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BECOMING NATIVE: AN ETHOS OF COUNTERMODERNITY II

FREYA MATHEWS

This man has lived his life in his own fields.
The house that saw him as a little lad
Sees him an old man: leaning on his staff,
On the same earth he crawled on, he will tell you
The centuries that one low roof has seen.
Fate has not dragged him through the brawling crowds,
Nor ever, as a restless traveller,
Has he drunk at unknown springs; no greed of gain
Kept him a-quaking on the perilous seas.
No trumpet sounded for him the attack,
No lawsuit brought him to the raucous courts.
In politics unskilled, knowing naught of the neighbouring town,
His eye takes pleasure in a wider sky.
The years he'll reckon in alternate crops
And not by parliaments: spring has her flowers,
Autumn her apples: so the year goes by.
The same wide field that hides the setting sun
Sees him return again;
His light the measure of this plain man's day.
That massive oak he remembers a sapling once,
Yon grove of trees grew old along with him.
Verona further seems than India,
Lake Garda is as remote as the Red Sea.
Yet, strength indomitable and sinews firm,
The old man stands, a rock among his grandsons.
Let you go gadding, gape at furthest Spain:
You'll have seen life; but this old man has lived.

From 'The Old Man of Verona' by Claudian, circa 370-405, tr Helen Waddell (Mosley 1996)

Are we moderns in a similar condition to that of the worldly Roman poet, Claudian? While we delight in travelling extensively, adventuring, sampling other cultures, acquiring and accumulating artefacts and wealth, exercising power under the sophisticated cloak of legality, are we merely 'seeing life', rather than, in some deeper sense, really living? If so, what is it about the experience of the old man of Verona that keeps him closer than cosmopolitan Romans and moderns to the true sources of life?

The old man of the poem is a native, born of and belonging to his own ancestral patch

of country in the environs of Verona. Being native is an existential condition which imperial civilizations such as Rome, but even more particularly those of Europe in the modern era, tend to render obsolete. With their regimes of colonization and appropriation, such civilizations set both their own citizens and the peoples they subjugate in wholesale motion: the imperial citizens disperse throughout the empire, and in their countries of origin are inducted into new, mobile lifestyles via affluence; members of the subjugated populations are forcibly removed from their lands and sometimes transported to distant destinations at the will of their masters. The state of indigeneity becomes more and more attenuated amidst the flux of peoples and cultures and economies that imperial regimes, particularly those of modernity, entrain. What, at a deeper level, does this vanishing state of indigeneity consist in, and what is the worldview that informs it? What is the cost of its loss? We know that natives can become deracinated, and in the space of a generation or two, turn into moderns. But can moderns become native again? Would this be a desirable end? How desirable is it, particularly, from the perspective of environmentalism? Does nativism, as a praxis, constitute a form of environmental politics? These are some of the questions on which I am proposing to meditate here.

ON BEING NATIVE

'Native' is currently a heavily loaded word; deeply perjorative and romantic simultaneously, it is one of the quintessential designations of 'otherness', connoting a state of unreason, primitiveness and closeness to nature that sets it in definitive contrast to European man's conception of himself as the rational master and director of nature (Plumwood 1993). But the word did not always bear this colonial loading. Derived from the Latin 'natus', meaning 'has been born', it originally referred simply to one born of a particular place. It is etymologically closely related to both 'nature' and 'nativity', and, like them, antedated colonialism by centuries. It was cheerfully used by the English to refer to themselves in relation to their own land before it acquired its overtones of primitiveness, irrationality, superstitiousness - subhumanity. Can this concept be salvaged from beneath its dualistic accretions, and rehabilitated as an identity which is in principle available to anyone who is prepared to renegotiate their metaphysical relationship with place and hence with world? By way of an evocation of the meaning of indigeneity, or the state of being native, that explains this metaphysical relationship, I shall try to show that this concept can be redeemed, and made available for use today.

What then, in essence, is it to be native? To describe a person as a native is not only to say of them that they were born in a particular place - since this after all can be said of everyone - but that they belong to that place, that they are made of its matter and imbued with its distinctive character. To be native is to have one's identity shaped by the place to which one belongs: one is a creature of its topography, its colours and textures, saps and juices, its moods, its ghosts and stories. As a native, one has one's taproot deep in a particular soil: one has grown in that soil, and continues to be informed and sustained by its essence. One is kin to all the other beings who arise out of and return to that patch of earth, and one draws one's substance and one's templates for meaning from it. The native is thus one born into a world which prefigures, predetermines, her being in every detail. She grows into the space that has been prepared for her, as a chick grows into its shell. She respects that space, never jeopardizing the perfect fit between herself and her world by taking radical initiatives

or assuming hard-to-accommodate shapes of her own. The world as it is given affords material sufficiency, mythic inexhaustibility and a rich vocabulary for both pragmatic and imaginative purposes.

A particular place, then, is an irreducible part of the identity of the native. To belong to place in this 'internal' way however is to by-pass, to a degree, the mind-matter dualism of the Western tradition. For one cannot regard the identity of human beings as intertwined with the identity of places if one also regards human beings as set apart from the material world on account of some kind of mentalistic attribute which the rest of reality categorically lacks. To experience oneself as part of the fabric of the world, in this deep metaphysical sense, is to experience the world as fundamentally continuous with one's own nature, rather than as an alien and lower realm of sheer 'mindless' externality. The native is thus bound to experience his world as something like a wider 'psychophysical' field within which his own subjectivity takes shape. For this reason I would suggest that nativism is logically tied to non-dualistic worldviews, according to which 'materiality' cannot be conceived independently of an internal principle which in some sense animates matter. Such a principle might be variously described - in terms of mentality, psychality, subjectivity, conativity, intentionality, self-presence or ensoulment, for example - where each of these attributes will be understood by way of analogy with and extension from prototypal human instances. I shall here characterize such worldviews as broadly panpsychist, inasmuch as they attribute such an inner principle to matter generally. I shall also offer a particular articulation of those aspects of panpsychism that I take to be relevant to nativism. However, I want to acknowledge that there are many ways of both characterizing and elaborating a basically nondualist outlook, and that many versions of nondualism may afford metaphysical frameworks for the notion of nativism that I am developing here.

Through the broadly 'inter-subjective' relation that the native enjoys with his homeplace, his nature is, as I have explained, continuous with the world at large - he is of the world, or belongs to it, on account of belonging to a particular portion of it. In light of this intersubjective relation with place, the native's integration into his world might be perceived as analogous with the way in which humans generally - native and non-native alike - become socialized into the human community. This is, of course, through intimate relations with particular human others. In modern societies, in which intersubjective relations with place are not accounted part of the process of identity formation, and are thus either ignored, denied, or systematically severed, the self is no more integrated into the 'psychic' fabric of the world than a self deprived of primary bonds with human others is integrated into the psychic fabric of humanity. Current psychoanalytic theory overlooks the alienation of the modern self from its metaphysical matrix. Identity formation is, from the basically Freudian viewpoint of psychoanalysis, entirely a function of the infant's psychosexual relations with primary human others. By ignoring our primordial relation to the world, and denying both the 'subjectivity' of that world and its disposition to interact with us in a meaningful fashion, current psychoanalytic theory, from the viewpoint of nativism, induces in moderns a kind of metaphysical autism or psychopathy, an incapacity for affective connection with the world.

Etymology is suggestive of the broadly panpsychist foundations of indigeneity. Native. Nature. Nativity. If a native is one who is born of and belongs to a particular place, as flesh of its flesh and bone of its bone, then nature is the realm of natives,

born beings, beings who belong to the great cycle of birth, death and regeneration; to be a born being is also to be perishable and hence resigned to immanence, to reincorporation into matter, into primal flesh and bone. The native is resorbed into his birthplace. Yet in a religious (Christian) frame of reference, the word 'nativity' signals the entry into nature, into the realm of the born, of one (the Christ) who is beyond mortality, one who has come from beyond space, beyond matter.

