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NOMADS AND NOMADOLOGIES:
TRANSFORMATIONS OF THE PRIMITIVE
IN TWENTIETH-CENTURY THEORY AND CULTURE

by

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For Suzy

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ABSTRACT

This thesis analyzes the proliferation of nomadic tropes in recent Euro-American literary and theoretical discourse as both a symptom and a strategic response to what Fredric Jameson calls “the cultural logic of late capitalism.” Although current uses of the nomad to signal nostalgic or radical consciousness tend to claim a decisive break with the Eurocentric vocabulary of modernist primitivism on the grounds that they privilege spatial categories over temporal ones, the shift from modernist primitivism to postmodernist nomadology represents neither a decisive break nor a simple repetition, but an ambiguous mutation in the structure of twentieth-century primitivism. Both the complexity and the appeal of the nomad for contemporary writers, I argue, stems from the nomad’s unique synthesis of spatial and temporal categories.

The first chapter of the thesis provides a genealogy of the nomad in anthropological writing since the eighteenth century to illustrate nomadism’s constitutive implication in temporal-evolutionary paradigms and to trace the emergence of two competing nomadic figures: “the pure nomad” (whose mobility derives from pastoralism) and “the general nomad” (whose mobility is unqualified). Chapter Two explores how the poetics of these competing nomadic figures both instantiate and diverge from modernist primitivism through readings of their function as signs of dwelling and homecoming in T. E. Lawrence’s *Seven Pillars of Wisdom* (1935), Bruce Chatwin’s *The Songlines* (1987), and Michael Asher’s *The Last of the Bedu* (1996). Following Jameson’s account of modernity and postmodernity as periods dominated experientially by categories of time and space respectively, I identify a general shift towards nomadic representations of the primitive in Chatwin and Asher’s works, and a more specific shift in representations of nomadism itself from the evolutionary “pure nomadism” favored by Lawrence, to the more spatially-oriented “general nomadism” preferred by his successors.

In Chapter Three, I turn from these more popular texts to address the development of philosophical “nomadology” in the poststructuralist theory of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari. Although their adoption of the nomad as a figure of radical political discourse (“the war machine”) and libidinal experimentation (“the nomad subject”) is often dismissed as utopian or anarchic, I find that attention to alterations in the rhetoric of nomadism from their earlier to their later work reveals a more cautious, flexible, and nuanced political “toolbox” than their critics usually allow, even if their critique of primitivism is ultimately incomplete. Finally, I consider ways in which the tension between utopian and cartographic versions of nomadism within Deleuzo-Guattarian nomadology have been synthesized in postmodern and postcolonial fictions that treat nomadism as a hinge between apocalyptic thinking and navigational discourses of cognitive mapping. Alfred Bester’s early cyberpunk novel, *The Stars My Destination* (1956), and Michael Ondaatje’s *The English Patient* (1992) illustrate how the nomad’s spatio-temporal doubleness allows it to coordinate competing political aesthetics and thus to figure more complete, more nuanced visions of social transformation. Ultimately, however, the thesis suggests that nomadism’s imbrication in colonial discourse makes it a problematic figure for political discourses whose very aim is the undoing of the structures that subtend primitivist discourses of imperialist nostalgia.

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Introduction

Reading Nomadology: The Politics and Poetics of Postmodern Primitivism

In modern times both myths (of the savage and of the nomad) have been revitalized, but the myth of the nomad would seem to be the more lasting one.

A. M. KHAZANOV, *Nomads and the Outside World* (1)

Upon his return from an intrinsically self-defeating quest through the Amazon basin and the jungles of Brazil for a society wholly untainted by Western intrusion, Claude Lévi-Strauss criticized the French public's insatiable appetite for the "feeble magic" of travel books and photograph albums that "create the illusion of something which no longer exists but still should exist, if we were to have any hope of avoiding the overwhelming conclusion that the history of the past twenty thousand years is irrevocable" (41, 38). It was as if, he observed, "Not content with having eliminated savage life, and unaware even of having done so, [that public] feels the need feverishly to appease the nostalgic cannibalism of history with the shadows of those that history has already destroyed" (41). Expanding upon Lévi-Strauss's acute remarks, anthropologist Renato Rosaldo has recently termed this paradoxical attitude—in which "someone deliberately alters a form of life, and then regrets that things have not remained as they were prior to the intervention"—"imperialist nostalgia" (*Culture* 70) in order to emphasize the ideological function inherent in its deployment of primitivist tropes. Within imperial cultures, Rosaldo points out, postures of "innocent yearning" typically idealize nature or the primitive in order to conceal the material violence of colonial

domination and the epistemic violence of “the civilizing mission” (70-72). Compared to such stark disjunctions between sentiment and praxis, the ethnographer’s sympathetic gesture of “mourning the passing of traditional society” (81) has often seemed benign or even strategic. But its function, Rosaldo maintains, “cannot be neatly separated” from that of more transparently ideological instances of imperialist nostalgia because the ethnographer’s historic reliance on colonial authorities to conduct field research brings the mournful collector of vanishing customs and the frontier agent who “goes native” into a common frame: “Both attempt to use a mask of innocence to cover their involvement with processes of domination” (86).¹

As Rosaldo’s dismantling of imperialist nostalgia reveals, moreover, the paradigm of “salvage ethnography,” in which the anthropologist anxiously records the traces of “fragile” cultural traditions before they disappear, is extremely difficult to dislodge (86). In this regard, Lévi-Strauss may be credited with anticipating one of the most striking features of the cultural logic of late capitalism some thirty years before Fredric Jameson asserted that,

In modernism...some residual zones of “nature” or “being,” of the old, the older, the archaic still subsist; culture can still do something to that nature and work at transforming that “referent.” Postmodernism is what you have when the modernization process is complete and nature is gone for good. (ix)

To be sure, Jameson’s eulogy for the “residual zones of ‘nature’ and ‘being,’” might be reproached for overstating the hegemony of what Lévi-Strauss called “Western monoculture” (38) or the global reach of late capitalism’s internationalizing tendrils.² Nonetheless, to the extent that he describes a significant mutation in the organization of global capitalism and a related “force field in which very different kinds of cultural

impulses...must make their way" (6), Jameson provides a useful framework with which to understand the current proliferation of primitive kitsch and imperialist nostalgia at every level of postmodern culture in Europe and North America. For if postmodernity can be characterized as the radical acceleration of a modernity that, in the decades of modernism, had already launched Joseph Conrad, D. H. Lawrence, and even Lévi-Strauss, towards vitalizing encounters with "Africa," "Mexico," and "South America," then the feverish intensification that has marked the production of primitivist signs of authenticity, now that the putative bearers of this metaphysical essence have embraced the spectacle of *Baywatch* and nature appears to be "gone for good," is immediately comprehensible. Today, the lament of the anthropologist who once bore witness to "the impossibility of escapism" in dejected solitude is simultaneously acknowledged and disavowed by postmodern culture's tireless procession of simulated savages. The artifacts of postmodern culture imply that escapism is "impossible," in other words, not because the primitive has vanished, but because he is everywhere: on TV and in our living rooms, assisting Jeff Probst as he directs the latest *Survivor* castaways in the reenactment of a sacred "tribal ritual."³

Yet, if the nostalgic cannibalism of late capitalism has kept us hungry for the primitive, something has changed about the primitive itself. It has become less rooted, more mobile, quitting the dank Conradian jungle for the more austere landscapes of desert and steppe. Like a sort of second-order romantic, modernism's primitive has grown tired of the primeval forest and gone nomad. Bruce Chatwin's bestselling *Songlines*; George Miller's *Mad Max* films; David Lean's cinematic hagiography of T. E.

Lawrence; Anthony Minghella's Academy Award-winning adaptation of Michael Ondaatje's *The English Patient*; Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's theoretical "nomadology"; Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri's recent call for a counter-empire of "New Barbarians" to combat the empire of global capital: such productions and "events" give an impressionistic but suggestive sense of the power, range, and pervasiveness of the nomad's manifestations in the culture of postmodernity.

Thus far, attempts to account for the nomad's current prominence and function have focused largely on its metaphorical manifestations in the theoretical culture of postmodernism. Deleuze and Guattari's *A Thousand Plateaus* (1980; trans. 1987), which presents a philosophical critique of modernity and an itinerary of revolutionary forms of subjectivity and social practice using a complex array of "sedentary" and "nomadic" tropes, has sparked particular attention and debate because it is widely regarded as the fountainhead of academic nomadology's copiously branching flows. Indeed, its influence has been sufficiently far-reaching for "nomadology," like "postmodernism" itself, to slip its conceptual tether and become a sort of shorthand for a loosely conceived gestalt of oppositional attitudes in line with Michel Foucault's galvanizing injunction:

[P]refer what is positive and multiple, difference over uniformity, flows over unities, mobile arrangements over systems. Believe that what is productive is not sedentary but nomadic. ("Preface" xiii)

As Caren Kaplan confirms, in her valuable survey of this phenomenon, much contemporary criticism has heeded Foucault's advice: "poststructuralist and postmodern critics who have been searching for alternatives to purely nationalist or modernist critical strategies have embraced enthusiastically the generalized figure of the nomad as a symbol

of hybridity, mobility, and flux,” for they have found that “the metaphorical nomad and theories of nomadology counter assertions of purity, fixed dwelling or being, and totalitarian authorities and social practices” (92).

The rather ebullient tone adopted by certain versions of nomadology has understandably occasioned skepticism and demurrals in some quarters, particularly from theorists of travel and diaspora operating within cultural studies or postcolonial frameworks who wish to distance their projects from more euphoric postmodern discourses of mobility. James Clifford, for instance, in a conference talk on “Traveling Cultures,” expressed concern that his call “to rethink cultures as sites of dwelling *and* travel, to take travel knowledges seriously” (*Routes* 31) not be misconstrued as mere “nomadology”:

I’m not saying that there are no locales or homes, that everyone is—or should be—traveling, or cosmopolitan, or deterritorialized. This is not nomadology. Rather, what is at stake is a comparative cultural studies approach to specific histories, tactics, everyday practices of dwelling *and* traveling: traveling-in-dwelling, dwelling-in-traveling. (36)

In his comments during the question period following, Stuart Hall voiced a similar sentiment, praising Clifford for “separat[ing] [him]self from the fashionable postmodernist notion of nomadology—the breakdown of everything into everything” (qtd. in Clifford, *Routes* 44), a separation which Hall himself has rigorously maintained in his own writing on diasporic identity, as when he insists:

the way in which I’m trying to think questions of identity is slightly different from a postmodern “nomadic.” I think cultural identity is not fixed, it’s always hybrid. But this is precisely because it comes out of very specific historical formations, out of very specific histories and cultural repositories of enunciation, that it can constitute a “positionality,” which we call, provisionally, identity. It’s not just anything. (502)

Dick Pels has recently added his voice to this chorus, charging that cultural criticism has become “a vast ‘travel literature’” characterized by the proliferation of a “risky and misleading set of metaphors which celebrate the traveler, the migrant, the exile, the stranger, or the nomad as the quintessential postmodern subject, and especially, as the quintessential role model of the modern intellectual” (64). In the ensuing argument, “nomadology” functions, as it did for Clifford and Hall, as a term of derision. Here, however, its scope swells to accommodate Pels’s extraordinary list of offenders—among them, James Clifford and Stuart Hall.⁴

The polemical elasticity “nomadology” acquires in these examples provides a neat illustration of the degree to which the term has become merely a convenient placeholder in contemporary debates over postmodernism. By and large, such dismissals do not even attempt to engage nomadology’s philosophical source material to investigate whether or not Deleuze and Guattari in fact claim that identity can be “just anything.” This is unfortunate since a careful reading of their texts reveals that nomadology has traveled very far from its nuanced and politically supple articulation in *A Thousand Plateaus* to its current function as caricatured signifier in the trenches of the nomadology wars. And yet, the concern of these critics for the way in which contemporary practices of representation implicate themselves in a romance of the margin remains salutary and overlaps with more even-handed critiques of nomadology which similarly emphasize its reliance upon imperialist nostalgia and modernist habits of representation that celebrate the primitive as an embodiment of vanishing “traditional” values or symbol of potentially liberating energies. Indeed, Pels even provides these critiques with a fitting emblem when he

recalls a genuinely cringe-inducing convention moment involving a “research group on ‘Transnationality and Multiculturalism’ of the deconstructivism-inspired Amsterdam School for Cultural Analysis [which], after having digested a heady batch of articles on nomadism, hybridity and exile, went on to test its readings in a ‘real-life’ situation, and set out on a ‘field trip’ to the Tropical Museum exposition on ‘Nomads in Central Asia’—thus bringing would-be intellectual nomads face to face with representations of weather-beaten shepherds herding flocks of skinny goats across the endless tundra” (64).⁵

Christopher Miller’s scrupulous archaeology of the “referential ‘tease’” (179) in *A Thousand Plateaus* where nomadism figures a desirable “postidentitarian” condition, for instance, takes Deleuze and Guattari’s footnotes as “the footprints in the sand of their nomadic intellectual wanderings” (176) and tracks nomadology’s profound imbrication in its now dated (and often eccentric) anthropological sources to illustrate its perpetuation of the very primitivist discourse it claims to oppose. In Deleuze and Guattari’s association of the nomad with non-hierarchical “smooth space,” Miller discerns “a classic gesture of primitivism” that inscribes “the dream of a utopia of *undividedness* that has so often characterized Western thought about Africa” (198). In their glorification of the nomad “war machine” as an instrument intrinsically concerned with “deterritorialization” and the production of revolutionary “flows,” he detects an “unshakable *sympathy* for nomadism, a desire to rehabilitate nomads” who have always been maligned and, as Deleuze and Guattari would have it, “dismissed” by the propagandistic histories of sedentary State culture (204). Nomadology thus appears to be indistinguishable from a kind of “nomad propaganda” which takes the form of a naïve reversal—“sanitiz[ing]” (205) and

“valorizing the terms that had been denigrated before, reinventing primitivism” (207).

