the globe.

It seems to me that the focus of decolonization is to address the past as we careen into the future, so it was with an eye to recolonization that I began to research the early stages of this project hoping to engage the future. The basic assumption being that the future will happen. But as it has not happened yet it is a more malleable concept than the past, as it has already happened. The past is already fixed and so does not require fixing. Perhaps it is only history that is broken into shattered little fragments. History's trick is that it appears to be about the past when in actuality it is of the present. If we consider the present to be merely the space where past times meet their future we can begin to more fully appreciate the malleability of history. As such history is at least as reliable an indicator of what will happen as it is of what has happened.

After a discussion about such issues with a friend and colleague he recommended that I read Richard Schechner's *The Future of Ritual* (1995). The next day as I held a copy in the book store I was greeted with the following words emblazoned on the back cover:

"Schechner has given us all the tools we need to appreciate the deeper social significance of what is taking place in front of our eyes instead of accepting it for what it seems to be" Colin Turnbull, *The New York Times*.

Without mining the richness of irony deposits in this quotation, it seems to me to be a tailor made introduction to an analysis of some of the tools employed by

Schechner in appreciating the deeper social significance of what took place in front of his eyes. I am not concerned with his methodology, data, findings, or insights. I am concerned with his writing, the mechanism that conveys his thoughts from a subjective form to an objective content.

While ultimately concerned with writing I am also interested in ritual so I will proceed straightaway by allowing Schechner to define his terms of engagement:

In both animals and humans rituals arise or are devised around disruptive, turbulent, and ambivalent interactions where faulty communication can lead to violent or even fatal encounters. Rituals, and the behaviour arts associated with them are overdetermined, full of redundancy, repetition, and exaggeration. This metamessage of "You get the message, don't you!?" (a question surrounded by emphasis) says that what a ritual communicates is very important yet problematic. The interactions that rituals surround, contain, and mediate almost always concern hierarchy, territory, and sexuality/mating (an interdependent quadruple). If these actions are the "real events" rituals enfold, then what are the rituals themselves? They are ambivalent symbolic actions pointing at the real transactions even as they help people avoid a direct confrontation with these events. Thus rituals are also bridges - reliable doings carrying people across dangerous waters. It is no accident that many rituals are "rites of passage" (1995:230).

We can see future problems lurking in his definition from the first sentence. While it is debatable whether or not the emergence of the social sciences to enshrinement in the academy was to further the ends of colonialism by justifying its means, there is no doubt that it is not a chicken and egg argument. By the time any social scientist arrived on the scene the collective colonial project was in full swing. My intention is not to admonish scholars for ethnocentrism or colonial complicity, but to merely point out that if rituals were not "devised

around disruptive, turbulent, and ambivalent interactions where faulty communication can lead to violent and even fatal encounters", they certainly were after European intervention. Were they always? Will they always?

"You get the message don't you!?" ritual is good yet not so good. We can see within the space of one paragraph Schechner has most handily explained and displayed that rituals are in fact: *overdetermined* (This is the metamessage...); *full of redundancy* (...what a ritual communicates is very important but problematic); *repetition* (...almost always concern hierarchy, territory, and sexuality/mating); and *exaggeration* (They are ambivalent symbolic actions pointing at real transactions even as they help people avoid too direct a confrontation with these events).

What I particularly like about this definition is how Benjaminian it sounds, as if foreshadowed by his fossil/fetish/wish image/ruin conception of history. I also find it interesting that its sentiments, if not the form and structure, were echoed during one of my interviews:

"I hope none of it becomes tradition. [...] rather than 'let's just go and do the same old things again week, after week, after week' [...] when [traditions] started they were important to those people, but my feeling is that they have been continued, but we've lost the meaning and the impact is gone; but we continue because it is tradition and I don't want to do that. I want to be part of something that's vital and alive and vibrant."

It seems that they are using different words to describe the same thing. On one level ritual is the same as tradition, but on another the obvious truth is that they are different. This conceptual switch between tradition and ritual is similar to the ones we have previously encountered among the Drummers.

The desire to end traditions in the formation of their ritual also brings out some points of commonality between the Drummers's experience and Schechner's analysis as he tries to explain that which does not conform to his argument:

What is to be made of advertisements in magazines like *Shaman's Drum : a Journal of Experiential Shamanism*? [...] Potential what? - shamans, buyers, the spiritually needy? - are invited to "Discover the Spirit of your Heart with Huichol Shamanism." Secunda, "the adopted grandson and close companion of Don Jose," his shamanic heir, "will lead people in Huichol rituals and ceremonies, including the sacred Dance of the Deer" (ibid:252).

While I am inclined to believe that the ads are directed toward all three of his postulates I must defer to a Drummer:

"I think there's been an extreme desperation for something on a prayer level for most people."

Incidentally another Drummer broached the topic of shamanism on her own accord without being prompted by a question my part:

"...but it's really almost more shamanic than anything else, in that everyone has that kind of possibility of connection in them."

How can Secunda lead people in Huichol rituals? Goodman's research suggests that belief and cultural context are unnecessary - put yourself in the proper posture, perform the right actions, and the experience will come. But does "experience" equal knowledge? Changing heart rate, blood pressure, and brain wave activity is one thing, learning and knowing is something else (ibid).

But of course "experience" and knowledge are two different things which is part of the point of the Drummers's ritual:

"One of the things that really spoke to me about a feminist experience of spirituality is indeed that - that it is experiential. And that's what I am enjoying, is that whole

experiential aspect; and that it's not coming from some expert or some committee. It's coming out of the experience of women that I care for, who may be very similar to me, or who may be very dissimilar."

It is around this opposition between "experience" and "knowledge" that Schechner circles his epistemological wagons: "To seek experience without knowledge is to commodify the process" (ibid). As I purchased the book seeking his knowledge without his experience I have the commodity of the process sitting on my desk while I wonder when commodity became such a dirty word.

And why is it that ancient and sacred knowledge is restricted to "old souls" from "old cultures?" Why would they want to share what they know with strangers or pass it on to authorized disciples who, living between cultures, dispense priceless timeless knowledge for a price, on a first come, first served basis (ibid:253)?

I have been troubled by his second question for quite some time regarding my study of anthropology, especially while witnessing anthropologists flagellate themselves over past ethnographic excesses. Why do "they" speak to "us" at all? It seems to me that Schechner is more involved in the business of restricting knowledge to "old souls" from "old cultures" than Don Jose, Secunda, or the *Shaman's Drum*. What I find particularly insidious is the connotation that the western market and the capitalist mind set are too complex to be understood in Huichol-land. That both market and mind could not be manipulated to widen the sphere of shamanic influence, especially if they believe in their healing powers; or that they wouldn't line their pockets at the expense of wealthy white people, especially if they are selling snake-oil.

The ads (and many articles in *Shaman's Drum* and like publications) can be analyzed back to their snake-oil and medicine

show traditions; they can be used as evidence of culture tourism, an appetite for the exotic, that has long characterized the colonial and neocolonial mind (ibid).

While shamanism is peripheral to the experience of the Drummers, spirituality conferences have played a significant role in their drumming rituals. A large component of these workshops are activities which could be considered shamanic and rely heavily on the knowledge of Other cultures - and many advertise as such. But like Schechner, I have never attended one. What do the Drummers know of the experience?