Out of this play of inter-penetrating meanings we might, with a little creative licence, distil a concept of the native as one who belongs to the realm of mortality, but whose taproot extends so deeply into his patch of earth that it reaches right through to the other side of matter. By remaining embedded in the substance of the world, he retains his originary connection with its psychic innerness or spiritual depths.

Let us contrast the native, understood in this way, with the modern. The modern individual is of course born, like other creatures, and is consequently mortal. But unlike the native he attempts, in part, to repudiate both his birth and his mortality. For through reason, and the sciences spawned by reason, he sees himself as capable of 'rebirthing' himself, remaking himself according to his own chosen design; and by the achievements of his intellect and will, he aspires to outlive corporeal death. And although he, like other creatures, is necessarily born in a particular place, he is not of that place. Places generally are contingent to his identity. Enjoying the mobility and freedom from attachments that are synonymous with modernity, he is an habitual traveller, latterly a tourist, hungry for new terrain. He also typically moves his residence regularly, for social and professional reasons, and even if he happens for some reason to stay put, the property regimes of modern societies ensure that the character of the places that surround him will change dramatically and abruptly as a result of 'development'.

It is clear from these remarks, I think, that the perspective of the modern is strictly materialist: matter is, for him, sheer externality, devoid of subjective interiority: material particulars are distinguishable only by their external location and form, not by any internal or 'psychic' principle that renders them present to themselves. Such particulars are disposable in the sense that, in destroying them we are not depriving them of their existence - lacking self-presence or ends of their own, they can neither be deprived nor gratified. If they share the same functional form, they are intersubstitutable, in a way that things which are present to themselves are not. Material particulars and places may thus, from this perspective, be considered as commodities, property, real estate, to be exchanged, traded up or redeveloped at the first opportunity.

Far from the modern being a creature of the world then, an incarnation of its deepest themes, this world is his object, an ever-changing artefact of his passing whims. Since this artefactual reality belongs to him, he himself belongs to nothing. Prised away from primordial place, he is severed from world per se. Floating free, he experiences the world as a play of appearances, of surfaces that may be spliced and re-arranged according to his whim. He has no sense of the depth of matter, of its interiority, no inkling of the spirit that underlies the appearances.

The appearances themselves, robbed of their interiority, become scarcely distinguishable from ideas, with which the modern mind is full to the brim. Ignoring

the given, except as a problem to be overcome, entranced with possibilities, the modern lives on an abstract plane. Since ideas lose their animating, recharging power as they become familiar, abstract thought is intrinsically restless, forever in movement towards the next insight or break-through or unenvisioned horizon. Hence the modern's craving for novelty, his habit of listening to 'the news' several times a day, and his intoxication with an already vast and rapidly expanding abstract or 'virtual' world of representations, which is increasingly estranging him from any connection whatever with the concrete given. He relates to the world of matter not as a presence with its own integrity, but as a set of co-ordinates or building blocks for his own ever-active imagination.

Extruded from relationship with the concrete world, unaware of the nurturing presence within matter, pursuing a mirage of alluring yet empty, uninhabited and ever-changing images and abstractions, the camera-decked, laptop-lugging modern may, in the privacy of his individual psyche, struggle to escape his existential maroonment and seek to 'make sense of things'. He does so by summoning up yet more ideas - philosophies and religions which postulate a source of meaning and value beyond matter, outside the world. He may comfort himself with abstract ideas of transcendent forces or beings or creators, which, though inaccessible to experience, can be 'believed in'. Unless fleshed out in elaborate social customs and practices however, such 'beliefs' have little sustaining power. This is evidenced by the fact that moderns who no longer participate in the major social institutions that have constellated around religious or other philosophical hypotheses tend to change their minds quite frequently, embracing new doctrines of creation or redemption, or converting to new 'faiths'. Eventually such individuals tend to give up the search, and settle for the secularity which is the logical corollary of the modern condition.

The native however, being in and of the world, experiences no comparable existential estrangement. Spirituality is, for her, less a matter of belief than of direct experience. She feels the presences in particular objects or places. Oracular communications emanate from cracks in the rocks and from gaps in the clouds. Birds and other animals bring her messages. Her country rejoices when she returns home. This is not a spirituality of ideas, of explanatory hypotheses - though out of her direct experience she may speak on behalf of place or country in story and song. Since it is not a 'faith' or system of beliefs, she cannot give it up, or at any rate not without leaving the country that daily speaks to her and through her. Her life, in situ, is saturated with spirituality, since in all her transactions she is in immediate contact with the spiritual depths of matter.

It may be objected that drawing the contrast between the native and the modern in this way begs the central question thrown up by the current wave of postmodern thought - it may seem to assume what postmodernists deny, namely that it is possible for human beings to engage directly with the real, as opposed to their own ideal constructions of the real. From a postmodern point of view, the native's understanding of himself and the world is as abstract, as culturally mediated, or, in postmodern parlance, as 'discursive', as that of the modern. Although the native may indeed experience himself as interconnected with the real, this experience is itself a function of his beliefs about the world rather than of his actual relations with it. The native is living in his own ideal construction of reality just as surely as the modern is.

In response to this objection I have to concede that it is the - broadly panpsychist - beliefs of the native that render him open to the possibility of intersubjective contact with the world. These metaphysical beliefs are of course as ideal or discursive as any others. However, such beliefs cannot of themselves ensure that contact will occur. Beliefs can blinker or expand my view; they can foreclose certain possibilities, and open up others. They enable me to interpret the evidence of my senses, but they cannot predetermine what that evidence will be - they cannot dictate how the world will behave. I may subscribe to panpsychist principles, but this will not in itself ensure that the world will respond to my communicative overtures in meaningful ways. My panpsychist beliefs may simply turn out to be false. However, if the world does engage in communicative exchanges with me, then I have experiences not available to the materialist. And it is such experiences, experiences of intersubjective exchange, that, I am arguing here, shape the identity of the native, an identity formed through communicative relation with homeplace. So although the beliefs which render the native open to such intersubjectivity are indeed ideal or constructed, the experience of intersubjective contact itself is not so, for it requires, not only the discursive amenability of the native, but the actual co-operation of the world. The native, I am suggesting, experiences an aspect of the world which is hidden to the materialist, and it is on account of being privy to this aspect of reality that she is able to engage in a form of relationality not available to the materialist - a form of relationality which extra-discursively structures her identity, qua self-in-the-world, in the same kind of way that, according to certain schools of psychoanalysis, intersubjective engagement with primary human others prediscursively structures our social identity. In both cases, it is the fact of relationality, of communicative mutuality, itself, rather than the discursive content of such communication, that structures subjectivity. In this sense, while native identity indeed rests on, it is not reducible to, a discursive dimension.

It is clear, I think, from the contrast I have drawn here between the native and the modern that while the native's agency is limited, both geographically, to the place where she belongs, and spiritually, by her engagement with her world on its terms, the agency of the modern is uncircumscribed, either geographically or spiritually. Since he belongs nowhere, he considers himself free to exercise his agency anywhere and everywhere, and since he denies the possibility of communicative engagement with the world, there are no spiritual constraints on his action upon it. While a custodial ethos is clearly implicit in nativism, an exploitative ethos of 'development', in its current economic sense, is a natural expression of the perspective of modernity. It should be noted, however, that custodialism and development represent contrasting attitudes to the given, without regard to the form the given takes; the custodian is by no means exclusively concerned with the ecological, and nativism is accordingly not simply coextensive with ecologism or ecopolitics.