For all its eclecticism,” Miller concludes, “*A Thousand Plateaus* remains primarily a work of European ‘high’ counterculture” that “sets out to ‘strangle’ but winds up at least partially reproducing not only representation but anthropology, evolution, primitivism, universalism, dualism, [and] orientalism” (176-77, 206).

Kaplan echoes Miller’s critique of the nomadic metaphor in *A Thousand Plateaus*, expanding it to diagnose ways in which “mystified versions of the ‘romance of the desert’ remain with us in postmodernity, often in the service of a ‘postcolonial’ critical practice” (66). Like Miller, she sees nomadology as the work of discursively *risqué* but politically misguided “high modernists” whose emphasis on “the freedom of disconnection” and “the pleasures of interstitial subjectivity” recalls earlier “valuation[s] of exile, expatriation, defamiliarization, and displacement” (89). Deleuze and Guattari’s corresponding identification of the nomad with ostensibly liberating practices of “deterritorialization” and “becoming-minor”—neologisms for social practices and processes of self-invention which subvert dominant models or norms—thus appears to recycle the primitivist imagery of an outdated and reactionary form of cultural politics “depend[ant] upon specifically modernist versions of colonial discourse” (86).

“Throughout Euro-American modernity,” she points out,

nomads, bedouins, and other mobile tribes have been geographically located outside metropolitan locations (in the desert or forest) or on the peripheries of metropolitan locales (gypsies, for example, who are portrayed as liminal, moving in and out of towns and always staying on the outskirts). These romanticized figures are always positioned in colonial discourse as closer to nature, purer or simpler, and near to vanishing. Within this context, the nomad participates in the discourse of the “other,” signifying the opposite of Euro-American metropolitan modernity.... The nomad as a metaphor may be susceptible to intensive

theoretical appropriation because of a close fit between the mythologized elements of migration (independence, alternative organization to nation-states, lack of opportunity to accumulate much surplus, etc.) and Euro-American modernist privileging of solitude and the celebration of the specific locations associated with nomads: deserts and open spaces far from industrialization and metropolitan cultural influences. (90)

Insofar as they perpetuate the “mythologized elements” of nomadism, in other words, postmodern nomadologies which invoke anthropological sources in support of their theorizing will inevitably replicate the structure travestied by Pels’s scathing anecdote in which Western academics gaze longingly upon a paste-board and plaster diorama of “real” nomads which they themselves have unwittingly constructed.

These critiques by Kaplan and Miller resonate powerfully with Marianna Torgovnick’s stimulating work on twentieth-century primitivism, *Gone Primitive: Savage Intellectuals, Modern Lives* (1990). In particular, their emphasis on the persistence of modernist figures of imperialist nostalgia in Deleuze and Guattari’s theorizing recalls Torgovnick’s own assertion of a fundamental structural continuity between modernist and postmodernist evocations of the primitive, despite their manifest diversity:

We have become accustomed to seeing modernism and postmodernism as opposed terms marking differences in tone, attitude, and forms of economic and social life between the first and second halves of the twentieth century. Yet with regard to views of the primitive, more similarities exist than we are used to acknowledging. The real secret of the primitive in this century has often been the same secret as always: the primitive can be—has been, will be (?)—whatever Euro-Americans want it to be. It tells us what we want it to tell us. (9)

By situating Deleuze and Guattari’s fascination with nomads and nomadism within a primitivist problematic of this type, Kaplan and Miller qualify nomadology’s claim to have outmaneuvered the imperial nostalgia of an earlier moment. Deleuze and Guattari’s rather vocal criticisms of anthropology, ethnography, evolutionism, and primitivism in A

Thousand Plateaus have certainly led some to believe that “the nomadological approach makes them incapable of coercion, primitivism, and ‘interpretosis,’ that this kind of post-structuralism will usher in a future where oppression will be ‘unthinkable’” (Miller 208). To point out that “a deeply modernist strain runs through Deleuze and Guattari’s texts at the very instances when they claim the most extreme break with modernity” (Kaplan 67) constitutes a valuable check on such utopianism, while encouraging forms of theorizing that are more self-critical and which refrain from the “kind of othering in theory [which] repeats the anthropological gesture of erasing the subject position of the theorist and perpetuates a kind of colonial discourse in the name of progressive politics” (88).

As a guidepost for an analysis of the nomad’s significance in postmodern culture more generally, however, the image of the nomad as a left-over “modern” primitive that emerges from critiques of Deleuzo-Guattarian nomadology is somewhat misleading because the political thrust of these critiques necessarily minimizes the ways in which nomadism constitutes a distinctively postmodern mutation of primitivist poetics. For even if nomadology’s nomad inscribes an identifiably “modernist” politics of representation into the heart of poststructuralist philosophy—as I believe it does—such an insight tells us little about the specificity of the nomadic metaphor itself, much less about its privileged function within the discourse of “postmodern primitivism” (Clifford, *Routes* 39). Embarking from the political critique of representations of nomadism articulated by Miller, Kaplan, and Pels, and expanding upon Torgovnick’s mandate to explore “conceptions of the primitive that drive the modern and the postmodern across a wide range of fields and levels of culture” (21), this thesis analyzes the efflorescence of

nomadic figures in postmodern culture with the intention of both historicizing this phenomenon and specifying ways in which a poetics of nomadism simultaneously registers and responds to contemporary Western anxieties and desires.

Mapping current representations of nomadism against Jameson's account of postmodern culture, I seek especially to complicate the question organizing Torgovnick's study—"Why did modernism / why do we desire the primitive?" (34). In its stead, I propose a related, but revised alternative: If modernism desired the primitive, why does postmodernism desire the nomad? My project might thus be seen as both a complement and a critique of *Gone Primitive* that rereads Torgovnick's history of twentieth-century primitivism in light of the increasing predominance of metaphors of travel and mobility among theoretical discourses which attempt to figure a world envisioned as increasingly heteroglot and interconnected—what Kaplan calls "postmodern discourses of displacement." For although Torgovnick provides a nuanced account of the ways in which "specific historical and cultural variations [of the primitive]...expose different aspects of the West itself" (190), she makes little attempt to explore how the primitive's historical and cultural variations interpenetrate, develop, or enter lateral relations of competition and interrogation. Postmodernism, moreover, receives surprisingly little attention in her account and, perhaps symptomatically, nomadism *per se* is virtually absent from *Gone Primitive*.

Thus, whereas previous approaches to postmodernity's fascination with the nomad have tended to treat this figure as essentially coterminous with modernism's primitive, I seek to distinguish the nomad's particular rhetorical and poetic functions in

relation to more conventional (and more sedentary) representations of this primitive more carefully. Let me emphasize that the purpose of making such distinctions is not to provide an alibi for nomadology by disengaging the nomad from what Torgovnick identifies as the “canonical line of Western primitivism” (248). On the contrary, it is not a matter of isolating the nomad as a discursive object, but of making visible the strategies and tactics of new, ever more subtle forms of primitivist discourse. As Victor Li has recently argued, we seem to have entered a phase of postmodern “neo-primitivism” that is more theoretically sophisticated, and thus more slippery, than the modernist forms of primitivist idealization Torgovnick describes. The work of two leading theorists of postmodernism, Jean-François Lyotard and Jean Baudrillard, he argues, exemplifies this new kind of “anti-primitivist primitivism” in which these critics’

sharp criticism of Western primitivism’s universalizing and colonizing aims comes to depend...on a reconceptualization and reinscription of the primitive as culturally and cognitively incommensurable and, hence, opposed to any assimilation or appropriation by the West.... As such, their project, for all its ostensible avant-gardism, rejoins that venerable European tradition, since Montaigne at least, that has imagined and relied on a valorized Other in its eternal quarrel with its own culture. (“Premodern” 105)

Although the binary structure that ultimately organizes all primitivist representation still operates in the texts of these neo-primitivist philosophers, in other words, it does so in ways that are becoming increasingly difficult to apprehend. In light of this development, alertness to the shifting and relational rhetorical functions of and between various primitivist figures is necessary if we are to recognize such obfuscations, particularly since, in certain versions of postmodern discourse, the nomad and the primitive (or savage) are presented not as interchangeable or synonymous, but as relational and

hierarchically ranked terms.

To speak of a “shift” from primitive to nomadic forms of imperialist nostalgia in postmodern culture is, of course, to raise a number of pressing questions about periodization which require more specific theorization than I have provided thus far. First, from a purely practical perspective, an attempt to map the primitive and the nomad sequentially against a modernist-postmodernist problematic is complicated by the persistence of primitive tropes into the present moment, on the one hand, and the flowering of a substantial sub-tradition of desert romance at the very moment of modernist primitivism’s would-be discursive predominance, on the other. Second, now that the initial blaze of periodizing fervor has cooled, theorists of contemporaneity seem hesitant to posit absolute breaks of any sort. Recalling Gerald Graff’s skepticism when he refers to “the myth of the postmodern breakthrough,” assessments of postmodernity’s relation to its immediate past increasingly eschew the excited rhetoric of “rupture” in favor of the more cautious language of “continuity,” “development,” and in some cases, “identity.” From either perspective—the history of primitivism or the periodization of postmodernity—a moment of decisive “breakthrough” seems difficult to specify.

As Jameson argues, however, periodization need not imply “breakthrough” to possess epistemological value. The perennial concern that periodizing hypotheses “tend to obliterate difference and to project an idea of the historical period as massive homogeneity (bounded on either side by inexplicable chronological metamorphoses and punctuation marks)” (3-4) should be answered not by a thoroughgoing repudiation of periodization but by a reconceptualization of periodicity according to the logic of the

“cultural dominant: a conception which allows for the presence and coexistence of a range of very different, yet subordinate, features” (3-4). In the case of postmodernism, such “subordinate” heterogeneity is especially pronounced because the present era “is not the cultural dominant of a wholly new social order..., but only the reflex and the concomitant of yet another systematic modification of capitalism itself” (xii). As such, it cannot be surprising if “shreds of its older avatars—of realism, even, fully as much as of modernism—live on, to be rewrapped in the luxurious new trappings of their putative successor” (xii). Such a conception of the syncretic culture of postmodernism helps to account for the persistence of primitive imagery well beyond the modernist period. The primitivist pantomime of *Survivor*, for instance, may be taken as one of many fossilized “survivals” of an earlier cultural moment. In a periodization of imperialist nostalgia of the type I am proposing, therefore, it is not a matter of claiming rigid historical breaks or zones of representational homogeneity, but of accounting for relative degrees of tropological saturation within a particular “cultural dominant.”

The tolerance of heterogeneity implied by Jameson’s conception of “culture in dominance” provides a necessary ground for the periodization of tropes, but the figures themselves present a dilemma that cannot be resolved by this expedient alone. In a strictly enunciative sense, the primitive and the nomad are potentially synonymous abstractions whose “meaning” at any given moment is determined by their insertion into a particular argument or system of representation rather than by any “innate” or “material” qualities the referents of these terms might be said to possess. As Edward Said puts it, in his classic formulation, “Orientalism depends for its strategy on [a]

flexible *positional* superiority, which puts the Westerner in a whole series of possible relationships with the Orient without ever losing the relative upper hand" (7). The tropes of imperialist nostalgia are similarly constituted, deriving their power from a position of "flexible" enunciative superiority which not only engenders variation within a particular colonial stereotype, but also enables the harmonization of meanings among very different discursive figures. Thus, just as Orientalism "borrowed and was frequently informed by 'strong' ideas, doctrines and trends ruling the culture," producing "a linguistic Orient, a Freudian Orient, a Spenglerian Orient, a Darwinian Orient, a racist Orient—and so on" (22), so one can identify not only a linguistic primitive, a Freudian primitive, a Darwinian primitive, etc., but corresponding linguistic, Freudian, and Darwinian nomads as well. Insofar as primitive and nomad can be seen merely as projections of ethnocentric or colonial systems of representation, they are, in theory, infinitely malleable and equally available to register or engage the concerns of very different cultural dominants—a feature which, if determinate, would obviously prove fatal to a periodization of tropes, regardless of any suppleness that might accrue to the periodizing hypothesis as a whole.