"There was a woman in that [conference group] who woke me up. She was a Native woman who told us her story. She had been given her first drum at the age of five and, she said, that in her culture drums are very personal and receiving your first drum was a real milestone. Then for some reason she ended up going into foster care and was told by her white foster parents that drumming was pagan, that she should not drum, and the drum was taken away from her, and she was robbed of that. She would be a woman, say, in her late forties. And then, she said, recently she had come back to drumming and she- the way she put it was- that she was becoming the person she always had been all along. And that finding herself was finding drums again. She played with such feeling and listening to her story I thought: 'you robbed yourself ... nobody told you you couldn't do it, you just stopped on your own.' She really had a oneness with the drum and I thought: 'yeah, I want that back.' So that's how I got back to drumming [after about twenty years]. The week after that I went out and bought my drums."

By this point it should not surprise us that in this instance of cross-cultural communication the Drummer learned more about herself and who she is than the other culture, except perhaps the obvious truth that those who come from other cultures are human too.

It should also not surprise us when Schechner sums it all up as more "Western reification and appropriation" (ibid:254). But of course he is trying to

prove that all ritual is violent. It is this exaggeration that overdetermines his argument into redundancy. The market is a fail safe which allows him to repeat the message that without the pedigree it is not ritual, even if it is violent.

As I expected, the topic of cultural appropriation prompted the strongest reaction that I encountered during the field work. What I didn't expect was that there was the only one Drummer who thought of it as an issue, which perhaps makes it not much of one:

"I get a little cranky about that one. Drums are everybody's tradition, all traditions have made music. There have been some complaints that white folks are stealing from Native traditions if you try to imitate without any reverence for their traditions. But for instance, I know a sweatlodge, but I'm not interested in a sweatlodge, I know the spiritual connotations don't appeal to me so ... I get a little cranky about trying to own traditions."

Who owns the ideas in someone's head, the buyer or the seller? who makes the music, the musician or the listener? or is it the dancer, real or imagined? who dreams the dream? who invented anthropology?

These are all rhetorical questions to be sure because we all seem to have a different answer. They are redundant to the point that they do not matter because the world is full of ideas and heads and buyers and sellers; music and musicians and listeners; and dancers and reality and imaginations; dreams and anthropology; and answers. What the world has none of is questions, it's only people that have questions. If we examine Schechner's we see that he is asking about violence, an object he is almost assured to find, and questions his subject through its advertising thereby loading his answers. His experience of the

alleged appropriation is confined to reading the market's literature into the literature market allowing him to conclude that:

These anthologies of cultures, or the wish for globalism, strike me as premature because they are unavoidably expressions of Western hegemony, attempts to cull and harvest the world's cultures. Maybe later in history, if there is more equality of power, more actual multiculturalism, but not now (ibid:257).

If not now, when? The New World existed before Columbus did. If we fix on a point, any point, earlier in history and look from there toward our present circumstances we will consistently see that there is no more equality of power in the world, but there is more multiculturalism as time progresses. Multiculturalism is happening, we do not have to wait for it and I doubt if it will wait for scholars.

Perhaps multiculturalism is not a power game at all; which maybe the ultimate irony of studying political inventions. If you look for power you will find it. At one time the market, technology, and human interests combined to create anthropology and as was the fashion at the time examined power as an abstract concept. The recombination of those elements over time have opened up experiences once privileged to the anthropologist to a much wider segment of the population. This will necessarily alter the focus of research. At any rate the present conditions afforded by the market, technology, and human interest means that interested people are now able to have cross cultural experiences of their own by-passing professional anthropology. Where the discipline ends the others begin and the market then becomes less of a barrier than an ice-breaker regarding introduction to different experiences:

"I think the only other tradition [we are] bringing in is the kind of drums we are using, everyone has a different kind of drum and so of course we are bound by the kind of drums we can buy."

As people become more and more able to do their own research projects and have their own experiences that would have been once restricted to an anthropologist it forces ethnography's hand amid all the changes taking place in a world in fragments.

Schechner's critique is reduced to assessing certain qualities of the experiences of other people and how they differ from his knowledge of the experience of the past. As such he speaks to a myriad of different histories with only one possible future of reification, appropriation, and violence. Thus he puts himself in a tough spot between deeming what are appropriate grounds for cross-cultural communication and retaining the scholarly privilege to do so. We are therefore offered a scenario that posits an ambivalent academic side stepping an object, the market, that is pointed like a sabre. But the academic is the conceptual abstractor while the market is a conceptual abstraction, and like all conceptual abstractions with a practiced actuality it is ambivalent. The conceptual abstractor only has a practised actuality when authorship is exercised in a fashion that is non-ambivalent at the point of conception. As such if you demand the market for violence it will be supplied.

However, when discussing the messages received through the media of an ambivalent signifier such as "the market" we cannot assume the market's motivations but merely that it is motivated. That is to say when assessing the

subjective quality of an experience we must consider the subjective assessment of the objective quality of an expectation. If we study the global market and the world's rituals for violence we will find enough of it to support both a past history and a logical conclusion that it must be embedded even in those things that don't look like it. If you do not demand of the market violence, power, God, or political leadership what experience will the wealth of your knowledge supply? If ye seek peace will ye find it?

Thus, we arrive at the heart of the paradox of the market as a reified category. Schechner's argument is indicative of a genre of scholarly writing on cultural appropriation that attempts to except the paradox by fooling ourselves into thinking we can somehow measure the amount of paradox that can be logically validated as acceptable. As such our knowledge of 'it' is stuck at certain levels.

For Schechner, the market and ritual combines to create a ritual market providing a bridge to help people avoid too direct a confrontation with certain cultural events. While this is a perfectly valid and empirically grounded proposition, so is its converse. Rituals as rites of passage are also devised to help people to directly engage cultural events. Integration into the market economy is a potent signifier between "us" and "them", between First and Third World countries but as much as the market wedges that difference it can also narrow that difference gap just by fostering communication. If the ritual you devise to help you expand your worldview requires drums, the market can provide access: "I just walk by music stores and hear a voice calling my name."

As the drum beat begins to call us deeper into the ritual we should give the final word on cultural appropriation to the Drummer who engaged the topic to allow her the chance to explain her understanding of the issue:

"For me it's been not that I'm borrowing somebody else's tradition but that the drum beat called to me in a spiritual way. Whether it's going to continue - if the drum speaks, if the drumming speaks to people. I think there's been an extreme desperation for something on a prayer level for most people. This is where I think the searching has occurred and the drumbeat does speak if you let it. [...] But for me it's not that I'm trying to have this tradition, the drum beat spoke..."

V

. . . that pays heed to discursive hegemonies . . .

"*The Beat of my Drum* " is the title song of the album written in 1980 after a conversation with a friend who commented that whenever she listens to the beat of my drum she cannot stop dancing. "It does something to my soul and I can feel it in my heart." That night after the concert I penned a rough draft of lyrics and basic rhythmic patterns. "When the world hears the beat of my drum - bun-bun-bun-bun-bun-bun-bun-bun then the spirits of the gods' ancestors will descend. When you can tell it in your soul, feel it in your heart, see it in your eyes as well as feel it in your feet, you cannot help but dance to the beat of my drum. The universality and commonality we experience from phenomenons such as the sun and the rain, the moon and the stars, the ocean and the waves; in the activities of the beasts and the birds are enough evidence that the world is the same, as well as all that dwelleth therein."