NATIVISM AS PRAXIS

The present global environmental malaise has undoubtedly come about, at least in part, because we moderns, the people of the industrialized nations, no longer love and cherish our world. Over the last three hundred years or so, we have been taught to see the physical ground of being in materialist terms, as in itself void of significance - as mere externality without an animating principle of its own. When we represent our world in this dualistic way, there is nothing that can be said against our parasitising it

and remoulding it to the last degree: it is just lifeless clay, there for us to convert into things for our own use, convenience and diversion. This way of viewing the world removes any philosophical brake on consumerism and development. It also negates the possibility of truly being at home in the world. For from such a materialist perspective, all places, like all material objects, are interchangeable, since none is charged with any indwelling essence or presence. All places, like all things, can be converted into 'property', to be acquired and discarded, traded and trashed, at will. For us to become 'attached' to a particular house, or neighbourhood, or tract of country, is for us to project inappropriate significance onto something which is in itself uncaring and unknowing and unresponsive.

Can this situation be remedied? I think it can. We can begin to remedy it by relinquishing materialism, and re-investing things with an inner presence or animating principle. When an informing impulse has been restored to matter, then objects, including artefacts, will have presence and immanent meaning, and will not be interchangeable and disposable, in the manner of commodities, but will demand attentiveness and acknowledgement from us even as we make use of them. Places will also have their own unique presence and personality, so that to live in a particular place will be to enter into relationship with it, a relationship that can come to claim us so powerfully that the place in question may become internal to our identity. As our lives and histories become more and more intimately interwoven with the mute, but waiting-to-be-noticed, presences of the things and places that surround us, we shall no longer be driven to seek out new and better things and places, but will hold fast to what has become dear and familiar to us, what has now become incorporated into the essential texture of our experience. We shall in this way lose our susceptibility to the ethos of consumerism and 'development'. We shall cherish the given in this way, rather than hankering after the ever-possible, not only because we apprehend the intrinsic or inner significance of all that is, but also because we appreciate that what makes things precious to us is our own relationship with them. And cherishing the given, we shall lavish our affection on it, so that gradually, without compromising its given-ness, we shall render it beautiful, life-filled and sufficient for the purposes of sustaining life. When every part of the earth has become 'home' to someone in this way, then this will indeed be a loved and flourishing world.

But let us backtrack a little, and ponder in more detail how we might act on a panpsychist premise in a contemporary context, and what the consequences of such a practice might be. My thoughts on this are offered in a spirit of experiment rather than of settled conviction: let us approach things and places as though they were ensouled, and let us see whether the world reveals itself to us in a new, responsive light in consequence. What do we have to lose?

The praxis I am suggesting here is simply this: love your world, whatever it contains. If your world happens to be a gritty or garish part of the city, seek the 'world soul' there. Do not turn away from it, but feel for the mysteries beneath the appearances. If your world contains computers and cars, be friendly to your computer and car. Use them in the service of your world, to enhance its beauty and improve its health. Be loyal to them - don't trade them in for new models, unless this is truly necessary. Keep your computer and car indefinitely. Maintain them well. Shine them often. If you have to part with them, don't break faith with them - give them away, to someone who will be as fond of them as you have been. Treat everything in your world as sacred. If

a particular artefact or technology is highly destructive in its purpose or effects, then you probably won't want or need to use it, ever, because it would harm other contents of your loved world. But don't demonize it, or vilify it. Adapt it to some other, positive use, and let it express the unique force of its being in that modified form. In this way, by re-animating artefacts, and gradually removing them from the market economy - the ultimate expression of the disenchanting world - and giving them the non-exchange status of gifts, or of inalienable parts of the fabric of our lives, we shall begin to shift from consumerism, with its implied contempt for matter and its devastating consequences for the environment, towards a conserver society.

Meanwhile, if you possibly can, find a place of residence that you can occupy indefinitely, and commit to it. If you already own a house, perhaps you can decide that you will never sell it. Be devoted to your house. Let it know that it is yours for life, till death do you part: it is 'family', it has its own people, and its destiny and identity are interwoven with theirs. Fill your house with life and beauty. In order to intensify its aura of being-a-home, being an inhabited, hospitable place, hollowed out of space and padded into shape by those who belong to it, encourage as many beings as possible to make it theirs. Grow trees and plants in profusion, inside and out. Provide shelter and habitat for insects, birds, frogs and other animals. Instead of trying, with barriers and chemical weaponry, to exclude all non-human life from your domestic space, share that space generously: adapt your house, so that harmless wild creatures can cohabit with you: make a cave for bats under your eaves, and let spiders enjoy the corners of your rooms. Populate your house with contented companion animals. When they die, bury them in your yard, so that the soil itself is charged with memories. The more beings to whom your house is home, the more cherished it will be, and the more detailed and layered the cherishing will become. If you possibly can, grow food at home, because making your abode the source of your sustenance will deepen your identification with it.

While you are re-enchanting your house in this way, try to do the same for your neighbourhood. Make it your wider home, cherishing the houses and public buildings and streets, however drab or ugly they might be: this, after all, is the landscape of your life. It is through these streets that you have pursued your hopes and fled your disappointments: here is your grown child's primary school; there the house of your late doctor. It was under that lamp post that you read the letter offering you a trip to China, and it was in this cafe that your first husband proposed to you. In time, as your personal history is stitched into it, this townscape will become precious to you, if you let it, if you are prepared to cherish it. When it does become precious to you, you will resist urban development, or at any rate development that begins with the razing of the given. For the cultivation of your sense of place calls for a certain degree of continuity - a certain respect for the given. This means that planners should not be permitted to succumb to planning hubris, erasing the old in favour of the new, however inspired and well-intentioned, or even ecological, their vision of the new might be. Old existing structures and land-forms need to be respected, and built on or modified rather than replaced. Simply by existing in the world for long periods of time they have acquired meaning and character, a certain identity of their own, as well as having become interwoven with your destiny, and the destinies of all the people who have known them. If they have been unhappy places, they can be redeemed. If they have been ugly, they can be made interesting and beautiful. Beauty is at least as much a function of meaning as of abstract aesthetics, and meaning takes time to grow.

So when your city has become your place, let it grow, but organically, from within the shell of that which already exists.

Meanwhile, try to induce a similar commitment and sense of place in the other residents of your area, by cultivating community there, providing a focus for local affections and energy. And just as you did with your own house, make your neighbourhood home to as many beings as possible, by abundant planting and provision of habitat. Notice, incidentally, how dead and forsaken are those places which are home to no beings at all - places of transience, utterly unclaimed, such as certain traffic-ways and car parks, especially underground ones. Such places, belonging to no-one, not even insects, become sterile and dangerous twilight zones - scenarios for violence and crime. Bountiful places, by contrast, places brimming with life, home to myriads of little witnesses and abuzz with purposeful activity, have a certain naturally inhibiting effect on random malevolence. By means of street closures, food gardens, habitat plantings and small-scale local amenities, reclaim and reinhabit as much of the anonymous, uncared-for space in your neighbourhood as possible.

Arrange, if possible, to have yourself buried either at home or nearby, in a site of personal significance. You are ancestor to those who follow you, and the presence of your remains will help to consecrate the site, deterring developers, and enriching the spiritual texture of the area for your descendents - the next generation of custodians. Soon your part of the city will begin to blossom, both of itself, in the stirring of unexpected responses to your attention, and as a result of your care. Places which had been ugly, desolate and dangerous will, once we have made them truly ours, begin to heal, to mellow and grow friendly and safe.