In practice, however, such malleability invariably runs up against certain recurrent associations and distinctions which make one or the other figure a more congenial vehicle for the preoccupations of a given historical moment and which enable differing figures to assume interlocutory or relational meanings. In other words, despite their common imbrication in colonial systems of power-knowledge and a generalized Euro-American discourse of otherness, the primitive and the nomad project fields of significance whose contours are determined by the accretions of relatively independent discursive traditions

(independent both from each other and from the cultural dominant). In *Colonialism's Culture*, Nicholas Thomas has critiqued the homogenizing tendency of colonial discourse analysis and stressed the need to grasp “a pluralized field of colonial narratives, which are seen less as signs than as practices, or as signifying practices rather than elements of a code” (8). As he makes clear, however, the diversity of colonial “projects” since the Enlightenment is nonetheless premised on the availability of differential elements susceptible to encoding—an availability he attributes to “larger shifts” related to “the distinctiveness of modern representations of others within a paradigm of anthropologically informed government” (9). Developing Johannes Fabian’s account of the eclipsing of pre-modern conceptions of otherness in which “pagans were conceivable primarily as incomplete or imperfect forms, rather than as ‘peoples’ of a comprehensibly distinct kind” (71), Thomas describes a paradigm shift, begun roughly in the mid-eighteenth century, according to which “figures of inadequacy are subordinated to a distinctively *anthropological* discourse, which registers a variety of human races or peoples, who are mapped and ranked, as Fabian notes, in an evolutionary natural history” (71). He continues:

This distinctively modern and anthropological imagining projects natural differences among people that may be rendered at one time as different “nations,” at another as distinct “races” or “cultures.” The underlying epistemic operation—of partitioning the human species—makes possible a variety of political and ethnographic projects: particular populations may be visible as objects of government; they may serve as ethnological illustrations or subversive counter-examples in comparative social argument; and these reified characters may be available for appropriation in anti-colonialist, national narratives. (71-72)

As we shall see, the nomad, as a modern anthropological category, emerges directly from the matrix of differentiation Thomas describes, as does its availability for appropriation

to “a variety of political and ethnographic projects.” For it was in the development of what Ronald L. Meek has named “the four stages theory” of the French and Scottish Enlightenment that nomadism as a socioeconomic and even “cultural” identity (rather than a general characteristic of all primitives) received its most systematic, “scientific,” and enduring elaboration, ultimately leading to the institutionalization of a specialized anthropological sub-tradition of “nomadic studies” in the early twentieth century whose fortunes have been documented by Neville Dyson-Hudson.

Such a differentiation among the figures of colonial discourse ensures that the periodization of tropes is not necessarily a quixotic pursuit; indeed, the fields of significance that attach to imperialist nostalgia’s various manifestations are precisely what make the predominance of a given trope at any historical moment not only possible but extremely likely. From this perspective, the genealogy of postmodern nomadism must be said to pass through the great “modernist” nomad-enthusiasts—particularly T. E. Lawrence and Paul Bowles—in a highly ambiguous way. In some ways, these writers’ identifications with Bedouin or Berber nomads can be shown to reflect distinctly modernist primitive obsessions, entirely in keeping with those of Conrad and D. H. Lawrence; in other ways, however, their choice of peripatetic alter egos opens their “primitivism” to a subtle tension, sometimes leading their discourse in novel directions, edging them, perhaps, toward the status of genuine precursors to postmodern nomadism. *Seven Pillars of Wisdom* especially, Lawrence’s account of nomadic tactics in the Arabian campaign of the First World War, bears all the hallmarks of what Brian McHale has called “an ‘amphibious’ text, queasily poised between modernism and

postmodernism” (11). I will take up the ambiguous place of these modernist nomads in Chapter Two; for now, it is enough to note that the chronological problem posed by these precocious desert wanderers for mapping primitive and nomad against modern and postmodern cultural dominants respectively can be allayed by attentiveness to the dual nature of colonial tropes themselves, which are supple enough to register cultural impulses of either sort, while maintaining sufficient density to be differentiated and thus privileged to unequal degrees within the cultural “force field” of any given historical moment.

Since the characteristic gesture of nomadology has been to disavow its relation to older forms of primitivism, I begin by tracing the genealogical links between modern conceptions of the primitive and the nomad in Chapter One. Whereas previous critiques of this sort have tended to see these two figures as identical, I emphasize distinctions not only between nomad and primitive, but within the discourse of nomadism itself. In particular, I explore tensions between two competing anthropological definitions of nomadism—pure nomadism, in which the nomad’s mobility is tied to pastoralism, and general nomadism, which is defined by mobility alone, independent of the nomad’s specific means of appropriating resources. This distinction, I argue, assumes central importance in subsequent literary and philosophical traditions of nomadic representation. Drawing on these anthropological debates and their adoption and reformulation in the pop anthropology of Bruce Chatwin and *National Geographic*, I advance an anatomy of nomadism(s), whose structure defines a terrain of possibility for both modernist and postmodernist poetics of the nomad.

Whereas the first chapter focuses on the discourse of nomadism as a synchronic structure to address fundamental issues of definition, Chapter Two historicizes the discourses of pure and general nomadism in relation to shifts within the broader field of twentieth-century primitivism. Plotting a course from T. E. Lawrence's modernist bedouinophilia in *Seven Pillars of Wisdom* to the more recent work of Bruce Chatwin and Michael Asher, travel writers who express similarly fetishistic attachments to nomadism, I explore ways in which the competing discourses of pure and general nomadism fulfill different roles and achieve different degrees of prominence within modernist and postmodernist aesthetics of the primitive. The predominance of the primitive in modernist discourse, I argue, opens a space for the emergence of a specialized discourse of pure nomadism epitomized by Lawrence's nomadic fantasy of medieval Bedouin knights; postmodern nomadism, conversely, is best understood as a colonization of the primitive by the nomadic reflective of what Jameson calls the cultural logic of late capitalism—a logic which he links to a shift from predominantly temporal to predominantly spatial modes of experience. Following Torgovnick's account of modernist primitivism as a palliative for "transcendental homelessness," I argue that nomadism acquires new significance among forms of imperialist nostalgia in postmodernism precisely because the nomad is uniquely suited to responding to the spatialized form such "homelessness" assumes in postmodernity. As would-be embodiments of a "natural" state of "dwelling-in-travel" (to borrow Clifford's resonant phrase), nomadic societies today inherit one of the primitive's most persistent functions in the Euro-American imagination: the task of representing what it might feel like to be at

home in the world.

Chapter Three revisits the much-contested terrain of Deleuze and Guattari's two-volume philosophical opus, *Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, in order to trace the subtle development and revision of the nomadic metaphor within their poststructuralist critique of the unified subject and their post-Marxist "toolbox" for revolutionary politics. In the shift from general to pure nomadism in the articulation of nomadology from the *Anti-Oedipus* (vol. 1) to *A Thousand Plateaus* (vol. 2) I find not merely an obfuscation of Deleuze and Guattari's debt to the primitivism and evolutionism they disavow, but an immanent, and deliberately partial critique of modernist counter-cultural strategies of resistance and subversion. Far from representing simply a repetition of primitivist poetics/politics, the nomads of *A Thousand Plateaus* represent a highly flexible revision of primitivism—a "post-primitivism," to paraphrase Kwame Anthony Appiah, whose "post," like the "post" of postmodernism, does not signal a decisive rejection of the master-term to which it retains an ambiguous relation.

In Chapter Four, I turn from the theoretical, highly abstract formulations of nomadology to literary representations of nomadism in postmodernist and postcolonial fiction to examine the extremely complex political function of nomadic figurations of transcendental homecoming in these texts where "homecoming" has somewhat different implications than it had for modern primitivists. For D. H. Lawrence or Georges Bataille, the primitive "home" was a sort of lost totality, available to the present via the mediating relation of displacement (Kaplan 35), but imaginatively located in the past and defined in opposition to a corrupt and alienating present. Primitivist obsessions with "sacrifice" and

the “sacred” were, at root, narratives of homecoming which attempted to bridge a fundamentally temporal gap between primitive and modern, to free something primal that modernity had entombed within the civilized self. Current discourses of nomadism are often no less utopian in their projection of an ancestral “home” for humankind. But the relation they construct between the present and correspondingly reassuring images of pastness is complicated by the nomad’s implication in cartographic discourse. Whereas the primitive was, by definition, set in contrast to modernity on the basis of temporal distance (“disguised” as distance in space), the nomad—as a primitive who travels, linking temporal and spatial categories in a single figure—simultaneously suggests both contrast and identity with the postmodern present. If the nomad is a utopian figure in the primitivist tradition, it is a utopian figure that aspires to the position of what Clifford has called a cultural “chronotope”: “a setting or scene organizing time and space in representable whole form” (*Routes* 25). In this latter quasi-allegorical capacity, it intersects, in suggestive ways, with Jameson’s notion of “cognitive mapping”—a project, he argues, which cultural politics must pursue in postmodernity where the greatest impediment to effective political intervention is precisely the inability of the revolutionary subject to locate him- or herself in relation to a world where the workings of power and domination have become strangely decentralized and amorphous. When politics become a matter of “gaining a foothold” in the present, the old nostalgic longing to be “at home in the world” gains an emblematic, potentially progressive resonance as a sign of achieved cognitive mapping.

If contemporary discourses of nomadism implicate themselves in specifically

postmodern forms of cultural politics, then assessments like those of Pels, Kaplan, and Miller, which tend to locate postmodern invocations of nomadism within a modernist problematic, must be seen to effect a certain degree of distortion. This is not to say, however, that nomadology in any way evades the charge of primitivism they levy, or even that its attempts at cognitive mapping are particularly effective. Rather, current invocations of nomadism may be seen as primitivist equivalents of cyberpunk, the science fictional genre whose “high-tech paranoia,” Jameson argues, constitutes a “privileged” but ultimately “degraded” form of “representational shorthand for grasping a network of power and control even more difficult for our minds and imaginations to grasp: the whole new decentered global network of the third stage of capital itself” (37-38). Cyberpunk’s figuration of the postmodern sublime, he insists, does not constitute an authentic cognitive map, since its figurations remain on the level of theme rather than form. It is only a sort of “poor man’s cognitive mapping” which “must be seen as a degraded attempt...to think the impossible totality of the contemporary world system” (38). Nomadology—in both its popular and “high” philosophical forms—participates in a similar dynamic. As the examples of Bruce Chatwin and Deleuze and Guattari will attest, postmodern discourses of nomadism are internally split between a more traditional utopian function and the more overtly political cartographic function of “naming the system” Jameson describes.

In this final chapter, I elaborate the analysis of postmodern nomadism as a utopian form of cognitive mapping with particular reference to Alfred Bester’s science fiction novel, *The Stars My Destination*—a text in which the many strands of the arguments

outlined above are interwoven. First published in 1956 under the Blakean title, *Tiger!* *Tiger!*, Bester's novel holds a special place in the SF canon where it has been hailed as "the perfect cyberpunk novel" *avant la lettre* (Gaiman x). But it is also a prescient work of nomadology since its protagonist, the atavistic Gulliver "Gully" Foyle, is reborn as the space-jaunting NOMAD in ways which precisely anticipate the forms that the nomadic variant of cognitive mapping assumes in the works of later nomadologists like Chatwin and Deleuze and Guattari. Indeed, in its unusual "anticipatory" position, between modernism and postmodernism, Bester's novel constitutes a revealing hybrid that provides a blueprint for the shift from modern poetics of primitivism to postmodern poetics of nomadology. The postcolonial narrative of Michael Ondaatje's *The English Patient* is organized around a similarly complex version of nomadism; like Bester, Ondaatje exploits the spatial element of nomadism to construct cartographies as well as utopian visions of postidentitarian transcendence. Yet the nomadic cartographies of *The English Patient* ultimately point to the need to expand and revise the Jamesonian project of cognitive mapping to accommodate the geopolitics of empire and the inevitable situatedness of identity, however "nomadic" it might ideally become. Comparing the very different forms of nomadic politics implied by the *English Patient* and *Kip*, I explore nomadism as a hinge that coordinates different levels of political thought—pragmatics and utopianism. Ultimately, I argue, Bester's and Ondaatje's nomadologies point to ways in which current discourses of nomadic utopianism both reflect and respond to apocalyptic figurations of postmodernism.

By way of conclusion, I seek to complicate my critique of nomadic forms of

Western primitivism by considering the reception of colonial stereotypes of nomadism outside of the West itself. Through a reading of Smadar Lavie's postmodern ethnography of the Mzeina Bedouin, *The Poetics of Military Occupation* (1990), I explore ways in which the strategic adoption of essentialist nomadic identities by cultures traditionally seen as nomadic solicits the development of more complex, dialogic forms of both representation and reading on the part of Western writers.

Chapter 1

In the Footsteps of the Primitive: Anthropology's Nomads

A discourse employing terms such as primitive, savage (but also tribal, traditional, Third World, or whatever euphemism is current) does not think, or observe, or critically study the "primitive"; it thinks, observes, studies in terms of the primitive. Primitive being essentially a temporal concept, is a category, not an object, of Western thought.