Babatunde Olatunji

The Beat of my Drum takes up the first 7:09 of Olatunji's 1989 release from RYKODISC entitled *Drums of Passion: The Beat*. Reproduced here are the lyrics to the song as they appear in the liner notes. Olatunji is a Nigerian and lives in New York and the album was digitally recorded in Berkeley, California in 1986. I purchased the CD at a record shop in London, Ontario, used and in a cracked case, for ten dollars in 1996. As I listen to the beat of his drum I think about the winding roads that both he and I and the CD had to travel for me to be able to hear it. I am sitting cross-legged and slapping my thighs in Olatunji's time as if my legs were human drum-sticks and wonder about appropriation. It doesn't seem to matter whether it's his beat or my body, or my beat and his body; only that they came together through my stereo. As I write about him I appropriate his voice and incorporate it in the text; as I could write about anything by incorporating his voice I have allowed him to appropriate my voice.

So to voice my opinion it is to agree with Olatunji - I cannot help but dance to his drum. It was my choice to write about Olatunji but I seemed to have little choice in the matter of dancing.

While it cannot be denied that economic domination causes tremendous violence and poverty to people through processes of cultural appropriation, this is not the only way the process works. The market can also provide access and in roads for cross cultural communication to happen as an interface between people and peoples. We must acknowledge at least the possibility that by means of the market the west can be the Other being appropriated. While this is perhaps a mild form of appropriation that may not have dramatic effects in the construction of someone's identity or worldview but we will not find ourselves in a multicultural world by revolution or by political decree, or even by economic equality - though these may help - but by considering that world view from all conceivable possibilities.

The integration of technology and recorded music with the commodity market is one of the points where it is conceivably possible for discursive hegemonies to meet and initiate a dialogue. It is in a sense that an individual purchases some cultural space to spend some time in, to experience it:

"...Its the beginning that I plan. And maybe that's because that's the way I've always done it and I find it works so well and it works quickly. I will play Susan Aglugark, Tracy Chapman, the Gypsy Kings, calypso, meditative music, Riverdance, an Equadorian group I have a tape of. I just love Spanish music. If I'm worked up about something I play with that and the energy that comes out of that music leaves me really mellow, so it varies."

The commodity form of recorded music has worked its way into this Drummer's personal ritual to help initiate the energy flow she will play from. The flip side to the commodity fetish is the collective process of the fad introducing multiculturalism, or drumming rituals for instance, to a wider audience that is exposed to a different voice:

"I guess it may be to a certain extent a fad for some people. Then again going back to some of the traditions we are borrowing from, these are traditions that have been in place for thousands - hundreds at least - of years. And I think because it is enjoyable and it does provide maybe, a different kind of voice for people; there's always going to be a place for it, even if there's not going to be widespread interest and involvement. But the people who have discovered it and who it works for them are going to hang on to it and pass it on to other people."

The drumming fad allows more people to experience the different kind of voice but the fad also gives a voice to the kind of different experience of drumming:

"Drumming isn't a fad but admitting to drum is. I think drumming has always been there and always will be, but there are times when admitting that you drum would be considered more outlandish than other times. And drumming right now is getting a revival in popularity, whereas - like in the 60's everyone had bongos; 'a guitar and bongos and let's go to the beach and have a hootenanny.' So it was really okay. But in the 80's I don't think so. Now in the 90's, it seems to be becoming more okay to admit to being a drummer."

As drumming becomes more a acceptable topic of conversation in the various social circles of the Drummers, word gets around about a communication that is simple to develop but difficult to put into words:

"I don't know that I ever really thought about it but it has really blown me away how we do establish a rhythm. And this group is such that there's people coming in quite a bit and someone will bring a friend and they're only there once; or someone that's been hearing about us for three or four months has just went out and bought herself a drum so that she could join. Again she'd never been in a drumming group and she's just fit right in. I haven't sat and thought about the metaphor but it's just interesting the way people come in and they leave and they might come back, they might never come back, whatever. And yet, there's always a coming together in that time, that two hours, somehow we all become in tune or something like that."

Upon sitting and thinking about the metaphor we are left a point of convergence of several discursive hegemonies each clambering to be heard. Here the commodity fetish blends with the voice of the drum, combining with the existential cultural Other, to meet my ethnographic questions half way toward a description of the mystic 'it' at the centre of the Drumming circle.

It seems that some of the questions in my interviews may have jumped the gun a bit on the Drummers. As I began my interviews I ran into similar problems with the Drummers that Schechner's analysis faced, in that our different understanding of the same words often lead to interesting contradictions. My understanding of ritual in the objective sense was more akin to Schechner's than the Drummer's objective sense of ritual. As such I found myself asking questions that would be more relevant if the group had more of a past, more of a tradition, more of an identity. The Drumming ritual is collectively constructed as an exploration concerned more with how the voice is communicated with each other as opposed to what it is being communicated to each other. The focus of description is on how they know that the drumming has communicated some meaning, not on what the communication may mean.

As such what is described is the way drumming speaks in different ways to individuals engaged in drumming together as one in an entrained rhythm. We can begin to see how the complex identities between the self and the group actively play out over the course of the ritual. I think we should also make note

of the serendipity as the Drummers create a collective space for individuals to communicate:

"I think one of the things I've learned is the community aspect of it, that we're communicating and communing on a very deep level because of what we have experienced as we've drummed. And it's not been anyone there saying: 'ah-one and ah-two and ah-three; and this is the rhythm we are going to do.' It has to do with someone starting something and other people in the group picking it up and either continuing it exactly as the person who started it, or varying it in some way; and that it can sort of start spontaneously and end spontaneously. It doesn't need to be orchestrated and that has been a wonderfully freeing experience to have been part of that."

"...when you've got a bunch of people there and everybody's kind of doing their own thing, it's what comes out of that makes the experience. So it's everyone together. So I guess in a way it is a sense of communication. It is again picking up something I don't want to give a name to, but it's picking up who everybody is in a different way. I think it is communication and not in the way we ordinarily think of it."

"I like drumming with this group because it's kind of like weaving. A group of people who are playing a particular rhythm and within there are all these little spaces and I love moving around in those little spaces with complementary rhythms. And when you've got a good size group that's much easier, if you've got two or three people, it's kind of like you can lean on someone if they're playing a good strong rhythm and improvise on the basic rhythm. I find it definitely creative, it gets the juices flowing."

"...there's times when, not the whole night, but at times it would seem that the drum had a life of its own, and that there was someone's drum it was responding to. I had really no idea who it was but it was like they were speaking to each other. It was really awesome."