To commit to a particular place as one's own life-world is to signal one's faith that it harbours the sources of life, that life can be sustained there; it is to announce its potential sufficiency. This means not only greening its streets and open spaces, providing habitat for a variety of nonhuman species and growing food for local people; it also means discovering the power of the place - harnessing its potential sources of energy, such as sunlight, wind and compost, rather than relying on external sources, or 'power plants', for one's needs. To emphasize the potential sufficiency of one's own place is not to deny the biospherical interdependence of places generally, but to point to the fact that each place has its own particular potencies and potentialities for giving and sustaining life. In this sense, commitment to place implies an ethos of self-sufficiency, an undertaking to adjust our energy requirements, as far as possible, to the capacities of the immediate and the local, rather than draining the world at large in the service of our supposed needs.

Such adapting of self to the given, rather than exceeding the given in order to adapt the world to self, may be generalized beyond the energy context: the sufficiency of the given can serve as a guiding principle for the whole of life. Such a principle directs us to allow the immediate and the local to dictate our choice of ends. So, to offer an obvious example, instead of selecting imported, out-of-season fruit from the supermarket, I might choose to eat whatever is available in local gardens. Or, to take a less obvious example, instead of electing to learn Latin, where this would involve travelling to a class on the other side of the city, I might ask my nextdoor neighbour, who was born in Italy, to help me brush up my youthful Italian. This would not only

enhance my language skills, but increase and improve my communication with my neighbour. Or, seeking an outlet for my long-repressed church-going impulses, perhaps, I might choose not to comb through the literature of the various denominations to find the one which most closely caters to my current convictions, but rather settle for the splendid gold-domed Russian Orthodox church currently being handbuilt by the parishioners themselves on the banks of the nearby creek. In other words, instead of abstractly deciding what I want, and then scouring, and perhaps remaking, the world to find it, I look at what already exists in the world as it is given to me, here and now, and then consider how I might adapt that which is so given to my ends.

To summarize, as natives we honour the given because it is through the given that the ensouled world presents itself to us. We commit to the local, or that which is immediately given, because to pass over it in favour of the elsewhere is to slap the world in the face-that-it-has-presented-to-us, a face which is, from a nondualist point of view, as ensouled as any other the world might offer. To fail to acknowledge the ensoulment of that face is to fail fully to acknowledge the animation of matter. So the native seeks to have her needs met through whatever is at hand, and she tries to do so without unduly modifying what is thus given to her, let alone despoiling it. The local to which she has committed in this way becomes informed with her history, layered with her meanings, and hence inextricable from her. She cherishes it. It responds to her attentions by allowing her to become sensible of its presence, by speaking to her and through her, thereby deepening her sense of belonging to it, of being immersed in it. As its native, she cares for it, and aspires to draw out its abundance and beauty, to make it a loved place that sustains both life and imagination.

NATIVISM AND ECOPOLITICS

The radical eco-philosophies which have emerged over the last twenty years - particularly the many variants of 'deep ecology' - have taken us some of the way towards a re-animated world. They have taught us to recognize the 'spirit' moving in non-human creatures, and in wild places and lands. They have reminded us of our place in the greater scheme of life, and they have enjoined us to consider other living things as our kin, or as parts of our wider Self. Eco-philosophy has thereby encouraged us to fight for the rest of the biosphere: it has called us out into the last remaining strongholds of wildness - into the forests and swamps and aridlands - where we have made our stand. We have become passionately protective of that 'nature' beyond our walls.

But this is as far as eco-philosophy has taken us to date. It has discovered an inner principle - a principle of ensoulment - in wild things, living things, and it has accordingly exhorted us to protect these things. It has also offered us images of how we might live attuned to this inner principle in a world consisting only of wild things, living things - a world of undisturbed 'nature'. These are images drawn from hunter-gatherer and other tribal societies. Eco-philosophies such as deep ecology and bioregionalism explain to us how, in such an ecologically pristine world, we could indeed belong; we could truly be said to dwell in such a world, become native to it. However these philosophies have not yet shown us how, in the world as it is, the 'disturbed' world of rampant urbanism and industrialism, we might live in attunement with that inner principle. In other words, eco-philosophy has offered us a posture of

resistance to the contemporary world, but no praxis for it, no way of living harmoniously in it.

Eco-philosophy is in this respect, I think, still incomplete. 'Deep ecology' has achieved a certain depth of inquiry, but I think a further level of inquiry about the relation of humankind to the rest of reality is coming into view. Eco-philosophy has rightly invited us to resist the machines of modernity in defence of 'nature', but at the same time it has left most of its followers still helplessly hooked up to the industries and technologies and modes of production of modern society in their everyday lives. There is an inconsistency here that undermines the ecological stance. In order to be consistent, I think that eco-philosophy needs to complete, or 'deepen', the project of re-animation or re-sacralisation. It needs to take the final nondualist step, and acknowledge the inner impulse or soul not only in the natural and biological order, but in the order of matter generally. Only when ensoulment is taken to its logical conclusion can we discover how to live attuned to soul in the world as it is, the world of concrete, tar and steel, of degradation and contamination, of the messes we have made.

To adopt the nondualist premise, and become a native, particularly an urban native, in the present sense, is plainly to take a step beyond traditional environmentalism. Nativism, as I have outlined it here, involves an acquiescence in the concrete given, where this is alien to environmentalism, which valorizes ecological systems over the built or human-made environment. The environmental project, of reinstating the ecological at the expense of the artefactual, perpetuates the restless impulse at the heart of modernity - the urge to make the world over in accordance with human values and preferences. By yielding ourselves to the world as it is, however, accepting that this, and no other, is our world, full as it is of refuse and junk, we begin to make the transition from the modern mentality of management and control, which is at the root of the environmental problem, to the profoundly countermodern mentality of affirmation of the given. This way of affirmation is, I contend, a way to beat modernity, while conceding the inescapability of its effects - the cities, technologies, industries, the litter and junk it has spawned. For while modernity is the process of converting the hitherto sacred order of matter and place into commodities, cash and property, our affirmation, forgiveness, preservation and enhancement of the given converts commodities and property back into the sacred order. We shall also in this way re-enter that order ourselves, as natives, re-capturing its spirit within the mundane domain of our actual lives, rather than projecting it out into a romantic and atavistic space beyond the supposedly inevitable secularity and 'fallen-ness' of the contemporary city.

NATIVISM AS A FORM OF IDENTITY POLITICS

Part of the fruitfulness of nativism from an ecopolitical point of view is that it introduces an identity politics into the heart of environmentalism. This lends environmentalism the kind of urgency and energy that accrues to other social movements in which the emancipation or self-realization of a class of people is directly at stake - movements such as those against sexism, racism or the denial of land rights. Radical ecopolitics, dedicated to the preservation of nonhuman life for its own sake, has tended to lack this energizing core, and I think this partly accounts for the miasma of boredom that has settled around environmentalism in recent years - the

sense that, though important, environmentalism is a kind of societal chore, a bleak responsibility settling ever more heavily on the shoulders of younger and future generations. It also explains why eco-activists, motivated by pure ecological altruism or compassion, are peculiarly prone to burn-out, since their efforts, even if successful, do not result in the kind of direct self-empowerment that has in the past rewarded the efforts of, say, feminists or black civil rights campaigners. Nativism, however, promises its practitioners emancipation from the meaninglessness of the modern condition. The meaning that it offers is not of the ideal kind, but is rather that which flows from connection with reality. This is a form of self-realization that many an anomic modern craves. In its pursuit, natives will defend their homeplace with the tenacity and passion that identity activists, such as feminists, defend themselves. They will in turn be re-charged by the reconnection with the real that their efforts entail: through homeplace they plug into the sustaining energies and spiritual solace inherent in a psychically active world.