JOHANNES FABIAN, *Time and the Other*

Anthropology did not create the savage. Rather, the savage was the raison d'être of anthropology.

MICHEL-ROLPHE TROUILLOT, "Anthropology and the Savage Slot"

The story of how the European sciences of man transformed non-Western cultures into pre-Western fossils—tentatively at first, in eighteenth-century philosophical history's four stages theory, which posited universal laws governing the emergence of modern commercial society out of earlier stages of hunting, pasturage, and agriculture; then, with increasing confidence, in nineteenth-century evolutionary anthropology—is by now a well-known chapter of Western intellectual history, usually referenced by the phrase, "the invention of the primitive." Seminal accountings like Ronald L. Meek's *Social Science and the Ignoble Savage* (1976), Johannes Fabian's *Time and the Other* (1983), George R. Stocking's *Victorian Anthropology* (1987), and Adam Kuper's, *The Invention of Primitive Society* (1988) have recently received an additional turn of the screw by Michel-Rolphe Trouillot's incisive claim that, categorically, the appearance of the "savage" in European discourse was in fact prescribed by the existence of a "savage slot" in Renaissance discourses about utopia. Although "it has often been said that the

savage or the primitive was the alter ego the West constructed for itself,” Trouillot suggests, the more important point is that

this other was a Janus, of whom the savage was only the second face. The first face was the West itself, but the West fancifully constructed as a utopian projection and meant to be, in that imaginary correspondence, the condition of existence of the savage. (28)

These readings make subsequent rehearsals of the primitive’s discursive history seem redundant; yet a study of this history’s obscurer sequel—the invention of the nomad—cannot avoid a certain amount of repetition if it is to demonstrate both the rhetorical differences and the deep conceptual affinities of these discursive cousins. For not only are the primitive and the nomad intimately interconnected conceptually, they are genealogically related as well. Since one of the most persistent features of nomadic tropes is to disavow their family history, thereby disguising their implication in allochronic discourse, the demystification of nomadism must be articulated simultaneously within and against the discursive context of “the invention of the primitive.”

Indeed, as I will argue in subsequent chapters, contemporary invocations of nomadism are deeply paradoxical. On the one hand, in certain versions of poststructuralist and postcolonial theory, as well as in postmodern culture generally, the popularity of nomadism as a metaphor for subversive or rebellious social practices that privilege flexibility, hybridity, impurity, and non-binaristic modes of thought is subtended by a rich imaginative tradition depicting nomadism not simply as “primitive,” but as ambiguously situated between savagery and civilization—as, in other words, intrinsically hybrid, impure, transitional, and unstable.¹ On the other hand, given that

their ethico-political visions tend to involve (often quite vocal) critiques of the very allochronic modes of thought conducive to the production of primitive Others, such theories and texts cannot appropriate the concept of nomadism without first divesting it (or appearing to divest it) of its ethnocentric and evolutionary associations. As we shall see, their solutions vary. In general, however, this divestiture is accomplished through an ingenious sleight of hand which appears to substitute (when in fact, it simply overcodes) nomadism's liminal temporal position in progressivist narratives of historical and evolutionary development with a synchronic, culturally relativist version of nomadism focused primarily on displacement and migration through space. In other words, the conceptual implications of the nomad for postmodern cultural practices and politics only become intelligible within the temporal operations of evolutionary theories of society and culture; rhetorically, however, the special attractiveness of the nomad for an ostensibly critical postmodernism (or even, postcolonialism) makes sense only insofar as it is understood as a figure whose spatial mobility constitutes a symbolic protest against these very temporal operations. The primitive thus necessarily serves as both a double and a foil to the nomad in contemporary writing and culture.

This chapter explores the construction of the nomad as discursive object and traces its fundamental implication in temporal discourses of the primitive by following the transformations in anthropological definitions of nomadism from the mid-eighteenth century to the present. The manner of the nomad's interpenetration with the primitive in the fluid medium of these definitions varies considerably; in general, however, the nomad is typically shuttled between two possibilities which might be designated *pure nomadism*

and *general nomadism*. In the former, narrower definition, the nomad's mobility is a function of his pastoral mode of subsistence; in the latter, broader definition, he is defined by mobility exclusively. In both cases, however, the nomad remains, like the primitive, a profoundly "temporal concept" (Fabian 18). In order to contextualize the analysis of nomadism's temporal implications, I begin by briefly rehearsing the invention of the primitive as a temporal concept in what I take to be its paradigmatic, most ideologically expressive, and most enduring form—the savage of Victorian sociocultural evolutionism. Subsequent sections both anatomize the nomad's unstable semantic features in relation to this primitive and trace the fundamental underlying temporal kinship of these figures by analyzing three key moments in the anthropology of nomadism: the eighteenth century's invention of pure nomadism in the bourgeois discourse of stadial theory; the autocritique of pure nomadism launched in the 1970s and 80s by what Harold Koster and Claudia Chang have dubbed the "nomadic network" (11) of Philip Salzman, Neville Dyson-Hudson, Walter Goldschmidt, Brian Spooner, as it is epitomized in Anatoly M. Khazanov's ambiguous, ultimately incomplete, repudiation of old temporal-evolutionary categories; and finally, Dyson-Hudson's more radical attempt to free nomadism from evolutionary discourse by propounding a conceptual return to general nomadism, a strategy whose affinity with the pop anthropology nomadism of *National Geographic* and Bruce Chatwin seems to precipitate a conceptual return to rather conventional structures of primitivism as well. The concluding anatomy of the anthropological rhetorics of nomadism suggests that the tension that emerges in competing definitions of the nomad is analogous to the tension between the primitive and the nomad—at least, as the latter has

been constructed in some versions of postmodern discourse—and that this tension between pure and general nomadism constitutes the condition of possibility for a postmodern, anti-colonial critique of the primitive that is, itself, deeply and problematically rooted in the same evolutionary paradigm it rejects.

The Primitive's Progress

We may fancy ourselves looking on Civilization, as in personal figure she traverses the world; we see her lingering or resting by the way, and often deviating into paths that bring her toiling back to where she had passed by long ago; but, direct or devious, her path lies forward, and if now and then she tries a few backward steps, her walk soon falls into a helpless stumbling. It is not according to her nature, her feet were not made to plant uncertain steps behind her, for both in her forward view and in her onward gait she is of truly human type.

E. B. TYLOR, *Primitive Culture*

There is perhaps no better entry-point into the nomad's and the primitive's mutually implicated histories of invention than a consideration of that third figure who both completes and organizes them—a figure strikingly personified in this quotation from E. B. Tylor's famous two-volume account of *Primitive Culture*, first published in 1871, wherein Tylor proposes to “set forth in mythic fashion how progress, aberration, and retrogression in the general course of culture contrast themselves in my own mind” (69). The canonical books of nineteenth-century armchair anthropology are studded with similar passages in which the systematizing enthusiasms of a new intellectual vanguard are polished to a brilliant luster, but seldom do they display the contradictions of their method so starkly, or so symptomatically. There is nothing neutral about Tylor's feminine Civilization. As a figuration of the science of sociocultural progress she is

insistently, even voluptuously, “mythic.” But for the sidelong nature of Tylor’s invocation (he speaks to us, not to her) one might justifiably interpret this “personal figure” as a sort of secular muse of evolutionary theory—for she is certainly the source of the anthropologist’s inspiration. Wedding fact to “fancy,” she supersedes her heuristic function, revealing ideological determinations which belie Tylorian anthropology’s positivistic aspirations and expose sociocultural evolutionism as, in George Stocking’s felicitous phrase, “a cosmic genealogy for middle-class civilization” (*Victorian* 233).

The elements of this cosmic genealogy are all clearly visible here, most notably classical evolutionism’s notorious “comparative method,” which is embodied in Civilization’s world-traversing stride. As Stocking recounts, the comparative method emerged as a solution to the crisis in ethnological explanations of human diversity that had predominated prior to the shakeup of 1858 when the discovery of archaic human remains at Brixham Cave and the publication of *The Origin of Species* extended estimates of the timespan of human existence and provided a new evolutionary framework in which such a timespan could be interpreted respectively. Rooted in the concerns and assumptions of Biblical anthropology and philology, ethnology’s diffusionist model of racial movement had sought to challenge polygenecist theories of separate creations for “lower races” and assert the original unity of the human family. But the project of tracing human variety back through a labyrinthine sequence of intercultural-contacts and influences to a single Edenic source required a timeframe whose duration now appeared grossly attenuated. Darwin’s so-called “ape theory” was a better fit with the new archaeological data, but in order to answer the objections raised by creationism’s last

gasp, its account of the physical evolution of *Homo sapiens* necessitated a parallel account of sociocultural evolution showing that “language, science, religion, morality, and law—and by extension, other divinely ordained institutions such as human marriage—had grown up naturally as part of man’s development from savagery to civilization” (149). Whereas Biblical anthropology explained modern savages as the result of degeneration, Darwin’s defenders were called upon to show not only that savages were inherently capable of independent progress, but that their progress could be charted in a uniform sequence of stages. These stages were to form the rungs of an evolutionary ladder that would lead directly to European civilization.² Lacking archaeological evidence that could fill out the fossil-record of culture change, evolutionary anthropologists adapted the techniques of the natural sciences “and look[ed] elsewhere in the world for the living representatives of species extinct in Europe” (153). In this way, ethnological reports of contemporary savagery and barbarism that had been amassed earlier in the century assumed a new importance and function:

“Contemporaneity in space was...converted into succession in time by rearranging the cultural forms coexisting in the Victorian present along an axis of assumed structural or ideational archaism—from the simple to the complex, or from that which human reason showed was manifestly primitive to that which habitual association established as obviously civilized” (172). By this simple expedient, ethnology’s “modern savages” were transformed from uncivilized contemporaries into “living fossils” and assigned supporting roles in the pseudo-Darwinian pageant of sociocultural development, the

unfolding of which culminated (where else?) in the social, moral, and intellectual achievements of modern industrial capitalism.

Of course, the comparative method's space-time conversion was not entirely new. It refurbished the speculations of Enlightenment thinkers whose stadial histories had already exploited the complementary tropes of "panoptical time" and "anachronistic space" (McClintock 36), as when Edmund Burke facetiously announced the obsolescence of historical inquiry on the grounds that, in travel,

the great Map of Mankind is unrolled at once and there is no state or gradation of barbarism, and no mode of refinement which we have not at the same moment under our view; the very different civility of Europe and of China; the barbarism of Persia and of Abyssinia; the erratick manners of Tartary and Arabia; the savage state of North America and of New Zealand. (qtd. in Meek 173)

Burke's sequence of "rude nations" clearly implies a chronology of progress that is later echoed in Tylor's "rough scale of civilization" that ranks the Australian, Tahitian, Aztec, Chinese, and Italian "races" "in order of culture" (1: 27; Stocking 235). But where Enlightenment philosophers of history saw contingent gradations in "refinement," "civility," and "manners," Victorian sociocultural evolutionists inclined towards an altogether more biologized view of human cultural diversity.³ Incorporating, often impressionistically, pre-Darwinian theories of development such as Jean Lamarck's notion that environmental pressures triggered the spontaneous "evolution" of acquired characteristics, Tylor, along with Lewis Henry Morgan and Herbert Spencer, tended to fix individual stages of development in categories of racial difference: the pockets of arrested development in Tylor's allegory which serve as rest-stops where Civilization lingers, exhausted by her heroic journey—but only momentarily. For she knows that

“From an ideal point of view, civilization may be looked upon as the general improvement of mankind by higher organization of the individual and society, to the end of promoting at once man’s goodness, power, and happiness” (Tylor 1: 27).