It is almost as if what is being described from different angles is the creation of rhythmic place in time to provide space for the drumming to communicate to each of them. The drumming provides a platform for them to hear the spirit in a unique way:

"I have one experience that stands out and I have the feeling that this was a drum that had the kind of voice that I need. I have the sense that I need a drum with a big voice. And someone offered me the opportunity to use her drum for a while, and all I ... I guess I can only describe it as ... I read about in Mickey Hart's book, where he talked about being in the zone. And I felt like I was in the zone. I just drummed and drummed and drummed, and yet my sense was I was not the one drumming. It was like the spirit or

something was drumming through me but I was very much a part of it while not being a part of it. It was just amazing, and someone said to me after: 'and now are your arms sore?' and I said: 'no, not a bit of it.' It was just an absolutely awesome experience."

We get a sense of the voice calling the Drummer from the collective body somehow more into herself but apart from her individual body. The rhythm calls you to a place from where you can see a side of yourself you do not ordinarily see. It is also a place from which you can see a side of things you do not ordinarily see yourself:

"I was with a group and I was drumming and I was looking down at my hands. And at some point they weren't mine, they were smaller, younger - that's for sure - and that in itself is interesting. But then it was also a strong feeling of being apart from that and watching. So I wasn't looking down at my hands, I was looking down at a pair of hands. And while I was very conscious of the real world continuing, it was a different sense of time as well, because it was still working. I could see the hands moving clearly, and then it just kind of gradually melded back together again. It didn't inspire any particular feelings of ... it was just there and seemed very natural."

Curiously when the group seems to be flowing together as one it fosters the conditions whereby individuals form that deep sense of personal communication with the spirit or describe a trance-like state of consciousness. But we can also notice that these experiences where somewhat extraordinary occurrences related to the activity and as I was constantly reminded during the interviews that each session is different, there is another side to balancing the scales in the dialogue between the individuals and the group:

"Some nights the sessions will just be really, really powerful and everything just sort of flows. Somebody will start a beat, and someone else will come into it, and then someone else will come into it, and then we're all together as one. Other nights it doesn't flow so smoothly. I ask myself: 'why is that?' But there's one particular drum that's sometimes in the group and when that drum is being

played it doesn't seem to flow. It's like that drum sort of fights the others. But it's not going to hold us back anyway. I'm aware of that drum and it's kind of different rhythm than the others, and the drum player seems to have a different rhythm than the others, but that's okay. I mean it doesn't hold you up but you feel that pressure."

When the collective flow that creates the individual experience is not achieved it perhaps negates the chances for the individual communication:

"I had an experience in one of the sessions that one of the people wasn't in sync sort of. I don't have any problem with people doing their own thing but it still has to blend and that just threw me right off. I couldn't get into it, then I was taking too much concentration to work on what I was doing, trying to make it all work, and that night was just a washout as far as experience was concerned. Although I suppose you can learn from negative things too."

This must have been some session as every Drummer referred to the night of the discordant Drummer at some point in their interview. While the general agreement is that the drumming works better when the space is under control of the time of the rhythm, the Drummers began arriving at a consensus of the significance of the experience of this session being a realization that this was a time when they were in control of the rhythmic space:

"I guess at times I've really experienced the metaphor. Because there's times when I've been drumming and then all of a sudden I kind of lose the beat, I get mixed up in it. And at first I'd get really frustrated with that then I realized that's kind of like life. It doesn't just go along, you know. And there's discord, I guess you could say - or there's sometimes you miss a beat or whatever. Another time there was someone with the group that as far as I was concerned, it was just noise; there wasn't any rhythm to it, it didn't blend in with anybody else - it was just bang, bang, bang, bang. And it was really, really difficult at first, then it kind of hit. Sometimes you just have to work with the discord. You can't run away, you just have to go through it. That's a couple of things that I've noticed with the drumming."

As each Drummer attached meaning to the discord of the Drummer who was not on time it became like a milestone in the groups evolution. This event stands

out like climax in the transition of the spirituality group from a prayer to a drumming circle. While membership is still fluid it has congealed somewhat around a core that is a partial carry over from the old prayer group that includes some who started in the group as Drummers. This night seems to be the session in which the drummers became the Drummers by confirming the consensus of the women who have remained. It was during this session that the Drummers reached the heart of the paradox they were to explore with their ritual:

"...and when someone does come in that wants to take control or is discordant it's felt, but there's enough strength in the circle. I would say that it's been okay, but it's a very fragile thing; though it's a very strong energy, it's very fragile. It can be changed immediately like anything can."

The fragile strength of the Drumming group was displayed as the stories were told about that night. There were seven Drummers at the session who probably for all intents and purposes represented a quorum of the old guard and the new era of the core membership. It is perhaps telling that the discordant member, who I did not interview, has not returned. I did talk to the six others who were present, five of whom have remained as the core membership the group has revolved around in the past few months; the other has retained a more peripheral association with the group since that session. Five of the Drummers spoke in terms of the group coming together to work against the discord confirming that the spirit was strong enough to withstand the discord but fragile enough to be destroyed. The sixth Drummer spoke about how she had felt the discord but decided to ignore it and work with the rhythm of the others and

confirms the paradoxical fragile strength of the rhythm when she mentions this is the night she got into "the zone" as previously described.

This particular night becomes generally significant by teaching individual Drummers about different aspects of the same paradox of the group. They experienced first hand their strength as a group in that they drummed despite the discordant individual, while getting to know it's fragility as the discordant individual took over the focus of the session. But there is also the experience of the individual strength to work beyond the discordant drumming showing the fragility of the individual's ability to take over the focus of the group.

This confirms the trust that the Drummer's have placed in the paradoxical concept of the feminine energy spirit by the extremes coming together in the middle of the rhythm. The experience of this session has allowed them to trust the drumming more fully.

This trust is a necessary element in the individual's experience of the spirit of the group's energy without controlling the meaning of the knowledge of the spirit:

"...the minute I attach a judgement to something, it is in my judgement. And let's say someone has an experience in a drumming session, and they really cry and wail, and oh whatever! - and everybody says -woah, let's make sure that doesn't happen again. But if that's what a person needs to heal, I'll certainly not be trying to control the holy spirit, or what ever you want to call it. And that's the biggest danger of all. As soon as you start to try and control something, and don't trust it, it goes wacko and all hell breaks loose. In my opinion."

The paradox is examined and explored while trusting that one idea is not dominating the energy allowing the spirit to be free to call them to a place where

they will find what they need. This allows the play between the conceptions of individuality and collectivity in the groups evolution. There is a process of movement whereby the individual's drumming spirit as a bounded entity, comes in contact with the collective drumming spirit and communicates with an individual spiritual entity that was bound to have been drummed up from an unbounded source of energy. This is why multiculturalism works so well as a metaphor for the Drummers who feel culturally incomplete and seek to experience with the group different ideas framed as an individual segment of an unbounded cultural entity. The quest is for a more complete self awareness by posing one self consciousness as completed in dialogue with another self that cannot be self consciously completed.