These remarks about nativism as a form of identity politics immediately call for qualification on two counts. The first is that at least one strand of radical ecopolitics, viz deep ecology, has already offered its supporters an identity ideal to match their politics, viz the ideal of the ecological self. The second point is that identity politics, popular in the 1980's, has been subjected to serious deconstruction in the 1990's. Is there then any justification for introducing a new genre of such politics at the present late stage?

Realization of ecological selfhood rested, according to deep ecologists, Arne Naess and others (Naess 1995a, Fox 1990), on recognition of the interconnectedness of all living things - on recognition of the fact that all beings are internally or logically related to other beings, and hence that the identity of any living being necessarily implicates that of others. When we recognize this interconnectedness of self with wider and wider circles of being, then, according to deep ecologists, we no longer distinguish sharply between our own interests and those of the beings with whom we are intermeshed - their interests are seen as implicated in ours; protecting them accordingly becomes a matter of 'self-defence'.

The idea of the ecological self is obviously cognate in key respects with that of the native self. However the - crucial - difference is that the idea of the ecological self will remain, for most people in so-called 'developed' societies, a perhaps beautiful but nevertheless definitely unlivable ideal. The greater part of the population of these societies lives in large cities, or on commercial agricultural lands, where original ecosystems have been dramatically modified or simplified, if they have not been outright demolished. Our selves are not in fact presently constituted within complex webs of ecological relations, at least at a local level, and many of the biological systems on which we depend are currently maintained not ecologically, but artificially, with human intervention rather than ecological checks and balances sustaining production and other vital biological outcomes. (Food supply, for instance, is generally maintained by chemical fertilizers and pesticides, rather than by biological feedback loops.) So the ideal of the ecological self does not reflect the actual situation of most of us today, nor is it achievable for most of us within the constraints of our actual lives. The prospect of returning as ferals to the forest is neither realistic nor appealing for the general public. The ideal of the native self, by contrast, is achievable by anyone, anywhere, provided they are in a position to

commit to some particular place of residence. Since an identity politics can succeed only to the extent that the identity ideal it promotes is achievable, the ideal of the native self may provide a more viable basis for such a politics than does that of the ecological self.

The second point I raised above related to the problematization of identity, and hence identity politics, in contemporary debates around issues such as sexism and racism. Under postmodern and postcolonial influences, feminist theory, for instance, has in recent years undergone an 'identity crisis', questioning the very existence of women as a natural kind or class. Categories, such as that of 'women', which impute a common 'essence' to a large selection of individuals, are, from a postmodern point of view, politically suspect, serving to naturalize and legitimate the oppression of such a group by rendering its members 'the same' in respect of certain characteristics that justify their oppression. So, for example, 'women' are defined in terms of certain reproductive tendencies which naturalize and legitimate their confinement to the private sphere; homogenizing categories of the colonized, such as 'blacks', 'savages' or 'aborigines', are defined by way of dualistic contrasts with the colonizers: they are constructed as irrational, superstitious, impulsive, childlike, primitive. Whereas identity politics involves the reclamation and revalorization of subjugated identities, and throws up 'pride' movements, such as those of blacks and gays, and in the case of cultural feminism (which rehabilitated the traditional feminine), women, postmodern politics entails the rejection of such monolithic, discursively constructed identities, in favour of the plurality and difference which are elided by way of such constructs. If I can no longer be assimilated to any particular discursive category, I cannot be systematically oppressed, nor can my oppression, if it occurs, be naturalized and legitimated. If I resolutely shrug off the constructed tags, 'woman', 'black', 'gay', in favour of more localized and particularized indicators of identity, then I escape the discursive nets that would gather me into various kinds of subordination.

In light of this powerful argument against identity politics, is there any justification for reclaiming the category of 'native', and building a new emancipatory movement upon it? Is 'native', in the present sense, as discursive a category as 'woman', for instance? While it is clear that all categories are discursive in a trivial sense, inasmuch as they belong to our discourses, it is open to question whether all are discursive in the operative postmodern sense of fictive - constructed to serve political and ideological ends. I have elsewhere drawn a distinction between abstract and concrete forms of identity (Mathews 1995), and I would like to reinvolve that contrast here. Abstract identity is based on identification with an ideal, whether the ideal is presented as an idea, such as that of 'woman', or as a set of prescribed ideal behaviours. Concrete identity is the prediscursive relational dimension of identity formed through mutualistic contact with other subjects: the self comes to know itself as a subject, regardless of its contingent physical or cultural characteristics (such as gender, skin colour, ethnicity) through the responses of particular others to it. This contrast between abstract/discursive and concrete/relational forms or dimensions of identity may be illustrated by way of the following pair of cases. The identity of a child brought up in a small, mutualistic, face-to-face community will be richly relational: her sense of self will be largely a function of her positioning within the collectivity, and of the particular pattern of her relations with its individual members. This child may or may not be aware, as she is growing up, that her people do in fact constitute a particular tribal or kinship group, let's call it the Black Swan clan, with a

traditional culture of its own. If she later identifies as a Black Swan woman, it is not because she has identified with an abstract idea of Black Swan identity and culture, but because she has been constituted through her relations with the individuals who comprise the collectivity which happens to bear this name. However, another woman, who was as an infant 'stolen' - removed from the same community, and raised within another collectivity, of different racial and cultural provenance - may one day discover her origins, and try to reclaim her Black Swan identity. In her case, this identity will be abstract and discursive, rather than concrete and relational, as it was for the first woman: the second woman will identify with an abstract idea of Black Swan identity and culture, and try to recast herself in this image.

Is the category of 'native', as I have defined it here, to be understood in an abstract/discursive or a concrete/relational sense? The colonial notion of the native, loaded with perjorative associations, was clearly abstract and discursive; it was an identity which the colonizers projected onto the colonized with a view to legitimating their colonization. But the notion of native that I am outlining here is of one who has been formed through intersubjective contact with a re-animated world. It is this contact itself which shapes native subjectivity. Qua discursive ideal, nativism directs us to seek the formative experience of such contact, for the sake of the real, extra-discursive restructuring of our subjectivity that it will entail. It is arguable that individuals in modern societies respond with such alacrity to the allure of identity politics precisely because the relational - and hence concrete - foundation of their identity is so thin. With only attenuated relations to one another, and no anchoring relation to the world, they feel identityless, and hence ripe for movements, such as feminism and black power, and more sinisterly, various forms of nationalism and fascism, that offer shiny new identity badges. Such abstract identities cannot, as I have already argued, assuage the problem however, because in the long term they only reinforce the modern individual's estrangement from the concrete. As an identity politics that regrounds people in relations with the concrete particularity of place, however, nativism does provide an authentic antidote to the excessive discursivity of modernity. In doing so it does not elide differences amongst those who identify as natives. Natives may be expected to differ from one another across communities and countries, since native identity is formed through intersubjective relations with particular places. As different native populations are constituted by different places, their identities and cultures will be as distinct and multiple as the places themselves. 'Native' is thus not an homogenising category in any sense that might be relevant to the purpose of naturalizing and legitimating oppression. Natives are identified in terms of their relation to the world rather than in terms of informing attributes (such as racial type, other anatomical features, costume or specific cultural behaviours or practices), which could visibly 'mark' them as a subjugatable class.