In light of this confluence of culture and biology,⁴ Tylor’s choice of an anthropomorphic allegory of cultural evolution rather than the more common evolutionary tree is not insignificant. As Anne McClintock has observed, the Tree of Man operated as a “switchboard image mediating between nature and culture” in which “human history can be imaged as naturally teleological, an organic process of upward growth, with the European as the apogee of progress” (37). In Tylor’s allegory, the tree’s forking branches have become a shadow projected over the surface of the globe, the outline of which forms the maze-like path replete with routes “direct” and “devious.” The principal image now, however, is Tylor’s intrepid female traveler in whose figure “of truly human type” the arboreal image’s naturalizing power achieves a new and heightened dynamism. Equating spatial and temporal “progress,” the natural operations of the human body—whose feet “were not made to plant uncertain [backward] steps”—allegorize the workings of universal evolutionary laws such that the naturalness of Civilization’s “onward gait” confirms the inevitability of her “forward view.” Tylor’s rhetorical strategy thus alludes to a second image of panoptical time: the Family of Man, which was typically represented by a facial series of primate species and human “races” arranged “so that anatomy becomes an allegory of progress” (McClintock 38-39).⁵ Indeed, as she propels herself across a Burkean Map of Mankind, Tylor’s Civilization might be imagined to experience the cultural equivalent of the metamorphosis implied in

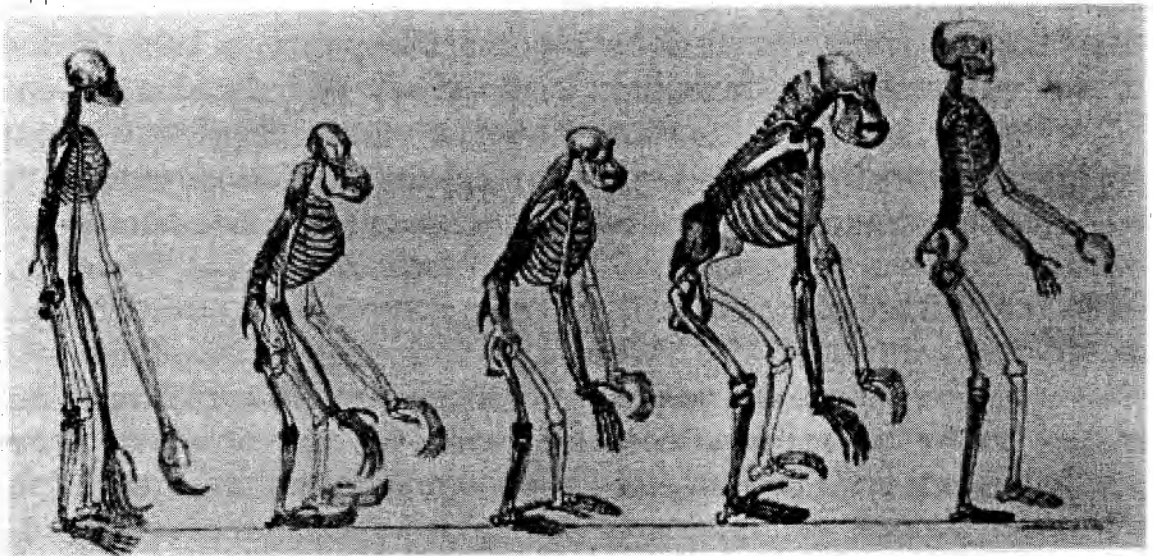


FIGURE 1

Frontispiece. Thomas H. Huxley, *Evidence as to Man's Place in Nature* (1863).
Gibbon, Orang, Chimpanzee, Gorilla, Man.

the frontispiece to Thomas H. Huxley's *Evidence as to Man's Place in Nature* (1863), which depicts a sequence of skeletal figures, arranged in identical postures from left to right: Gibbon, Orang, Chimpanzee, Gorilla, and finally modern Man, who seems to evolve simply by walking across the page (Fig. 1).⁶

Classical evolutionism's transformation of non-Western "races" into Civilization's primitive remainder, the silent partner without whom progress would be unimaginable and upon which Tylor's allegory depends, is paradigmatic, not only of Victorian anthropology, but of many subsequent "anti-evolutionary" iterations of the primitive within anthropological discourse. Such longevity is surprising given the creakiness of Tylor's theoretical structure, even in 1871. Beneath its baroque exterior, it is already possible to detect a threatening groan, as if the support beams of some monumental edifice were in the process of giving way as Tylor's myth-making strains continually to contain empirical contradictions that threaten to destroy unilineal evolutionism's neat hierarchy of human societies. The slapstick image of Civilization's "helpless stumbling" as she inexplicably rebels against the dictates of progress that are supposedly "according to her nature," regressing to the infantile stage of "toddler," introduces an element of farce into otherwise dignified proceedings that is difficult to assimilate. That Tylor felt the need to muddy his panegyric with intimations of recidivism suggests the degree to which his entire project is haunted by the Victorian bogey of "degeneration." His need to contain "retrogression" as "aberration" in the same breath that he celebrates the natural order of "progress" is not so much a sign of the lingering influence of earlier discourses of ethnology or Biblical anthropology, as it is an

attempt to manage (and even to mask) the theoretical inadequacy of the comparative method.

Overtly, at least, the gap between the study and the field, which had made the foundations of evolutionary speculation like Tylor's seem so shaky, was narrowed in the succeeding decades by a reorientation of anthropology towards intensive fieldwork. The careers of Franz Boas, Alfred Cort Haddon, W. H. R. Rivers, Charles Seligman, Bronislaw Malinowski, and A. R. Radcliffe-Brown reveal a generation of anthropologists who were distinctly uncomfortable with evolutionary speculation and quick to point out both the moral and scientific shortcomings of the comparative method. Whether it arrived in the form of historical particularism,⁷ as it did in America, or functionalism, as it did in Britain, the cultural relativist challenge to unilineal sociocultural evolutionism was informed by a desire to understand so-called primitive cultures on their own terms, rather than as "survivals" or as mere cast-offs of some universal process of historical maturation.

And yet, the Tylorian structure held. As Fabian has argued, the shift from diachronic to synchronic approaches that marked the early-twentieth-century transition from sociocultural evolutionism to cultural relativism did not redress so much as it "ignored" or "denied" (21) the problem of temporal distancing—what Fabian calls "the denial of coevalness" (31)—that had been the hallmark of the Victorian tradition it sought to revise. "Functionalism," he suggests,

in its fervor to explore the mechanisms of living societies, simply put on ice the problem of Time. Synchronic analysis, after all, presupposes a freezing of the time frame.... Ironically, the supposedly radical break with evolutionism

propagated by Boasian and Kroeberian cultural anthropology had little or no effect on these epistemological presuppositions. (20)

Although it intended to liberate contemporary non-Western cultures from Victorian anthropology's cultural-evolutionary version of the Great Chain of Being, cultural relativism produced temporal prisons of its own in the form of gated "culture gardens" which "wall[ed]-in the Time of others so that it cannot spill over into ours" (52). By "encapsulating" Time (41) in this way, cultural relativism "*exorcised Time from the study of relations between cultures*" (41)—a move which had problematic consequences. For as Fabian argues, "The denial of coevalness becomes intensified as time-distancing turns from an explicit concern into an implicit theoretical assumption" (39). Rather than heralding an authentic relation of "radical contemporaneity" (xi) between the West and its others, the functionalist and historical particularist breaks with evolutionism transformed the overt allochronism of the comparative method into the covert, and thus, more insidious, temporal codings of modern primitivism.

The persistence of temporal terminology—both explicit and implied—in ethnographic works that explicitly reject the presuppositions of the comparative method confirms Fabian's claim that the dismantling of evolutionary paradigms of culture in early-twentieth-century anthropology remained essentially unfinished. As Torgovnick has pointed out, the shift to cultural relativism did not preclude recycling the romantic terminology of the past. "The evolutionary paradigm linking us and them was difficult to discard entirely," she suggests, because "[i]ts assumption of an essential human nature was a useful way for ethnographers to justify their work to themselves and...to obtain funding from government agencies and foundations" (8). James Clifford's analysis of

how “the ethnographic allegory” inherent in anthropological writing about “preliterate” oral cultures “enacts a redemptive Western allegory” (99) of “textualization” and “salvage” (113) likewise suggests the real difficulty of extricating the representation of other cultures from the temporalizing discourse of the primitive—even with the best of intentions. If forms of representation which would convey the “radical contemporaneity” of human societies remain elusive, moreover, this is not only because of the many covert ways in which temporality continues to structure both academic and popular forms of relativist anthropological discourse. For these forms compete side-by-side in the intellectual marketplace with re-emergent forms of sociocultural evolutionism in which the allochronic language of classical evolutionism and the comparative method is explicitly recycled (Stocking 328). Such a remarkable persistence of the primitive as a man out of time in contemporary discourse leads Stocking to conclude that it seems “unlikely that the classical evolutionary goal of a deterministic ‘science of culture’ will be abandoned, or...that classical evolutionism itself will soon be reduced to *merely* historical significance” (329). The allochronic transformation of non-Western “races” into Civilization’s primitive ancestors that is mythologized by Tylor’s evolutionary muse can thus be seen as establishing the paradigm for all subsequent Western discourses of the primitive, even those anti-racist, cultural relativist forms.

**Pastoral Routes/Enlightenment Roots:
The Genealogy of Pure Nomadism**

There has long been a tendency in anthropological writings (and elsewhere) to represent “pastoral nomads” as having a distinctive social character which sets them conceptually apart from and in opposition to

sedentaries (or “peasants”). Once one goes beyond the rather banal, common-sense fact that all pastoral nomads are dependent on animals for their livelihood, and that they move about from place to place in caring for their animals, argument about what nomadic societies essentially have in common or about what a nomadic mode of production necessarily implies, becomes immediately interesting and problematical.

TALAL ASAD, “Equality in Nomadic Social Systems?”

[P]recisely what nomadism entails has remained far from clear, and it is indeed rather doubtful whether the notion has any analytic utility at all.

TIM INGOLD, *The Appropriation of Nature*

If the primitive is “essentially a temporal concept” and thus “a category, not an object, of Western thought” (Fabian 18), what sort of concept is the nomad? Unlike the term “primitive”—which originally meant “original or ancestor” and, by the eighteenth century, had come to indicate “the first, earliest age, period, or stage” (Torgovnick 18-19)—“nomad” has no direct temporal denotation. From the Greek, *nomas*, “to pasture,” nomad initially designated “A person belonging to a race or tribe which moves from place to place to find pasture,” but quickly assumed the more general meaning of “one who lives a roaming or wandering life” (OED). The apparent temporal neutrality of typological designations like “pastoral” or “wandering” would seem to make the nomad congenial to more humanistic theorizations of radical contemporaneity than a temporally charged category like the primitive could ever be. Indeed, the difference between temporal priority and spatial practice, which primitive and nomad respectively imply, may seem to suggest that, conceptually as well as terminologically, nomadism evades the problem of the “denial of coevalness” that is a hallmark of primitivist discourse.

Such a reading of nomadism collapses, however, in the face of Fabian’s critique of typology as another way in which anthropological discourse covertly preserves the

effect of temporal-distancing in its production of a “primitive” object. “Typological Time,” as Fabian defines it,

signals a use of Time which is measured, not as time elapsed, nor by reference to points on a (linear) scale, but in terms of socioculturally meaningful events or, more precisely, intervals between such events. Typological Time underlies such qualifications as pre-literate vs. literate, traditional vs. modern, peasant vs. industrial, and a host of permutations which include pairs such as tribal vs. feudal, rural vs. urban. (23)

Nomad vs. sedentary also belongs on this list of temporal pairings in which Time’s “vectorial, physical connotations” have been replaced by diagrammatic representations of “a quality of states”—“a quality, however, that is unequally distributed among human populations of this world” (23). If the evolutionary dichotomy primitive-modern is the product of refracting a savage-civilized dichotomy rooted in an already highly-charged (and dubious) opposition between “simplicity” and “complexity” through the lens of time, then the dichotomy of nomad and sedentary results not from the substitution of a spatial lens for the temporal one, but from the addition of a spatial lens to the already temporalized dichotomy of primitive-modern. Even as it maps a new ambulatory poetics of movement and rest, traveling and dwelling, the nomad-sedentary opposition retains the structure (and connotations) of chronological primitivism, despite its typically culturalist form, since it is ultimately a transformation of two prior, overlapping binary oppositions: simplicity-complexity and primitive-modern.

The full extent of nomadism’s temporal-evolutionary associations becomes visible as early as the 1970s in a series of anthropological debates over the definition, scope, and conceptual validity of the term. Although their methodological assumptions were often very different, participants in these debates almost uniformly premised their

definitions of nomadism with a critique of the current state of typological approaches within the field of nomadic studies and (to varying degrees) called for a repudiation of what came to be called the myth of pure nomadism. The myth and the method were in fact closely related, for as Dyson-Hudson argues, this myth was the byproduct of a “typologizing-generalizing” mode of analysis that “works by categorizing and homogenizing procedures, and involves essentialist notions” (“Study” 3, 8):

The units of analysis are, in effect, not societies but “ideal types,” and its method of ordering phenomena is to produce typologies and classifications. Accordingly we have the concept of a “pure” nomadism, in which extremes of stock dependence, possession and movement, and opposition to agriculture and wider market involvement with settled populations, are all emphasized. Groups having less in the way of stock possession and dependence, of movement, of separation from agriculture, or of independence of settled populations and external markets are then conceived of as being fractionally nomadic or “not really” nomadic. This is the style of thinking most common in geographical descriptions, and in anthropological accounts of culture areas or culture types. A characteristic form of its expression is the “railway map” in which entire “tribes” are seen as making distinctive, uniform, regular and total moves of an environmentally-responsive sort. The cultural equivalents of such maps are broad oppositional categories—apparently endemic in writings on the Middle East—of the kind “nomad and peasant,” “tribal and civilized,” “the desert and the sown.” The equivalent of the geographer’s spatial homogeneities are, in such anthropological treatments, assumed temporal homogeneities in which data of widely different dates are fitted together for descriptive (rather than for historical) purposes. (8)

At one level, commentators challenged the empirical validity of this “romantic stereotype, still widely held through the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s, which viewed nomadic pastoralists as brave, independent, fierce men, freely moving with their herds, and not having to deal with the constraints and frustrations we ourselves face in day-to-day ‘civilized’ living” (“Nomadic” 15). At the heart of such challenges to the stereotype was a rejection or qualification of the shaping role it attributed to geography in nomadic life, a role which had paradoxically reduced the “fierce and fearless warrior-herdsman” (44) to

“a creature of, rather than actor in, his environment” (“Study” 7). Ritualistic invocations of Owen Lattimore’s prescient analysis of steppe nomadism as a political rather than purely ecological phenomenon in *Inner Asian Frontiers of China* (1940)—a work which anticipated one of the main objections to the myth of pure nomadism by several decades—marked this new turn in nomadic studies which defined itself in negative terms as a critique of schematic ecological determinism and, more positively, in terms of its wider recognition of what Lawrence Krader called “the supplementary activities of the nomads” (5, 16, 23-4; Krader qtd. in Dyson-Hudson 16). At a more radical level, however, the new critique of romantic stereotypes of nomadism also questioned the very validity of the nomad as a discursive object. In a number of articles in the 1970s and 1980s, the critique of the nomadic stereotype implies a genealogical critique of nomadic typology which hints at, even if it does not fully develop, the shaping role of evolutionary assumptions in the formation of pure (that is, pastoral) nomadism as a category of anthropological discourse.