Thus there is trust in the objective spirituality not to take them some place that is too dangerous, while recognizing the real danger that you may get stranded out there in the spirit world. The Drummers must not only trust in the energy being raised in the session they also have to be able to trust in each other that it won't be closed, or collapse before they get back from their spiritual journeys:

"Well, it's just that you are going to be contained through the whole process, so you'll be held through the whole process. That you won't get lost mid-process, floating around in this energy going - 'Oh my God!'. Because sometimes people will go into a visualization who are very damages and I've seen it happen where they're meeting something horrible in the visualization. Okay, so may be it's a demon they need to face. But they're so overwhelmed and they're so frightened and so they need to have somebody there who will say to them - 'breathe, you're okay, it's all right, it can't hurt you, open your eyes.' So you need that person to who'll bring you through the process, so that you are contained throughout the process."

In the paradoxically real imaginary space of the container the Drummers spend a time of their lives exploring what they have left uncompleted and examining that which has been completed. The ritual is thus a bridge to engage themselves in the paradox allowing them to understand when to let the time control the space and when to let the space contain the time. So to understand the ritual's message we must delve further into the "container" as the cutting edge of the collectivity that provides the foundation for the awareness of the individual's spiritual self-consciousness.

VI

. . . but not at the expense of rigorous, empirically grounded analysis .

Inventing Sin George Ella Lyon

God signs to us
 we cannot read
She shouts
 we take cover
She shrugs
 and trains leave
 the tracks

Our schedules! we moan
Our loved ones

God is fed up
All the oceans she gave us
All the fields
All the acres of steep seedful forests
And we did what
 Invented the Great Chain
 of Being and
 the chain saw
 Invented sin

God sees us now
 gorging ourselves &
starving our neighbors
starving ourselves &
storing our grain
& She says

I've had it
you cast your trash
upon the waters -
it's rolling in

You stuck your fine finger
into the mystery of life
 to find death

& you did
you learned how to end
the world
in nothing flat

Now you come crying
to your mommy
Send us a miracle
Prove that you exist

Look at your hand, I say
Listen to your sacred heart
Do you have to haul the tide in
sweeten the berries on the vine

I set you down in
a miracle among miracles
You want more
It's your turn
You show me

This was read as a prayer to open the energy of one of the sessions I attended in a room that by day serves as an office for one of the Drummer's pastoral counselling practice. It is located in downtown London and shares space in the building with a fine dining restaurant, a bar/grill chain franchise, a real estate firm, and two medical specialists. The office is large enough that I can huddle in a loosely formed circle with five women around a candle holder depicting seven humans with linked arms across shoulders, ringing the flame. I am sitting on a metal folding chair rubbing the face of my drum in a circular motion, partly because I can feel its chill from the cold October night, and partly to conform. I was later told that the drums are rubbed in a circular motion both to warm up the skin and to open the energy and centre it in the drum (the drums were rubbed in the opposite direction to close the energy). With the focus of the energy centred

the designated leader for the session began to gently pick up a heart beat rhythm while initiating a visualization exercise to ground us in each others presence.

"The building is full of people. I'll be your container. Feel secure, feel safe. You know where you are. Feel your bodily sensations. Let your wind out. Send a root all the way down to the earth ..."

At this point she pauses and plays her drum while I open my eyes and look around the room. The women are all dressed as if they had gotten up from their dinner tables and gone to the session as if it was just the next thing they had to do that day; there were no costumes. Four of the women looked as if they could be my mother, while one looked like she could be my wife. This is because my fiancée, who is also an anthropology student, was invited and welcomed to the session by the group. I watch her as she takes notes while the leader speaks:

"Imagine. Imagine yourself in your favourite place. Notice the time of year. Feel the wind. Smell the air."

Her presence becomes more than just stenographer as I begin to imagine myself, us, on a Springtime afternoon in France at the altar. As the leader continued:

"Someone is coming towards you. Ask them to join you. Ask them if they have a gift for you. If there is something you want to know ... ask."

I began to lose my sense of who I was. Was I participating in the ritual objectively to try and get the Drummer's perspective of the spirit? Was it to be subjective and gain my own experience of the energy to try and get the

Drummer's insight of the energy? Or was it to be reflexive and participate as an anthropologist observing the anthropologist at the ritual?

"When you are comfortable begin to say good-bye and thanks. When you are ready come back to this room. Slowly. You can retract your root. When you're ready, open your eyes."

We were soon ready and opened our eyes. It became almost immediately apparent that we were going to share our visualizations with each other. As such I had the time it took to relay the first two Drummer's stories to have another minor identity crisis. Should I observe the ritual merely as anthropologist and pass my turn? Will they let me pass? Do they expect me to share? Should I observe the ritual as a Drummer and share my experience? I am holding a drum. I decided to observe the ritual as myself and spoke of what I saw but none of my conundrum. I doubt if it surprised any of them to hear which feminine energy spirit was dominating my experience.

As this chapter is intended to explore the time that I actually spent in the space of the Drummers, it is in the interest of chronology that I insert this description of a Drummer's vision. It's relevance will be more apparent later but this is the point in the session that the story was told.

"I was standing in a meadow on a Summer day in field of daisies, it's sunny and I can smell the daisies. A rider on a white horse comes up over a hill off in the distance. It's Jesus and he rides up to me and stops. He bends down and holds out his hand. I reach for him and he gives me an amulet on a chain. I say thank you, and he rides off. I know that someday I'll find that amulet somewhere when I least suspect it."

After each of us told of our visions we once again closed our eyes and tried to feel the energy as the drumming built gradually over a few minutes from

a light patter of false starts to a steady pulse of rhythm. I was earnestly trying to drum through my confusion, while one of the Drummers kindly handed my fiancée a drum as she was on the verge of looking absurd holding a notebook at a drumming session. Soon the whole room was into it, tightly for a while, then it fell into silence, only to start again by a similar process of feeling out the energy. At one point between rhythms one of the Drummers began to speak about having the feeling that she was drumming for someone. That she was sending a vibration to someone who was not there and the message was that 'God loves you.' She wondered if anyone else could hear her name.

It seemed that every time one of the women spoke it sent me scrambling to pick up the broken pieces of who I was. As soon as it was mentioned that someone was being drummed for - a woman's name popped into my head. I knew the woman speaking had a friend with the same name that I was thinking and knew a bit about their relationship as I had previously met them together. Was it an educated guess? Was it the 'spirit' or was I just playing a hunch? Was it my place to say anything at all? What if I was wrong? What if I was right? I wasn't sure what to think. At any rate the drumming continued before I spoke up. I drummed a little rhythm for the woman I had been thinking about anyway. After the session I spoke with the Drummer and it was confirmed that we had both been drumming for the same woman. I am still not certain what to think.

It was in talking with this Drummer after that particular session that I began to get a better sense of what the drumming meant to her life. Up until this

point we had been discussing how the ritual fit into her life story as a more spatial entity in a temporal continuum - the ritual interaction with the self over a period of time. We were now talking about how the spirit fit into her ritual history as a more temporal entity in a spatial continuum - the self's interaction with the ritual within in its space.

As such we began to discuss the visualization presented above and she revealed that it fulfilled a prophesy from about 1985 (she had forgotten exactly when and only remembered the previous vision on recounting that night's) when Jesus promised to appear to her on a white horse in a field of daisies. She told of it in such a way as to reiterate that she felt it confirmed that she would at some point come across the amulet she had been given in her imagination. She went on further to discuss her visualizations of the spirit:

"See, I work with two different guides. Jesus is one of my guides. I also work with "Grandmother" who is an ancient Native woman. She has not been with me as long, she's only been with me for about two and a half years. And I am still much more comfortable working with Jesus as my guide. And I almost have the sense that it's time to switch to Grandmother but I don't want to give up Jesus."