HAVING A LIFE

Perhaps we can now appreciate some of the resonances of our poet Claudian's distinction between 'seeing life' and 'living'. The modern, as the representative of the most extreme and encompassing of imperial civilizations, has become a spectator of life, a connoisseur, or at least a sampler, of different cultures and belief systems, which have for him been converted from genuinely inhabited forms of consciousness into a mere play of ideas, appearances, representations, apprehended at an abstract level. The modern's sense of self depends upon which out of this range of beliefs and

values he chooses to privilege, which he elects to build his life around. The particular beliefs and values out of which he forges his identity may be assembled by himself or prescribed by his society. Either way, his identity is at bottom an abstractly constructed one, a function of ideas or discourse, subject to revision and review. Although inevitably limited by empirical variables in a general way, it is not tied to particular concrete realities. The native, by contrast, has little choice as to who or what he is, because he is already predetermined by the metaphysical context of his birth. Ideas do not constitute the core of his sense of self. His identity is rather a function of his actual relations with a particular place, a particular part of the psychophysical terrain of earth, and is thus rooted in reality. He is not a spectator of, but a participant in, the unfolding of the world. Where the modern observes the various manifestations of the life process - where he 'sees life' - the native is himself a conduit for that process.

However, Claudian's distinction between 'living' and 'seeing life' perhaps casts the life of the native in too vegetative a light. I would prefer to describe the native not merely as living but as 'having a life', being subject to a tapestry of experience that coheres in a way that renders it a unity, an organic unfolding with an inner logic and telos of its own. The modern, in contrast, samples bits and pieces of life, but her experience, however vast and various, fails to cohere, fails to acquire the organic momentum, the inner principle, that carries her along towards ends beyond those of her own limited devising.

I can explain what I mean here, in briefest outline, by drawing on my own experience. For a long time, I was dogged by the feeling that I didn't really have a life. It made no difference that I had work that many others regarded as interesting and worthwhile; that I was engaged in creative writing projects; that I had family and romantic roles and ties; that I was blessed with friends I loved and that I was lucky enough to embark, from time to time, on exotic adventures. Whatever was happening in my life, it always felt as if nothing was happening - that I had no life.

Consequently I spent a lot of time deep in doubt, psychoanalyzing my past, trying to ascertain when exactly it was that the drumbeat had stopped, that the sense of the Tao, once so strong, bearing me along on its swift current, had departed. Recently, however, I have heard the stirrings of that deep pulse again, muffled and faltering, to be sure, but signalling the joyous return of the feeling of life, a life which can carry me forward with its own momentum, instead of having to be reinvented, out of my own flagging will and limited imagination, day by day.

This return of a sense of my life as a genuine life, with a meaning and momentum of its own, seems to have occurred as a result of my recently having had a significant period free of paid work in which I decided to make my own neighbourhood the site of my 'activism'. The ecological ideals to which I was committed in my work had hitherto seemed impossible to put into practice in the heart of the city. I had been waiting, for decades, for a chance to relocate myself to the country, to take up a lifestyle compatible with my dreams and convictions. In the meantime, I had searched amongst the innumerable, urgent and compelling environmental issues which came to my attention daily for the one to which I could devote myself whole-heartedly; for a time it was rainforests, then uranium mining, then Tibet, and so on. But I had so little connection with the issues, and the effects of my actions were so insignificant, it was

hard to sustain commitment. So when this period of free time eddied into view, I decided to start just where I was, to focus my attention on the drab little precinct where I actually lived; I would try to care for it, to make it the site of an ecological way of life. It was undoubtedly a lost environmental cause, but it alone was mine. Little did I expect that this attempt to re-enchant my neighbourhood would result in the re-enchantment of my own life.

I started by enlisting as a weekend animal volunteer at my local environment park. This was a lonely and rather daunting affair, as at weekends there was no-one else around to talk to but rats and the farm animals, who were distinctly bad-tempered and uncooperative with their transient keepers. But in time this involvement led to other, more expansive and satisfying forms of participation, and the park has become for me a principal site of reinhabitation. Meanwhile, a dear friend presented me with a (supposedly!) miniature pig as a birthday surprise. The elemental presence of this eventually hippo-sized prima donna filled our home with radically non-human emanations and, by keeping us attuned to other-than-human perspectives and imperatives, freed us from the obsessive human-centredness and reflexiveness of city life. Her presence also lent our backyard a distinctly rural ambience; it introduced a new range of raw and earthy sounds and smells into this hitherto rather ornamental space, and turned me into something of an urban farmer, hauling bales of straw and bags of feed about, mucking out the pen each morning, and trawling the neighbourhood supermarkets for greenwaste, which the pig quickly converted into high-grade manure. As the scene of our pig's life, the backyard became a vortex of activity, of energetic transfer and transformation. As the home of such a powerful being, the locus of all her needs, desires and feelings, and the axis around which the weather and the birds and the seasons turned for her, it also became a site of richly layered psychic significance.

In the course of my wanderings along the local creek, I found a beautiful old market gardener who, with his ancient wooden wheelbarrow and 1957 tractor, still cultivated a couple of acres on a floodplain upstream. I was able to purchase enough vegetables from him each week to see us through to my next visit. The creek had long been 'country' for me, and obtaining food from my own country, straight from the hands of a man who had worked that tranquil patch, with his family, for fifty years, gave new depth both to my relationship with the creek and to the business of eating. This was soulfood; it was the gift of my own country, and in eating it, I embodied my country, became substantially of it. This eating also bonded me to the man, my friend, who had grown the food, and knew and loved the country.

Other activities included rescuing indigenous seedlings from development sites and replanting them in public spaces. I made an effort to patronize nearby businesses, facilities and venues, and to take an interest in local initiatives and history. I joined action groups and wrote anti-development submissions. In the latter process, it became necessary to learn something of the workings of local government and planning procedures, a counterpart perhaps, in the contemporary urban context, to indigenous knowledge of the factors which are salient to caring for country.

As a result of these and other activities, I discovered that my experience was starting to cohere - and this was an indescribably enchanting feeling, as if a long-lost elixir were bubbling back up from archaic springs, and bringing my arrested existence to

life. It was then that I realized what had been amiss these many years. My life had become spatially dispersed and fragmented - work, leisure, activism, social life, family, the rhythms and requirements of my corporeal existence, all were relegated to separate locales and hence to separate experiential spheres or compartments. My friends all lived in different parts of town, and did not know one another; my family was scattered; my food and clothing and other material requisites came, like my environmental causes, from anywhere and everywhere. Since life had become broken up into so many discrete spatial compartments, it had also become disjointed in time, in the sense that activity in one sphere did not lead naturally into activity in another. It was therefore necessary to impose sequence by way of the calendar and the diary. My time had to be plotted out in advance: a slab of days each month for work; separate slots, subject to availability, for appointments and engagements with different friends, members of the family, doctors and dentists, accountants and colleagues; times for language classes and tai chi sessions and political meetings, for shopping and cleaning and walking the dog. This arbitrary ordering of experience allowed for no 'flow' of meaning or momentum from one activity to the next, from one day or year to the next. The continual 'jump-cutting' from one activity or context to another gave rise to a sense of rush and breathlessness, of acute lack of time. (In a similar way, the jerky pace of a heavily spliced sequence of film creates an illusion of urgency or mania, while a camera that pans continuously generates a leisurely, even timeless, atmosphere.) The future being foreknown, spontaneous emergences and changes of direction were pre-empted; all possibilities of growth and development were foreclosed. Being fragmented, divided, parcelled up in this way, my life had no dynamic or movement of its own - it was not a living thing, but something that had to be reassembled, reinvented, every day.