The immediate catalyst of this more radical critique of typology was Philip C. Salzman’s 1971 introduction to a special issue of *Anthropological Quarterly* on nomadism and pastoralism which questioned the discipline’s tendency to conflate these terms into an “ideal typical” category and called for “an analytic distinction...between nomadism, defined as a kind of movement, and resource extraction, defined as the sources and methods of drawing energy from the environment” (105). These remarks were developed more systematically the following year by Dyson-Hudson in a state-of-the-discipline report, “The Study of Nomads” (1972). Seeking to explain “why nomadic

studies are so backward” (2), the article launched a sustained attack on what its author disparages as anthropological essentialism “in the Sears Roebuck tradition” (6), ultimately addressing the mystifications that inhere in “the concept of ‘nomadism’ itself” (8). Following D. Schneider’s anti-typological injunction to disassemble “total-system model[s]” into their “relevant elements” (qtd. in *Study* 23), Dyson-Hudson argues that “the very concept of *nomadism* is poor and obstructive to analysis” on the grounds that

“nomadism” immediately breaks down into two quite distinct sets of phenomena, *viz.*: livestock rearing and spatial mobility. Each one of those sets of phenomena embraces conditions quite beyond “nomadism” in its generally-accepted sense. Indeed, “nomadism” is simply the area of overlap between the two. (23)

Because this “yoking the two sets of phenomena together is what has facilitated the erroneous assumption that nomadic movement is caused simply by environmental factors,” Dyson-Hudson favors “[s]eparating them out” (23), “break[ing] down the category of ‘nomadism’ into...its immediate constituents of herding and movement” (26).⁸ Thus divested of any special epistemic privilege, the pure nomad emerges from such critiques as yet another mirage of Eurocentric discourse, as artificial as the primitive or the savage, or any other of the West’s ideological fictions of otherness.⁹

Talal Asad, in a paper pointedly subtitled “Notes towards the dissolution of an anthropological category,” arrives at a similar conclusion, though from a classically Marxist, rather than strictly “empirical,” perspective. Addressing the traditional attribution of egalitarianism to pastoral nomads in anthropological writing, Asad likewise dismisses “nomadic society” and “the nomadic mode of production” as “theoretically unviable concepts[s]” (426). Whereas Dyson-Hudson suggested that the category of pure nomadism results from the conflation of mobility and pastoralism, Asad minimizes the

relevance of these “techniques” to suggest that pure nomadism is the result of a mutually reinforcing intersection of Western primitivism and nomadic ideology, both of which “confuse...economic exploitation and political incorporation” and thus mistakenly equate “spatial mobility” with “freedom” or immunity to exploitation (423). The romance of pure nomadism’s “essential” egalitarianism, in other words, is partly a reflection of “the older idea of nomads being warlike and hostile towards the civilized, unfree life of sedentary communities” (419), and partly a reflection of an excessively “etic” approach to the study of nomads.¹⁰ “Contemporary pastoral nomads in Third World countries might not see themselves within a class context (as groups whose political-economic situation was defined by a particular mode of production articulating a complex social formation which is systematically connected with other social formations) but rather as a total society—a ‘tribe,’ a ‘people,’ a ‘nation,’” Asad argues, “[b]ut that is no reason why the anthropologist should, uncritically, adopt the same viewpoint as his *analytical framework*” (422). If he does, “nomadic society” is reified, and a sort of metaphoric logic takes over, whose persistent gesture is to equate spatial mobility with political freedom. Such an equation misses the point and betrays its origin in a kind of “pastoral” fantasy, Asad maintains, not only because “states and empires can exploit autonomous populations without having to incorporate them politically,” but because

spatial movement...acquires political-economic significance only within the context of what may analytically be identified as the problem of the open frontier: it is not ease of physical movement as such which is significant, but the extent and power of the state...in defining the political frontier between effective domination and “free lands.” To say of a given population of pastoral nomads (or colonial homesteaders) that the state cannot reach them, is also to say something about a particular state—whose reach cannot extend beyond a certain point. (423)

Such steps toward the complete “dissolution” of nomadism as a conceptual category may be read as localized moves within larger methodological debates concerning the practical utility and empirical salience of social and cultural typology in general. However, a stray observation of Dyson-Hudson’s suggests that there may be more at stake in recent terminological dismantlings than a methodological quarrel with typology. One of the reasons that “pinning nomads down by definition can be every bit as difficult as finding them when you are in the field,” he points out, may be because

Some of our labels come from the turn of the century when anthropologists were mainly interested in the evolution of Western civilization. They found it convenient to imagine “stages” of social development. They happily arranged the world’s societies into sequences, as if inspecting so many living fossils, and clearly considered their categories as natural as species of plants and animals. When we talk of “hunting societies,” “pastoral societies,” or “agricultural societies,” we are using old labels of this sort. (*Inheriting* 15)

The prehistory of current categories in the evolutionary paradigms of the past is in fact considerably more complex, and considerably older, than this offhand remark implies, and Dyson-Hudson does not pursue this crucial point any further.¹¹ Nonetheless, it provides a vital clue to the subtext of recent debates. In order to pursue the implications of this subtext in the present, both for the field of nomadic studies and for the discourses of nomadism more generally, it will be useful to consider the shaping role that progressivist and evolutionary ideas played in bringing about the original conflation of pastoralism and mobility in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century conceptualizations of nomadism.



The roots of that process, whereby the overlap between “mobile” and “pastoral” forms of social activity came to be accorded special visibility and meaning as a

sociocultural or socioeconomic type designating not merely a mode of subsistence, but an entire social formation marked by distinctive forms of law, government, property ownership, manners, and cultural production, extend back to the mid-eighteenth century, to the conjectural histories of the French and Scottish Enlightenment. The “four stages theory,” as the premise of such histories has been dubbed by historian Ronald L. Meek, was developed independently in Paris by Baron Turgot and in Edinburgh by Adam Smith, both of whom espoused versions of it in university lectures in the early 1750s.¹² Subsequently, versions of the theory were elaborated and embellished by Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Sir John Dalrymple, Lord Kames, William Robertson, John Ferguson, and John Millar, among many others.¹³ Seeking to explain the origin and progress of European “civilization,” these writers presented a materialist reading of social development that enshrined mode of subsistence as the engine of social change and posited a more-or-less steady advance of human society through a sequence of developmental stages, customarily identified with hunting, pasturage, agriculture, and commerce (Meek 1-2).

Prior to the first detailed articulations of stadial theory, Montesquieu’s *The Spirit of the Laws* (1748) advanced a classificatory framework for describing national governments and social mores that was diffuse and non-hierarchical. When accounting for differences of law between the Roman state and a Tartar horde, Montesquieu invariably considered “the way of life of the peoples, be they plowmen, hunters, or herdsmen,” and his identification of hunting, pasturage, and agriculture with savagery, barbarism, and civility respectively assumed the status of an axiom for later stadial

theorists. But, for Montesquieu, a country's mode of subsistence was only one social variable among a constellation of relatively independent factors affecting the political and civil laws of a nation.¹⁴ Within this context, to be a "herdsman" was not yet to be a nomad, nor even a pastoralist, in the modern anthropological sense. Herding, for Montesquieu, is perhaps "a way of life," but it is a way of life that is not yet determinate of a coherent sociocultural identity. Moreover, Montesquieu's terminology suggests the extent to which a specifically nomadic (that is, mobile) form of pastoralism has yet to differentiate itself as an especially meaningful category in discussions of modes of subsistence.

Investigations of the "progress of civilization" type which followed, however, shaped Montesquieu's categories into an explanatory structure whose focus on mode of subsistence as the central cause from which all other social variables radiated transformed pastoralism from an economic activity to a socioeconomic identity.¹⁵ This reorientation around questions of subsistence, Meek argues, reflected "the rapidity of contemporary economic advance," for,

In the 1750s and 60s, in cities like Glasgow and in areas such as the more advanced provinces in the north of France, the whole social life of the communities concerned was being rapidly and visibly transformed, and it was fairly obvious that this was happening as a result of profound changes taking place in economic techniques and basic socio-economic relationships. [These]... new forms of economic organization which were emerging could be fairly easily compared and contrasted with the older forms of organization which still existed, say, in the Scottish Highlands, or in the remainder of France—or among the Indian tribes of America. If the changes in the mode of subsistence were playing such an important and "progressive" role in the development of contemporary society, it seemed a fair bet that they must also have done so in that of past society. (127-28)

Thus “pastoralism” passed into a new phase of categorical significance in the 1750s and 60s. For the first time, “the herdsman” and “the shepherd” began to take on the broad implication of referencing not merely an economic feature of a more amorphously defined “nation,” but an abstract, universal figure, standing for an entire “pastoral society” whose cultural life and political organization could be understood as effects of a prior economic cause. In this sense, the four stages theorists’ refashioning of pastoralism into a social type marks the first significant step in the invention of the nomad “in its generally accepted sense” (Dyson-Hudson, “Study” 23). The temporal framework in which the categories of hunting, pastoral, agricultural, and commercial societies emerged further reinforced the boundedness and exclusivity of each term. Separated not only by what stadial theorists envisioned as a socially determining mode of subsistence, but by a gulf of time from other developmental “stages,” pastoral society had, by definition, to be able to stand alone as a single, coherent socioeconomic and sociocultural designation.

Even as these developments brought about the invention of “pastoral society” in the 1750s and 60s, the progressivist narrative’s organization of different social types into an evolutionary sequence that gave the triumph of commercial society an air of inevitability¹⁶ made it possible to differentiate the mobility of pastoralists from that of hunters—a distinction which paved the way for a more nuanced evolutionary hierarchy of nomadism that was eventually instrumental in establishing pure nomadism as a privileged anthropological category. Before the eighteenth century, nomadism’s etymological designation of a specifically pastoral form of economic activity had long since relaxed, producing a second, more casual and expansive sense of “nomadism” that included any

form of “wandering” or “roaming” practiced by any “nation,” “tribe,” or individual (OED), regardless of their mode of subsistence—a duality which ultimately produced a “thoroughly chaotic nomenclature” that would bedevil twentieth-century anthropologists (Ingold, *Appropriation* 165). Rousseau exemplifies this second, looser usage when he writes that “Peoples who are not settled do not know how to cultivate the land: such in times past were the nomads, such were the Arabs living in their tents, the Scythians in their wagons; such are still today the wandering Tartars, and the savages of America” (qtd. in Meek 87). This broad sense of nomadism as merely an opposition to settlement—a category in which “Arabs” and “Americans” make equally good examples—was later elevated to the level of system by the diffusionist historian, Sharon Turner. In his *History of the Anglo-Saxons* (1828), he dismissed the stadial theory of the preceding century, posited degeneration brought on by climate and indolence as the cause of cultural difference, and magisterially divided the world into “the two great classes of mankind” (12) which

were at first to each other, what the Dorians were to the Athenians in Greece; the one a settled population, the other migratory and restless. And though we may retain the expression of civilization, as the character of the settled races, it will less mislead our imaginations, if we call the other portion of mankind the Nomadic race. These had improvements and civilization of their own, though of a sterner and more hardy nature.... It is unjust to degrade those with the appellation of barbarians, in the present meaning of the term, from whose minds, institutions, and manners, all that we [British] now possess in civilization, superior to the most cultivated states of antiquity, has been principally derived. (11-12)

As Turner’s primitivist defense of “the great barbaric or Nomadic stock” (12) from the prejudices traditionally associated with “barbarism” ever since “the Greeks denominated all nations as *barbaroi* but their own” (10) makes clear, the source of this opposition is an

(often implicit) correlation of “nomad” with the original meaning of barbarian. Yet, against this binary construction of nomadism as settled civilization’s “restless” other, the four stages theory made possible a more complex sort of identification between nomadism and barbarism on the basis of its own redefinition of the latter. Barbarism, at least since Montesquieu, had not designated simply the negation of civilized life, but a specific form of social organization linked to property-ownership and, increasingly, a specific stage of social development poised ambiguously between savagery and civility.¹⁷ By virtue of association, the nomadism of pastoral “barbarians” was, implicitly, superior to that of their less refined, less materially advanced hunter-nomads.