What I find interesting is the syncretism, forced or accepted into her spirituality by the energy, that is communicated in part during the drumming sessions. This is what makes multiculturalism a good metaphor for intellectual incursion as well as a good avenue for spiritual excursion:

I did something very Native American the first time. We honoured the four directions and we smudged with sweet grass and all the prayers were from that tradition. The second time that I lead I did something Rastafarian and used a tape called "African Head Charge". The next time I'm going to do at least part of it as something that's very Buddhist. So, I want to just keep exploring different expressions of religion. Like taking

things from religions that have touched me. It doesn't mean I want to do the entire discipline in any of them, but I like part and I want to borrow this part tonight; because it's an amazing experience."

This syncretism and multiculturalism is then applied to the group infusing it with those different perspectives. But there are also other different perspectives brought into the group which makes any metaphorical "-ism" inadequate to characterize the ritual. The Drummers are not so much driven together by the appearance of syncretism but fuelled by the paradox of syncretism:

"When --- lead [...] she had all these little message cards and so they were all in a basket and we just chose. And so people got messages and they said: 'Oh-my-gosh! this is just what I need.' It was just awesome [...] because what we're saying is that the spirit is operating here and that there's synchronicity. Which means we'll get what we need. And I mean it happens again and again and again, that I'm with somebody whose really, really depressed, and the word they will get may be 'perseverance' or it may be 'trust', and they just know that the message is for them. [...] So it's that kind of an energy. So you either believe that or you don't. You either choose to live that way or don't chose to live that way."

The faith in synchronicity is the underlying impetus for this Drummer to trust the rhythm and the energy, to trust the spirit and the voice, to trust ritual as an expression of herself in the group.

The group being what it is this is the only Drummer who used such terms to cognate the evolutionary processes of her spiritual development as it pertains to drumming. She is the only one who used the word synchronicity. Yet, the women are still able to communicate with each other, and to the interviewer, instances where the drumming has provided the opportunity to experience synchronicity as the syncretization of one thing and something else, like their and my point of view:

"I am kind of interested by the different cultures who use drums in ritual. I met a couple of men from Nigeria and they were Catholic. And they were telling us how in their country instead of ringing bells at the time of consecration, they'd beat drums. They explained that in their culture if someone of royalty, someone of great importance, was coming into a village there'd be a drummer who would precede them, beating the drum to let people know that this special person was on his way (and it was usually a man); so like Jesus the priest is led in procession by a drummer."

Here we see a multicultural syncretism of Catholicism that focuses on a different cultural expression at the same ritual time as it is performed within the space of both her church on one hand and her ritual drumming on the other.

However the Drummer's ritual can be focused in another way that fosters a syncretism with one's own tradition and introduces a syncretic experience related to their religious heritage:

"With my Christian background, when I look at some of the different Christian forms, well I suppose you could find them in all religions; but it's for that contemplative thing where you just kind of empty yourself, you kind of empty your mind, and in some way that's communing with God or whatever you want to call that, you know, higher power sort of thing. But it's not like a communication in a normal sense, it's just a being with. And I find that drumming does the same sort of thing. It's probably an easier way to do it. I'm not the kind of person who can sit in contemplative prayer and just empty my mind. I find it very hard to do and yet the drumming somehow seems to make it easier for me because my mind is concentrating in a way on the drumming, so that my mind is empty in that sense. I let go of everything else that's been bothering me. [...] And from a Christian perspective I've experienced that charismatic thing of singing, 'singing in the spirit', where everybody goes off and does their own thing but it all fits together. It's that kind of thing I find just amazing; it's an amazing experience, like a harmony."

We also get the sense of the past whereby individual histories fit together in the present space of the ritual from the other Drummers all who mentioned singing, meditating, dancing, chanting and glossolalia as related to what they experienced drumming⁴.

They are stitching together a syncretic world view to build on and to build from the faith in the synchronicity they have experienced. The container is a good metaphor for examining the logic of the ritual. The ritual is always focused around a central object, it is just never manifest as the same object in the centre. The centre is perhaps the object itself and we have seen that a paradox is always at the centre of the ritual. As such this makes the object, whether it be real or imaginary, a container as it holds the focus for a time. The object is to get into the spirit but the spirit is an object that gets into you as well. The spirit is contained in the self it contains. The drum holds the rhythm when you are not using it and produces it when you are. The group contains the energy of the individual who contains the energy of the group. It is contained by the rhythm, which has a beginning and an end - a time and a space. All of it contained by the human body but very little by the human mind.

The container in the version of the ritual that I witnessed objectively represented the possibility of the creation of the conditions for 'it' to appear. And it appears to happen. And it appears to happen all by 'it-self':

"You can drum in order to get into an altered state in that sense I think, if it's contained properly and you are doing that intentionally. And I think you can do anything intentionally with a drum, but I don't think that if you drum you are going to automatically have an altered state of consciousness."

There is more to consciousness than we know or experience ourselves, meaning there is more to self-consciously know and experience. Culture affects human consciousness to the extent that to be aware of culture is an altered state of consciousness. Culture is one of the many objects contained in and

containing our minds and bodies, our knowledge and experience. Culture not only contains the edge of human consciousness, it contains both edges, the parameters between which there is the space for some to stop, some to explore, and some to go beyond; and there is the place to come together as one for the time that 'it' happens.

VII

. . . and an insistence on concrete social change.

"...and I also happened to bring along a curious little device known as a trinome. A trinome is a metronome that can keep track of three rhythmic cycles. Each cycle has a different sound. You can set it so the three beats will weave in and out of one another, circling around in endless loops, and every time the loops intersect with one another a bell will bong, indicating what is known as "the One."

The One - the alpha and the omega, the beginning and the end of the rhythmic cycle" (Hart 1990:143).

Perhaps we can consider the trinome as a curious little mnemonic device to help us access the deeper social significance of the social analysis of the Drummers. It is a particularly useful cognitive tool because it provides with an example of a possible way to bring together diverse ideas in dialogue. The epistemological luxury of this metaphor for anthropology is that we are not forced to write from a space dominated by either us or them but 'it' as a sort of catch-all container. Thus what is imposed over a dominant rhythm is a communication between "us" and "them" relating to dominance itself and not just to the dominance of the Other. If we also consider that an anthropologist in choosing to argue from a position of the "us" or "them" being dominant opens up a dialogue with dominance itself rather than each of the Others, we can see the heart of inventions like culture beating along side and woven between a self and another who have never met. The imaginary trinome can create an ideational space to bring them together.

However, as a trinome is merely a fancy metronome designed to measure the pulse of time at an arbitrary tempo we need to set an ideational time

signature. For example our three rhythms can be structured to follow a dominant rhythmic pattern of four beats occurring within four measures of those beats. For the purposes of this project our concern is not so much for rhythm but what it represents, which is time. As such we have already seen time, as measured by history, in Benjamin's conception of a four part process from Fossil, to Fetish, to Wish Image, to Ruin. We have also seen time, as measured by ritual, in Schechner's conception of a four part definition of Overdetermination, Redundancy, Repetition, and Exaggeration.