But now all this was starting to change. By reconstellating my existence around a particular place, I was bringing about the coalescence of the various spheres or compartments. Proximity ensures coherence: different activities undertaken in a given place inter-permeate one another. My local activities and commitment to local sites had brought me into contact with local people. This meant that merely strolling down the street or to the shops was now a potentially social experience, so that it was no longer so necessary to 'put time aside' for social engagements: social interactions could erupt in the midst of mundane daily affairs. My contact with local people in turn put me in touch with local opportunities, issues and possibilities, so that social activity could at any moment turn into work, activism or food exchange, for instance. It was no longer possible to compartmentalize experience, and hence it was no longer feasible to live according to the segmented, breathless logic of the diary. Time lost its choppy quality, and started to flow long and smooth again, and my life, previously subject to the deadening control of will, re-acquired an organic unity and force of its own; it was taking charge of me.

The organic quality of place-centred life was perhaps most colourfully exemplified for me by my local environment park. Over a fifteen year period, this ten acre reclaimed tip-site has given birth to innumerable community activities and functions. Subject to no grand design or premeditated co-ordination, the site has evolved spontaneously, with disparate projects springing up side by side, and different aspects of life intermingling anarchically: offices are situated in the midst of food gardens; in the gardens themselves, cross-species mutuality rather than species apartheid is fostered; animals wander around the cafe; children run freely; sociability informs

work; functional areas are inscribed with in situ 'art', which endows the mundane activities that occur in those areas with larger meanings, and lifts the tone of daily life to a poetic or ritual level. This is the village model of organization, in which different aspects of life, from the trivial to the transcendent, interpenetrate, and thereby cross-fertilize and enrich, one another. In such a scenario, spontaneity is rampant: when a chook jumps onto your table while you are following your usual coffee-and-conversation routine, or when you spend your office break checking what's happening in your vegetable plot, or when fifty schoolchildren dancing to an African drum turn up to watch you fix your solar panel, life can no longer be contained by our conventional scripts. Our experience becomes fluid, multiply dimensional, unpredictable. 'Efficiency' inevitably suffers, but the creative possibilities that 'efficiency' keeps at bay proliferate.

Life lived according to the 'village' principle is thus no longer segmentable, and hence can no longer be governed by the 'planner' or the diary. Activities, relationships, ends are dynamically evolving minute by minute, day by day, year by year, and cannot be prescribed. Each day is indeed a new day, though the unanticipated that it brings forth is not the exotic or imported newness that the modern craves, but a fresh unfolding of the inexhaustible richness of the given.

While the modern 'sees life' then - busily ticking off innumerable predetermined destinations, acquisitions, appointments in itineraries, inventories and diaries - yet is still somehow always short of time, short on life, the native has a life that stretches out timelessly and lives itself, bearing her along on its unique currents to the greater ends that form in the confluence of the many local tributaries to the life of the world. The idea of nativism as I have thus far outlined it cuts across traditional political formations and hence throws up many questions and issues, only some of which I can address here, and those only in the briefest of terms.

NATIVISM: ISSUES AND OBJECTIONS

1) LINK BETWEEN NATIVISM AND THE PROCESS OF RECONCILIATION BETWEEN COLONIZERS AND COLONIZED

As a white Australian, it is more than evident to me that I cannot become native to, and custodian for, my homeplace, however narrowly or widely I define that place, until my white countrymen and women acknowledge the truth of our history here, since this is a major part of the 'truth' of our land, a truth we must fully encompass if we are to lay claim to the title of 'native'. To become native thus requires of us that we acknowledge the entire history of colonization, opening ourselves to all the regret and preparedness to compensate that such acknowledgement entrains. Nor can we assume the role of come-lately natives and custodians unless and until the original natives and custodians accept our presence here, and invite us to join them, as co-custodians rather than as conquerors. The original custodians can issue no such invitation, however, until we declare the wrong we have done them, and seek to make amends. If, after such 'sorry business', the original indigenes invite us to share their responsibilities as custodians, what deep knowledge of place they can offer us, they who have been engaging for aeons in the kind of communication-with-place that we moderns are only now rediscovering. But again, we cannot share that wisdom until the original inhabitants invite us to do so, and it cannot be hoped that they will issue any such invitation until we have admitted, and moved to rectify, to the degree that

rectification is possible, the wrongs.

2) LINK BETWEEN NATIVISM AND COMMUNITY / MULTICULTURALISM

In order to take care of their neighbourhood, people have to co-operate and communicate with one another. Such caring for one's own 'country' thus inevitably draws people together. Their deep investment in the 'country' they have thus collectively called up also inevitably binds them to others who are likewise invested in the neighbourhood - people who belong to my homeplace are my people. When I assume the name, 'Freya of Brunswick', or identify as a Merri Creek woman, then I feel an immediate affinity with others whose names or identities link them to my place. I want to meet the person who wrote 'BELOVED CREEK' in large sprayed letters on the underside of the bridge, and the little band of troubadours who call themselves the Merri Creek Players. I want to know my tribe, those whose psyches are nourished by the same soil, the same landforms, as mine is. When we 'take care of country', whether that 'country' falls in the inner city or the heart of the desert, community, by some kind of happy pre-established harmony, takes care of itself. Natives of a particular place share a common relational identity, whatever their cultural and racial provenance. When we commit to a place, we become in due course the people of that place, and belong to it, and hence to one another, whatever our initial differences. In time too the place inflects our different racial and cultural styles with its own subtle markers, bringing a richly differentiated coherence to our erstwhile heterogeneity. In these ways nativism unifies peoples without eliding differences.

3) NATIVISM AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

If commitment to place enables people to achieve self-realization, as natives, and to escape the anomic condition of modernity, then it would appear that freedom to commit to place is a basic human freedom. Yet in modern societies, many people lack such freedom. People cannot be assured of their tenure of a house or apartment, in capitalist economies, unless they are in a position to purchase it. Rented accommodation is subject to disposition by the owner. Nor may tenants be assured of finding new accommodation within the neighbourhood they may have decided to make their own. Neighbourhoods are subject to development, and to the rise and fall of property markets, and an area that has been affordable in the past may not be so in the future. As an ideal then, native identity would seem to be accessible only to the relatively economically privileged.

Is the nativist ideal thereby vitiated? In my view, it is not. Rather, this objection from social justice brings to light a new fundamental human 'right' - the right to homeplace, where this may be understood as a counterpart, for all peoples, of the land rights of indigenous peoples. From the viewpoint of nativism, every human being has the 'right' to resist or overcome the existential alienation of modernity, and to preserve or restore her relation of belonging to the world through a particular place or set of places. (In putting the point this way, I do not wish to commit to an ethic or ontology of rights, but only to draw an analogy between the acknowledged - though generally not honoured - entitlement of indigenous peoples to their ancestral lands, and a similar but so far unacknowledged entitlement of all peoples to a homeplace.) If a society is so structured as to deprive individuals of the possibility of re-establishing a homeplace, then to that extent the society in question is unjust, and in need of political reform.

Another objection to nativism from a social justice perspective is that, in affirming the sufficiency of the given, nativism condemns certain individuals to remaining in the straitened or derelict places to which an unjust society has consigned them, while condoning the monopolization of spacious, well-endowed places by those who currently enjoy the privilege of occupying them. This is a more serious objection than the previous one, because it brings out the point that nativism is a philosophy of sufficiency rather than equality. If a seemingly poor place has the potential to sustain life, materially, spiritually and imaginatively, then it may be valued as highly as a better-appointed place, from a nativist point of view, since provided a place can support life, its value lies as much in its capacity to engage with us as in its more overt attractions. To appraise places purely in terms of their real estate values would be analogous, from a nativist perspective, to appraising marriage partners purely in terms of their looks and their dowries. Just as love and commitment allow individuals to blossom as spouses, whether they are initially rich or poor, attractive or plain, happy or sad, so love and commitment allow differently endowed sites to blossom as homeplaces. There are many examples of how the reinhabitation of neglected localities has rendered them colourful, vibrant, magnetic neighbourhoods again, far richer, in an existential sense, than adjoining upmarket "addresses". (The danger then is that the sites re-encharmed by devoted, resourceful inhabitants become re-colonized by capital - 'gentrified' - and the natives are dispossessed all over again.) To say this, however, is not to suggest that people are obliged to commit to their homeplace at whatever cost to their physical and social well-being. Being grounded in the real may be a basic human good, but it is only one of a number of such goods, all of which must be weighed against one another in our attempts to achieve self-realization.