This evolutionarily inflected hierarchy of nomadisms was fittingly expressed in terms of a contrast between degrees or qualities of unsettledness and on the basis of the degree of the nomad’s control over resources implied by his mode of subsistence (the same mode of subsistence that ostensibly “determined” his degree of property-ownership). As Turgot suggests in his seminal statement of the four stages theory, for instance, the mobility of the first men was determined by their abject reliance upon the animals they pursued. This reliance caused them to “move aimlessly wherever the hunt leads them,” resulting in an “accelerated...dispersion of peoples and their rapid diffusion” (65-66). By contrast, the state of pastoralism begins when men realize that “There are animals which allow themselves to be brought into subjection by men, such as oxen, sheep, and horses, and men find it more advantageous to gather them together into herds than to chase after wandering animals” (66). This latter remark makes the evolutionary hierarchy of mobility explicit, suggesting that only a negligible difference is

to be found between the “wandering animals” and the “aimlessly” wandering hunters themselves whose comic subordination to the itinerary of their prey travesties in advance the mastery of the herder.¹⁸

Anticipations of the myth of pure nomadism are already visible in the invention of “pastoral society” and in the developmentalist differentiation of nomadisms, but the conflation of pastoralism and nomadism was ultimately cemented by the allegorical structure of the four stages theory—a narrative which was both an outgrowth and the ultimate realization of eighteenth-century metaphors of progress.¹⁹ At the heart of these metaphors was a vision of progress as a journey from homelessness to domesticity. For instance, when travel writer and stadial theorist Cornelius de Pauw observes that agriculture “led men by the hand, step by step” from the lower depths of savagery and barbarism (qtd. in Meek 146), or when the political philosopher Adam Ferguson notes that man is a “travelling being” (14) or that mankind “pass on, like other animals, in the track of their nature” (119), they employ rhetoric of this type in which “progress” provides its own metaphor: its original denotation of an actual journey (through space) returns to figure its later denotation of “advancement,” “development,” or “improvement” (over time).²⁰

Insofar as it described the trajectory of a “travelling being” from a condition of “homeless” wandering (savage hunters) to a state of settled ease (the civilized farmer and merchant), the four stages theory was merely a version of such metaphors writ large. Within the poetic structure of this narrative of journey and settlement, the association of pastoralism with mobility acquired a certain aesthetic inevitability. To be sure, De

Pauw's classification of "pastoral peoples or shepherds" as "the nomads" in his somewhat eccentric *Recherches Philosophiques sur les Américains* (1768-69) suggests that pastoralism already implied a notable degree of geographic mobility for eighteenth-century theorists. Even mainstream versions of the four stages theory concerned with the history of property, where the pastoralist was of explicit interest less for how he moved than for what he owned, tended to favor a highly mobile model of pastoralism—no doubt because mobility seemed to imply a contempt for land-ownership and thus helped to situate the pastoralist as a mid-point between the property-owning stages of hunting and agriculture. To this theoretical predisposition toward the fusion of mobility and pastoralism, the itinerant poetics of progress as a journey from homelessness to settlement provided further adhesive reinforcement. For once the four stages theory is grasped as an aesthetic as well as a theoretical structure, it becomes evident that the narrative of progress requires pastoralism to be "nomadic" in order to provide a transitional mid-point within the narrative from aimless wandering to settled agriculture.

It would be too much to claim that the exponents of the four stages theory established pure nomadism as the predominant nomadic myth; there was still too much ambivalence surrounding the term's use, and, in any case, it would be fruitless to search for a decisive moment at which nomadism became principally identified with figures like the pastoralist or the shepherd since, as we shall see, the definition of nomadism and its relation to pastoralism remains contentious to this day. This tension between hunter and pastoral nomads is precisely what gives the discourses of nomadism their semantic richness. Nonetheless, by the end of the eighteenth century, the stadial theories of

Turgot, Smith, and their followers had erected the basic skeleton over which the modern stereotype of pure nomadism would be stretched. Not only had the four stages theory enshrined subsistence as the master-term of materialist social typology, it had done so in the context of a developmental paradigm that elevated pastoralism above the level of common savagery, encoded it with evolutionary significance, and privileged its most mobile incarnations. Various called the shepherd, the pastoralist, the barbarian, and the nomad, this figure and his evolutionary “stage” were to provide a model for nineteenth-century sociocultural evolutionists anxious to make sense of ethnological data in the wake of the Darwinian revolution.²¹

**Revision and Retrenchment: The Twilight of Nomadic Studies, or,
A. M. Khazanov and the New Philosophy of History**

The drama of herding and migration, the idleness of a pastoral existence, where the herds satisfy the basic needs of man, and most of one's labour is expended on travelling and maintaining a minimum of personal comfort, and hardly any of it is productive in the obvious sense; the freedom or necessity of movement through a vast, barren and beautiful landscape—all these things assume a growing aesthetic and moral importance as one participates in nomadic life, and seem to call for an explanation in terms of the specific circumstances which have brought them forth.

FREDRIK BARTH, *Nomads of South Persia*

The emergence of the pure nomad from the evolutionary matrix of the four stages theory certainly helps to account for the iconoclastic reaction the term provoked among anthropologists in the 1970s and 1980s, during which time anthropology in general had entered a new phase of critical self-reflection announced by such works as Talal Asad's *Anthropology and the Colonial Encounter* (1973), Eric Wolf's *Europe and the People Without History* (1982), and Johannes Fabian's *Time and the Other: How Anthropology*

Makes its Object (1983). In the context of this overarching critique of exoticism and latent primitivism, the epistemological salience of “the nomad” could not fail to escape serious, perhaps fatal, interrogation. Yet, what is most remarkable about this period of disciplinary history is not the nomad’s disappearance, but his recalcitrance and conceptual perpetuation.

The reluctance to do away with the concept of nomadism must be seen, in the first place, as an inevitable consequence of a subdiscipline’s curious historical position. Nomadic studies has, from its inception, been plagued by a grim awareness of its own belatedness and by a commensurate anxiety that the delay has consigned the sub-discipline to irrelevance before it has even become established. Dyson-Hudson’s anguished and irony-laden exercise in disciplinary history is a case in point. “The Study of Nomads,” painstakingly traces the “curiously inchoate, non-cumulative character” (3) of the disciplinary development of its topic from “sloppy foundations” (3) in the nineteenth century, when nomadic studies made “that first leap into oblivion” (5), to modest respectability in the 1950s, once “the Malinowskian impulse... finally entered nomadic studies” (7), only to conclude by repudiating the category of nomadism itself. Dyson-Hudson’s historiography reveals a sub-discipline caught in an impossible double-bind: wishing to assert its legitimacy, while acknowledging that the object around which it is organized is not only epistemologically unsound, but the direct descendant of an earlier stage of anthropology’s troubled past. The result is predictably ambivalent. As Asad charges, for instance, even Dyson-Hudson’s empiricist “plea for more data” conceals a kind of nostalgia whereby “the *concept* of pastoral nomadism is being retained

as the dim image of a 'phenomenon' about which, we are told, we do not yet know 'enough'" (427; author's emphasis).

This type of ambivalence achieves operatic grandeur in A. M. Khazanov's massive (and influential) overview of the literature of pastoral nomadism, *Nomads and the Outside World* (1984; second edition, 1994). From the outset, Khazanov's book dons the revisionist mantle and presents itself as an attack on old stereotypes. Its opening pages summon and dispel "the myth of the nomad" in both its "light" and "dark" aspects (2). In the former, the nomad's "real or imaginary freedom and political independence almost occupy pride of place" and, "despite its poverty and other drawbacks, nomadic life is thought by nomads themselves and by many onlookers to have one important advantage, which was defined by A. C. Pigou at the beginning of the century as 'quality of life'"; in the latter, the nomad appears in his barbarian guise to be "perceived almost as the devil incarnate," a view which has antecedents not only in the records of besieged sedentary empires, but in the popular assumption, "from the times of the biblical prophets...that [nomads] have a particular destiny, as a means through which God can chastise different peoples" (1-2). Light or dark, Khazanov suggests, "The time has come for us to ignore those myths" (2)—something he proposes to do by dismantling their common basis in the foundational myth of all stereotypes of pure nomadism: the myth of nomadic autarky.

Khazanov attacks this myth on two fronts. The first is primarily synchronic, even universalizing, in its attempt to determine "whether or not there do exist some definite laws about the interrelations between nomads and the outside world" (5), and bears upon

the economic and sociopolitical interaction of “nomads” and “sedentaries.” In his approach to this question, Khazanov is deeply informed by one of the earliest authorities on nomads, the medieval historian Ibn Khaldun who once observed that, while the Bedouins “need cities for the necessities of life, the urban population needs [the Bedouins] for conveniences and luxuries” only (qtd. in Khazanov 82). The highly specialized economy of pastoral nomadism, Khazanov argues, actually makes nomadic societies more, rather than less, dependent upon neighbouring agriculturalists and urban centers for the needs of basic subsistence. In strictly economic terms, “nomads could never exist on their own without the outside world and its non-nomadic societies” (3). This thesis alone substantively redresses the myth of pure nomadism and its connotations of “freedom” and “independence,” but Khazanov is not finished. For “the nomads’ economic dependency on sedentary populations,” he continues, “means that their social and political organization cannot be fully autonomous and that culturally to a certain degree they are not self-sufficient” (122). In other words, “It is no coincidence that nomads sometimes have more in common, socially and culturally, with agriculturists in the same area than with nomads from other areas” (122).

This synchronic presentation of the nomad’s essential entanglement with “the outside world” is buttressed by a second, more speculative foray into the realm of history. Concurring with Boas, that “To understand a phenomenon we have not only to know what it is, but also how it came into being” (qtd. in Khazanov 6), and shrugging off Spooner’s “pessimistic” (85) caution that “virtually nothing is yet known about the beginnings of nomadism” (qtd. in Khazanov 85), Khazanov undertakes to study the

history of “the interrelationships between nomads and the sedentary world...*ab ovo*” (6) in order to show that nomadism “is not”—and has never been—“in any respect a closed system,” and that, consequently, “attempts at defining the operation and evolution of nomadic societies only from the inside, from the viewpoint of ecological or socioeconomic determinism by their own environment can never be fully successful” (4). To this end, he dismisses the four stages theorists’ account of the origin of pastoral nomadism out of hunting²²—a theory which still finds contemporary champions amongst some anthropologists who claim that pastoral nomadism emerged when “wandering hunters who followed herds of [herbivorous mammals]...finally managed to domesticate them,” and which finds at least tacit acknowledgement amongst those who regard reindeer-herding as the earliest form of pastoralism (86). In place of evolutionary theories of nomadic origins, which make pastoralism an autarkic precursor to agriculture and sedentary society, Khazanov rehearses the opposing (and more widely accepted) theory that “[t]he sources of pastoral nomadism...go back to the Neolithic revolution and to the emergence of food-producing economy which, it is now clear, in the Old World had always basically consisted of two forms of economic activity—cultivation and animal husbandry” (89). While he acknowledges that “[i]t is not impossible that groups involved in advanced gathering had already begun to domesticate animals before incipient cultivators did,” he insists that “only groups leading a relatively sedentary way of life and who had definite surpluses of vegetable food at their disposal could domesticate animals” (89). As these mixed food-producing economies spread through a process of diffusion, the original mixture of pastoralism and agriculture inevitably

adapted itself to the vicissitudes of locality. Pastoral nomadism thus originated not as a development of hunting, but as a specialized form of food-producing economy which, because of limited environmental opportunities, de-emphasized agriculture (89-90).

Such an account of the origin of pastoral nomadism out of mixed, sedentary, food-producing economies assails the myth of nomadic autarky at two levels. First, whereas evolutionary accounts of the origins of nomadism based upon an emplotment of modes of subsistence according to a gradualist narrative of “progress” had guaranteed the autonomy of their subject by isolating it from agriculture with a gulf in time, the distinction between food-procuring and food-producing economies based on the premise of a Neolithic revolution effectively bridges the temporal gaps between economies and insists not only upon their original, but upon their continuous interaction. Second, the notion that “more mobile forms of pastoralism...emerged from more sedentary forms” (90) subverts one significant (though fatuous) prop for the oft-repeated claim that “multi-resource nomadism” is a deviation from the norm of “pure pastoral nomadism”: the argument to origins.