If we carry the four part process into our analysis at the beginning of the final chapter and begin to look back on the paper from the point of view of the One we might be able to pull together some of the ideas that we have had trouble communicating. As such if we count the chapters backwards from this one (the previous being four), it means that I began the ethnography on a third beat, joining the rhythm in progress with our Fetish already Redundant; and in the middle of an argument.

At that point the fetish was the functionalist invention of culture that was made redundant by the argument that was a structure for the logic of the understanding of the poetic irony culture invented. The Wish Image was then for an invention of culture that has a new objective to include the subject. This is an important evolution in the knowledge of the study of culture while its impact is experienced in the Repetition of knowledge. The structure of the argument for the re-invention of culture, illustrated with the redundancy of postmodernism, is that the functionalist project could be repeated with a different object. The

structure of the argument as a means of communicating ideas about culture illustrated in the repetition of the postmodern object is that the subject is still that of functionalism. This is because if we take the postmodern tropes of power and politics from the point of view of any cultural conception, especially in the interest of social change, it must be translated into the terms of dominance. You cannot challenge the dominant culture you can only argue against it, but not against its power, because it is the dominant's argument for inventing the power in the first place. If you are looking for an argument you will find it for the dominant like the argument because even if they don't always seem to win, they never seem to lose very much, or very often. The only place an argument can lead to is a logical conclusion. Thus to argue for a more subjective anthropology merely means more subjects for the postmodern object of power. Curiously despite the difference of subjects the object is still functional, dominant, apparent, and ironical.

The next chapter came out of the desire to end the argument by drawing it to its logical conclusion at a point before engaging with the subject instead of drawing logical conclusions from the subject by engaging the argument as a structure. As such it became logical to concede to the powerful that within the confines of an argument power is dominant and consider that as a cultural constant; the dominant will dominate. We are perhaps in a historical position to be able to draw some logical conclusions as we have had more of a chance to see the patterns develop over the time it takes for spatial awareness to expand. By the process of the accumulation of the knowledge we are in a temporal

situation to be able to be much more aware of our space than ever before. Once history has been shattered there is the time to pick up the pieces of our fragmented knowledge.

The attempt from that basis was to ruin the argument by exaggerating its strengths to the ignorance of its weaknesses. Thus there is the functionalist object of a reality beyond human understanding that anthropologists are professionally obligated to try and cognate to expand the world view of our culture's knowledge. This was combined with the postmodern object of power which is logically like an opinion in that everyone has one and it is objectively powerful. The same can be said about the culture object of aftermodern subjectivity and its power over the individual. As such the project required more of an interface between the self and the collective as it revolved around the objective reality we are trying to understand. To sketch a logical conclusion of the anthropological project meant to go beyond a translation of one term into another, but of both into a lingua franca of sorts for the purposes of the ethnography. The object of defining culture as: "the collective edge of human consciousness" was then based on the subjects I was concluding, or perhaps excluding, as the point from which I could see what might be included.

Then the anthropological project as such concluded became the fossil I built from in the overdetermined effort to eradicate politics from the invention of the power of identification. As per the stipulations of this new definition the Drummers and I set out to describe the object of power in the terms that they had experienced it and in a way that I could understand. As such we discussed

many of the familiar power objects such as culture, ethnicity, religion, and gender and got around to the description of a feminine energy spirit. This feminine energy spirit is the central point identifying the intersection between objective reality and subjective creation in a paradoxical fashion that allows one to identify herself in the Drummers and the Drummers in herself while maintaining her own independent self constructed drumming ritual.

The identity thus constructed became our next chapter's fetish as we delved more into the ritual drumming of the feminine energy spirit. We then saw the systematic change in power relations as energy took control of the cognitive framework. There was a conceptual switch between tradition and ritual stemming from the look beyond powerful violence to the peaceful energy afforded by the ritual. This was further illustrated through the cultural marketing of shamanism whereby Schechner found the appropriation and violence of others and the Drummers discovered other experiences of themselves in the knowledge of others. Thus displayed was an ambivalent market that not only segregates but also integrates by providing the objective means to access subjective ends.

Following the fetish market is not the commodity but the next chapter's wish image to explore that ambivalence further. The market not only provides access to other experiences, it provides access for other experiences to happen. The commodified fetish produces an interaction and a reaction that produces the market's response of a fad. What a fad provides, among other things is the opportunity to repeat an experience. If the drumbeat speaks to people, the

market will respond to provide space for the fetish object for as long as it will speak. The market too must pay heed at times to the discursive hegemony of the consumer. Among other things the availability of the market has allowed the Drummers to repeat their experience often enough to incorporate it as a ritual, but not by hearing what the commodity fetish was saying but what the fetish commodified was saying. The market interacted with the Drummers in the creation of a ritual communication within the subjective bounding of the drumming energy and the objective unbounding of the drummed power. Somewhere between the ritual market and their drumming ritual a paradoxical balancing occurred whereby as individuals they subjectively selected an object that objectively selected the subject of their collective. As such the Drummers all communicated to the same spirit energy and the energy spirit communicated to each Drummer differently. As such they are together by chance while the spirit has it together by design.

The attempt to communicate with the spirit by way of the terms of scientific reality leaves us caught in the middle of exaggerations, especially concerning invented concepts which force us to admit to the reality of imagination and vice versa. While we debate the existence or the consistence of an objective reality based on the external power of the others, there is obscured the obviousness of an objective reality based on the internal energy of the self. As such what is real is experienced and what is knowledge is imagined. Therefore rigorous empirically grounded analysis must be conscious of the real power of imagined energy, a combination which has been demonstrated to

provoke the appearance of synchronicity. For example one Drummer's knowledge of synchronicity was based on the real experience of the difference of the spiritual energy of her imagination, while the collective experience of synchronicity was evidenced by the imagined knowledge of the similarity of the energy spirit of the object's reality as manifest in other activities and different approaches to looking at what has been created.

In the ethnographic expression of synchronicity as a ritualized portrayal of a feminine energy spirit we are once again looking to social theory with an insistence on concrete social change. This time this insistence is on refusing to argue for or against social change but to observe as 'it' changes. As such our metaphorical trinome chimes on the One in this chapter to collect the three divergent rhythms that were separated in chapter three after the bell for the previous One. In the space of the new One we see the conceptualizations of energy opposed to power, consensus without agreement, and ritual beyond tradition, have the time to come together in the ritual place of the Drummers. Thus demonstrated is the fostering of concrete social change built on the collective trust in the integrity of the individuals:

"...when we get together with the group it's for the sole purpose of drumming, we don't usually have ulterior motives other than sharing and having a good time and things of that nature;"

and the individual trust in the integrity of the collective:

"...there's something in the sharing that adds to the community; that I can tell you people and you are not going to say: 'Oh that's ridiculous! Please don't tell me you were talking to Jesus!'"

From the openness of the group toward each other there follows an openness from the individual to the group which provides support for the group of individuals:

"Well, it's nice to be respected for the fact that you've chosen drumming because you are with a group of people who have made the same choice and nobody laughed out loud, nobody smirked."