4) NATIVISM IN A GLOBAL CONTEXT

Contemporary communication and information technologies imply that nativism in the present day will differ significantly from nativism in certain of its premodern forms, such as the form in which Claudian found it personified in the old man of Verona. Modernity has created a new context for the local, one which cannot, and in any case, in my view, ought not, be repudiated.

Modernity has spawned the contemporary phenomenon of globalism. Globalism can be understood in terms of both its economic and its cultural aspects. Economic globalism is a recently emerged system which constitutes the very apogee of modernity; it is a regime of total development, total subordination of the given to the boundless abstract ends of the market system. Its philosophy is the antithesis of that of nativism: instead of seeking to adapt and limit the needs of the in situ concrete self to the capacities of the immediately given, global capitalism ransacks the entire planet to meet the ever-expanding, metamorphosing demands of the free-floating, ideal or abstract self. However, the phenomenon of globalism can also be understood in a different, more salutary, cultural sense, as pertaining to the knowledge afforded by electronic access to the diverse cultures of the world. Although we cannot actually dwell in the purely epistemological space that is opened up by this communicative technology, with its capacity to reveal the cultural differentiation of the global, our dwelling in the local may be fruitfully permeated by such awareness of a larger frame. This awareness will ensure that our attachment to the local will not degenerate into the narrow-minded parochialism, xenophobia, or exclusionary thinking that often characterize the mentality of the insular village, region or clan. By maintaining the

global array of places, peoples and cultures in view, we remain mindful that our local scenarios are but one manifestation of the variegated possibilities of the planet, and we are not tempted to mistake their preciousness-to-us for preciousness per se, for a degree of preciousness which other places, peoples and cultures lack.

Having the capacity to locate ourselves within a greater scheme of peoples and places also enables us to know ourselves better, to understand the true character of our homeplace in comparison with others, and its role in the relational fabric of the planetary environment. Being mindful of the indefinite differentiation and interconnectedness of the global, we are less likely to take the hallmarks of our own scenarios as the yardstick for other scenarios, where it is this myopic tendency to universalize our local norms and values that generates all manner of parochial intolerance and devolutionary mayhem. Such awareness of a world of differences beyond our native borders is best maintained not merely by way of electronic windows onto other peoples and places, but by way of communicative exchange with them. Their responsiveness to us will ensure that we remain attuned to their inner reality and dynamism, so that they do not become for us merely picturesque or exotic media images or charades (as colonized cultures typically did for the colonizers). The native thus forges communicative networks with the wider world, while at the same time remaining firmly grounded, culturally and materially, in her own place. Such communication with natives elsewhere, which is so greatly facilitated by electronic mediation, may include exchanges of knowledge, arts and moral and political lore. These cultural exchange networks may also be mobilized for political purposes when the need arises - when the homeplaces of native allies are threatened by development, for instance.

The global cultural context afforded by modernity has thus ensured that a truly benign form of nativism can now be reliably practised, a form of nativism that is not premised on ignorance of other cultures, or hostility to their intrusions, but on appreciation of the indefinite differentiation of the global. Within this global frame, the native celebrates the uniqueness and authenticity, but not any supposed superiority, of her own particularity. (In this respect, contemporary nativism parallels to some degree the nativism of many precolonial non-European indigenous peoples. For unlike the village-dwellers of premodern Europe, who often had little contact with the world beyond their borders, the peoples of Polynesia, for instance, or Aboriginal Australia, engaged in great rounds of gift-giving (in the case of Polynesia) and ceremonial exchange (in the case of Aboriginal Australia) with neighbouring peoples throughout the year.)

5) THE NATIVE AND THE TRAVELLER

Does nativism imply an embargo on travel? Or, more accurately, will one whose identity is bound up with homeplace lose the impulse to seek out distant places? Will he, like the old man of Verona, be forever content with his own plot, forever content to see the sun rise over the same wide field on which it set? Clearly, for a contemporary native, whose consciousness and conscience is permeable to the global context, opportunities to recharge his network relationships via face-to-face meetings will be desirable, and festivals and exchanges may be arranged for this end, if they are within the means of the participants. But is travel in any wider, exploratory sense consistent with the ethos of nativism?

The first question to consider in this connection is that of nomadism. The nomad appears to present a contrast to the native, but insofar as the traditional nomad typically followed seasonal routes which were as familiar to him as homelands were to the traditional indigene, this contrast is actually more apparent than real. These routes in effect constituted linear homelands, and the nomad could assume as custodial a relation to them as did natives to their more bounded territories. However, insofar as nomadism is interpreted loosely, as connoting a merely wandering way of life, the question of its relation to nativism is more complex.

Evidently, the ethos of nativism is incompatible with travel in the touristic sense, where this is understood as involving the packaging or purchasing of certain prescribed geographical and cultural sights and sounds and 'experiences' (the Eiffel Tower, Ayers Rock, a bull fight, a Japanese tea ceremony, an Aboriginal corroboree). Tourism is one of the paradigmatic pursuits of modernity, one of the principal ways in which the modern converts the psychophysical field of reality into a manifold of mere appearances, which can be duly accumulated, like possessions, and mentally encompassed. Having 'seen it all', the modern feels larger than the world, and epistemically in charge of it, since he neither apprehends nor participates in its inexhaustible reality.

However, although the native is not a tourist, nor is he necessarily as entirely a homebody as the old man of Verona, even allowing for occasional sorties to cement alliances. Nativism today, I think, calls for complementation by a certain kind of free travel. This is because the native, dedicated to the familiar and the deeply known, also needs opportunities to experience the strange and the unknown, to discover the indifferent face of things. While the touristic mode of travel - of paying one's money to have one's expectations fulfilled, and the world dished up to order, a harmless potpourri of appearances - is antithetical to the spirit of nativism, there is a mode of travel consistent with this spirit. This is a mode of travel which might be described as journeying. Journeying involves a voyage into vulnerability, a doffing of one's habitual identity to become the stranger, open to serendipitous direction by the world, and to the self-appointment of one's destinations by themselves. It matters little, from this point of view, where one travels, but only how one does so. Journeying in this way, in utmost humility, without expectation, open to revelation, one stands to discover those things about oneself, about one's own community and culture, that are hidden at home.

Such journeying, undertaken at critical points in one's life, with the attitude of a supplicant rather than of a spectator, is arguably only possible for one who has assumed the position of the native, for without the sense of existential security, of inalienable belonging to the world, that accrues from nativism, one might not be able to endure the vulnerability of journeying. It is perhaps by participating in the inner nature of the world, where such participation seems most achievable via the particularity of place, that one acquires the trust in things that enables one to surrender the precautions, plans and itineraries that insulate the touristic modern from both danger and revelation.

CONCLUSION

I have suggested here that nativism, adapted to the contemporary context, offers a

deeper response to the challenge of modernity than do philosophies which are purely ecological in scope. Although the immediate outcomes of nativism may not always match our ecological aspirations, the attitude of the native meets and subverts head-on the modern contempt for matter that lies at the root of the present environmental crisis.

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