As our conceptual triumvirate of energy, consensus, and ritual begins to gel as a social form in these quotations it is summed up rather succinctly by a response to the question: 'What is drumming, what is it for you?'

"It's an experience of place and connectedness and community. And it's living in paradox because it's noisy but it's so peaceful. And the mind, my mind, can't grasp that I could go and be with people and we're all making noise and yet it's the most peaceful, relaxing experience of me; and it's just paradox."

Here the One comes together when our three major themes strike a paradox. Most paradoxical for the anthropologist perhaps is the underlying self-ish nature of the Drummer's "experience of me." It may well be that synchronicity is the only way to describe the collective benefits of such individual motivation. The aim of the ritual seems to be to engage the energy of group with oneself and in the process of decreasing self consciousness to increase self awareness.

It is this final cognitive substitution of consciousness for awareness that signals a next phase of anthropological research into more subjective avenues that insist on concrete social change. The Drummer's ritual has evolved and is evolving by setting their limits as stepping stones into realms of unknown self consciousness. If the study of culture is to keep pace with such social change it

must accept the reality of the human imagination and the paradoxical imaginings of people with projects designed to ascertain the differences of the collective consciousness of people and the similarities of the individual awareness of humanity. The mystic 'it' at the heart of culture lies somewhere in the middle of concrete social change and the communicative tension it creates between individual persons, other people, and the rest of humanity all contained on a spinning planet revolving around the sun.

NOTES

1. The term liminoid is of course borrowed from Victor Turner and his famous refashioning of Arnold van Gennep's work on *rites de passage* considering a three part model of the ritual structure that includes a progression from *separation*, to *margin (limen)*, to *aggregation*. As such Turner's definition of liminality is central to both the structural conception of his writing and that of this paper, albeit in differing fashions:

The attributes of liminality or of liminal *personae* ("threshold people") are necessarily ambiguous, since this condition and these persons elude or slip through the network of classifications that normally locate states and positions in cultural space. Liminal entities are neither here nor there; they are betwixt and between the positions assigned and arrayed by law, custom, convention, and ceremonial (Turner 1969:95).

For Turner the purpose of the liminal phase of the ritual process was to blend diametrical opposites in order to foster a social bond which he termed *communitas*:

What is interesting about liminal phenomena for our present purposes is the blend they offer of lowliness and sacredness, of homogeneity and comradeship. We are presented, in such rites, with a "moment in and out of time," and in and out of secular social structure, which reveals, however fleetingly, some recognition (in symbol if not always in language) of a generalized social bond that has ceased to be and simultaneously yet to be fragmented into a multiplicity of structural ties (ibid:96).

For the purposes presented in this ethnography we should consider anthropologists to be the "threshold people" standing betwixt and between two cultures. As such the thesis itself, if not ethnography in general, is a liminal entity that is the researched object bridging the gap between the subjected research (academic literature) and the research subjects (the Drummers). Thus created is a fleeting moment in and out of time that is captured in a conceptual space seeking a cognitive bond (in language if not always in symbol) between social theory and societal practice. The ultimate goal being not to demonstrate *communitas* but to develop a "*communicatas*" between the diverse and often opposing world views that are anthropology's *raison d'etre*.

2. Over the course of the field work and subsequent writing of this thesis the issue of my own gender and inherent masculinity proved more problematic in theory than in practice. In short, the Drummers seemed rather unconcerned with

my manhood, preferring to speak of "man" and "woman" as general social constructs and not immutable categories marking individuals. Due to uncontrollable circumstances it happened that I conducted most of my interviews before attending any of the drumming sessions and was assured during our discussions that the women were unconcerned with my presence having a negative effect. In trying to explain this indifference it has been suggested that my close previous relationships with many of the Drummers and our age differences rendered me effectively genderless. It may also be that my presence at the drumming ritual was not intended as self expression but to consider the Drummer's self expression. A third theory, offered by a Drummer, was that the self confidence of the Drummers as a collective entity superceded any possible threat my gender might represent. At any rate, the first session I attended was a rather small affair, though this was due more to external happenstance than reservations regarding my presence, and was comprised of three women and myself. These three Drummers, when interviewed, articulated very different opinions concerning the gender division of the group. One woman saw the drumming as an expression of something other than the patriarchal tradition she was raised with; another enjoyed the fact that the group was comprised of women but was ultimately ambivalent as she had never drummed with men; and the third, while happy with the group as it is expressed her preference of drumming with a mixed group. During the session itself I felt the entrainment as the drumming came into sync and is an experience I can only describe as the moment of recognition when you know you are playing the drum but it feels like the drum is playing you. Afterwards the women described hearing a symphony of many drums combined with other instruments although only four drums were present. This was perhaps a manifestation of the spirit I must have witnessed but not consciously, leaving me to wonder if this was due to my gender or my inexperience.

3. This idea of an energy spirit is perhaps similar to that considered by David E. Young in his article "Visitors in the Night: a creative energy model of spontaneous visions," but as he merely suggests reasons why such a model is plausible and never elucidates on its configuration one cannot be sure. Nevertheless he does conclude that:

It is time that we as anthropologists begin to take our informants more seriously and attempt to build models that will do justice to both our own "scientific" world view (which we cannot leave behind) and the world view of those who see reality in a different way. This requires more than a hermeneutic method which translates meaning from one system to another. It requires an honest effort to try and find some common ground. Only in this way can we move beyond relativism and ethnocentrism to a type of inquiry which involves treating our informants as colleagues in the anthropological endeavor (1994:191).

What Young does demonstrate most efficaciously is that such a directive is easier said than done. This is perhaps the most troubling legacy of postmodernism - the willingness to outline what should be done rather than actually attempting to do it. The "multicultural feminine energy spirit" included in this thesis is intended to be a representative model of the common ground that bonds the Drummers together. This can be considered a more microcosmic version of the conceptual "mystic 'it'" which endeavors to search for common ground between the scientific world view and different realities.

4. Here the Drummers approach the extremes of the comparative method of both inter- and intra-cultural understanding that shake the very foundations of the discipline of anthropology. As such I now turn to Franz Boas and his critique of the comparative method of anthropology:

The fact that many fundamental features of culture are universal, or at least occur in many isolated places, interpreted by the assumption that the same features must always have developed from the same causes, leads to the conclusion that there is one grand system according to which mankind has developed everywhere; that all the occurring variations are no more than minor details in this grand uniform evolution. It is clear that this theory has for its logical basis the assumption that the same phenomena are always due to the same causes (1973 [1896]:88).

The various expressions based on the life experiences of the Drummers seem to indicate that the same phenomenon is an effect of a myriad of different causes which concurs with the Boasian tradition of Historical Particularism:

... when we find an analogy of single traits of culture among distant peoples the presumption is not that there has been a common historical source, but that they have arisen independently (ibid:90).

However, the Drummer's confirmation of Boasian theory soon turns into denial with the recognition that the same cause can effect a multiplicity of phenomena. This can lead to the conclusion that there is one grand system, but various ways of accessing and activating it, meaning that (hu)mankind has developed everywhere *interdependently* in communion with the spirit by either confirming or denying the common source of history.

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