Khazanov’s elaboration of the proverb, “There is no Turk [nomad] without a Tadjik [sedentary], there is no hat without a head” (qtd. in Khazanov 82), both synchronically and diachronically, is addressed to two broad anthropological orientations, Marxist and ecological, each of which, he argues, is deeply invested in the myth of nomadic autarky:

Ecologically oriented anthropologists explain the social particularities and sociopolitical developments of nomads as internal ecological adaptation. The French [Marxist] scholars...and some of their Soviet colleagues explain them as evolutionary changes on account of internal contradictions. (196-97)

His critique of such internally-oriented accounts of nomadic “societies” or “modes of production” holds considerable appeal. The understanding of pastoral nomadism, not as “an autarkic economic system” nor as “a distinct, closed sociopolitical system corresponding to a specific stage...of evolution, a system with its own internal laws of social functioning and development” (192), but as a form of economic activity in perpetual tension and interchange with the surrounding world that emerges from Khazanov’s magisterial synthesis constitutes a genuine challenge to the myth of pure nomadism as it has emerged in earlier anthropological sources. But it does so in a way that is self-implicating. For even here, the imprint of that earlier figure of romance is everywhere apparent.

One might expect that Khazanov’s multi-pronged perforation of the nomad’s mythic, self-enclosed “independence” would make him particularly disinclined to typologize; but, in fact, the opposite is true. As the ambiguous tension of its title proclaims, *Nomads and the Outside World* would have it both ways:

the connection between nomads and the outside world is one thing; the complete identification of nomads with the outside world is another. To underestimate the idiosyncracies of nomadic societies is just as dangerous as to overestimate them.
(4)

Certainly Khazanov cannot be accused of succumbing to this fresh danger, for he meets it with a typological system that rivals Northrop Frye’s *Anatomy of Criticism* for sheer ambition and complexity of permutations. Unfortunately, it ultimately rests upon the reconstituted figure of pure nomadism that it seemed, at first, to displace. His definition of pastoral nomadism in terms of its “economic essence” (16) as “a distinct form of food-

producing economy in which extensive mobile pastoralism is the predominant activity, and in which the majority of the population is drawn into periodic pastoral migrations” (17), for instance, restates, at an abstract theoretical level, the conventional “railway map” model of regular “tribal” movements Dyson-Hudson repudiated. The resulting typology moves predictably from this “essence” down a familiar ladder of “transitional forms” of food-producing economy whose rungs mark “the gradually diminishing specific position of pastoralism” (17). Thus, we descend from “pastoral nomadism proper,” “which in its most pure manifestations is characterized by absence of agriculture, even in a supplementary capacity” (19), down to “semi-nomadic pastoralism” (19), “semi-sedentary pastoralism” (21), “herdsman husbandry” (or “distant-pastures husbandry”) (22), “yaylag pastoralism” (a vertical, “mountain” variant of herdsman husbandry often called “transhumance”) (23), and finally, at the very bottom, “sedentary animal husbandry” (24). Is it merely coincidental that, despite the specifically economic focus of this typology, that its sequence also reflects not only the gradual “sedentarization” of the pure nomad, but its degeneration into “one of the most primitive forms of pastoralism” (24)?²³

There is also considerable seepage between the abstract level of Khazanov’s typology and the more vexing and contested level of representing actual groups of people. For the subsequent exposition of variables such as the species-composition and size of herds (25-33), the use of ecological zones (33-37), the nature of pastoral migrations (37-39), the uses of products from pastoral economies, and diet (39-40) are all ultimately placed in the service of establishing an old-fashioned “typology of pastoral

nomadism based on its geographical distribution” (25).²⁴ Despite a smattering of nervous qualifications,²⁵ an elaboration of six “geographic” types of pastoral nomadism follows: the Northern Eurasian, the Eurasian steppe, the Near Eastern, the Middle Eastern, the East African, and the High Inner Asian.

The tension between the lure of old stereotypes and the impulse to demystify them in these models is all too palpable in paradoxical statements like, “the important phenomenon of nomadism (while it remains nomadism) really consists in its indissoluble and necessary connection with the outside world” (3), or in qualifications which feel more like retractions. After asserting the frequent similarity of nomads to their sedentary neighbours, for instance, he demurs:

None of this means, of course, that in the social organization of nomads there are no forms directly linked to the economic specificity of nomadism, stimulated by the productive needs of the latter, and indirectly even to the adaptation to a specific natural environment. (122-23)

At the level of particular cases, perhaps, Khazanov has a point. He is simply (and sensibly) arguing that “the sociopolitical organization of any nomadic society as a whole...can and should be looked at from two angles: from within, as having risen directly out of the needs and particularities of the functioning society itself; and from outside, as having been stimulated, completely or partially, by the particularities and needs of its own relations with the outside world” (123). But Khazanov also wishes to generalize, and the degree to which the arguments of *Nomads and the Outside World* are characterized by the see-saw effect of its title is a direct result of the typological balancing act Khazanov’s own methodology forces him to perform. At best, its typologies are reinventions of old stereotypes by abstraction—pure nomadism is rejected

as a “myth” when applied to particular populations, only to be elevated to mythic heights at the level of model. As the slide towards the description of “culture areas” (Dyson-Hudson, “Study” 8) in Khazanov’s typology suggests, moreover, the border between model and world is dangerously porous.

Khazanov is aware of both the paradoxes and the pitfalls of his endeavor, just as he is aware that the “inevitable and conscious simplification and schematization of reality” entailed by the typological turn of his study opens it up “not for dithyrambs but for some basic and severe criticism” (4, 5). Indeed, subsequent moves in the exposition are marked by Khazanov’s uncomfortable certainty that he is “supplying those who disapprove of classifications with yet another weapon with which to attack me” (40). Like most latter-day typologists, he defends his system on the grounds of its utility as a tool for cultural comparison and is gamely prepared to admit the arbitrary nature of his criteria, the artificiality of his final scheme, and the ultimate unclassifiability of actual human societies:²⁶

Classification for the sake of classification is, of course, nonsense. Of course, no one anthropological classification can accommodate the entire multiplicity of specific cases and every kind of local and temporal specificity and already, therefore, should not be too rigorous or categoric. However, when classification is not an end in itself and makes for a more profound understanding of the essence of the phenomenon being examined and of its genesis, then it is useful. Without classifications and typologies many generalizations are impossible, and without generalizations anthropological theories, general theories of nomadism amongst them, are also impossible. (18)

Yet, to admit this much is already to raise questions that are not easily swept aside.

Khazanov seems unaware of or at least untroubled by the circularity of his defense. For to assert, tautologically, that without typologies of nomadism, “general theories of

nomadism” are “impossible” is only to beg the question of whether such theories can have any epistemological purchase if the “essence” of their principal object cannot rise above the level of assertion.

Moreover, Khazanov’s investment in theoretical abstractions like the “essence” of nomadism is only one indication of how profoundly his typology is animated by the very mythic figuration of nomadism it makes a pretense of banishing in its opening pages—a figuration which is in fact quite unapologetically reinvented through the text’s founding acts of exclusion and legitimization. “The term ‘nomads,’” Khazanov observes, “means different things to different scholars; however, for a long time now it has been used to describe two basic tendencies”:

On the one hand, some scholars have defined nomads as all those leading a mobile way of life independent of its economic specificity; other scholars have described nomads as extensive and mobile pastoralists who either have nothing at all to do with agriculture, or who are occupied with agriculture to a limited degree in the capacity of a secondary and supplementary activity. (15)

Scolding his colleagues that “terminology is something about which we should agree, not argue,” Khazanov proposes to settle the dispute by decree:

wandering hunters and gatherers, on the one hand, and mobile pastoralists, on the other, have too little in common to unite them under a single label. The bases of their economy, food-extracting in the first instance, food-producing in the second, are different in principle; thus their reasons for being mobile are different and the character of the mobility is different.... In the same way, the term “nomads” is not applicable to other mobile groups, whether ethnic-professional groups such as gypsies, or the so-called ‘maritime nomads’ of Southeast Asia, or shifting horticulturalists, or certain groups of workers in contemporary industrial societies (so-called industrial mobility).

Consequently, hunters and gatherers who do not lead a sedentary way of life are best described by the term “wandering”...., and mobile extensive pastoralists by the term “nomadic.” (15)

Khazanov is certainly not alone in demanding a narrower definition of nomadism. Anthropologists specializing in “nomadic peoples” regularly bemoan the “thoroughly chaotic nomenclature for denoting the various forms of spatial movement encountered in human societies, and in particular those of hunter-gatherers and pastoralists” (Ingold, *Appropriation* 165). Whatever theoretical justifications (food-extracting vs. food-producing, etc.) might be adduced in favor of delimiting the definition of nomadism in this way, however, the decision to delimit is itself *a priori*. Thus, to defend his choice, Khazanov ultimately retreats to the mystical haven of authenticity as his argument takes the inevitable etymological turn. In excluding “Australian Aborigines,” “hunters and gatherers in general,” and “mounted hunters of bison” (15) from the class of “nomads,” he suggests, “we are returning to the original meaning of the term and the sense which the ancient Greeks attributed to the words ‘νομάς, νομάδες, νομαδικός.’ ‘And the wind returneth again according to his circuits [Eccl. 1.6]’” (16). In light of such (sacred) rites of terminological purification, the panoptic five-stage history of the study of “nomads” that Khazanov offers in his opening chapter (7-14), does not constitute a critical review, so much as a veritable invention of tradition, which differs from Dyson-Hudson’s similar narrative only in the grander scope of its genealogy.

As Khazanov drives the imposters from the steppe, moreover—that motley wandering band of nomads “so-called”—it is difficult not to feel, as Tim Ingold has perceptively suggested, that Khazanov’s “reluctance to accept the nomadism of hunters and gatherers” is

an anthropological reflection of the very general contempt that pastoralists have for their hunter-gatherer neighbours. For the wanderer is not just one who moves

about; if he differs from the nomad it is because he roams without aim or purpose, follows no course, knows no destination. The connotations here are moral as well as physical: thus the nomad, with his relatively complex culture and social organization, furthers the advance of civilization; whereas the wanderer, bereft of all rudiments of culture and having strayed from the path of progress, contributes little or nothing at all. Precisely the same sentiments led [A.L.] Kroeber...to distinguish “pastoral nomads” from “primitive nomads”—the latter including all hunter-gatherer bands. (*Appropriation* 167)

Regardless of whether Khazanov’s rejection of “primitive nomadism” reflects either an internalization of the “contempt” characteristic of what Spooner has called “nomadic ideology” (36) or a more scholarly prejudice stemming from the unconscious hangover of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century developmentalism, Khazanov’s deep-seated attachment to a fairly conventional mythos of pastoral nomadism can be felt at every point in the design of *Nomads and the Outside World*, exerting a determining pressure on its definitions, typologies, and methodologies.

Khazanov’s repetition of the four stages theory’s original bifurcation and ranking of primitive and pastoral nomadism is the founding gesture of a project best described as a revision rather than a repudiation of nomadic myths because it ultimately seeks both to secure nomadism’s historical importance and to defend the “dark” myth of nomadism (the nomad as barbarian and imperial conqueror) against the judgments of evolutionary anthropology and imperial history alike. From the very beginning, Khazanov is concerned with “the question...as to whether nomadism represents *more* in the evolution and history of mankind than one example of economic adaptation” (2; emphasis added)—a question which has, he suggests, hardly even been posed, much less satisfactorily answered: “In the many concepts of the evolution and history of mankind which have been put forward by different scholars, adhering to different schools of thought, with the

exception of Toynbee's works, nowhere are nomads apportioned a fitting, let alone, a special place" (11). This surprising allusion to Arnold J. Toynbee—the modern heir to Oswald Spengler and to that long line of “speculative philosophers of history” preceding him (Walsh 162)—points to an illuminating seam in Khazanov's text that is considerably more significant than it appears.



To be sure, *Nomads and the Outside World* differs from Toynbee's *A Study of History* in most outward respects. In general, it is both less synoptic and more scholarly than the latter; it also finds many of Toynbee's specific views on nomadism reductive (Khazanov 200)—and little wonder. Toynbee's chapter on “The Arrested Civilizations” (Chpt. IX, Bk. III), containing his account of nomadism as “essentially a society without history” (1.203), is a bravura performance of the ecological determinist interpretation of pure nomadism that Khazanov stringently resists.²⁷ But even though the letter of Toynbee's anthropology does not survive Khazanovian scrutiny, the spirit of a different aspect of Toynbee's nomadology—his ambitious incorporation of nomadism into a metaphysical philosophy of history—is embraced and refashioned in *Nomads and the Outside World* at a higher level of empirical rigor, under the guise of historical neutrality.

Toynbee's case for the historical significance of nomadism inheres in his ambivalent, but ultimately recuperative treatment of barbarism. Historically, the terminological relation between “nomad” and “barbarian” is complex and difficult to untangle given the overdetermination of each term that is the result of natural inconsistencies of usage. Referring etymologically to “one whose language and customs differ from the speaker's” and historically to one living beyond the pale of civilization

(OED), “barbarian” is fundamentally a relational and extremely loose term belonging to the vocabulary of political ideology. As Denis Sinor has shown, the barbarian is seldom simply any cultural outsider—“A barbarian must also be aggressive; he must be dangerous” (48-49). Conversely, nomadism—particularly in its “pure” form, as both Toynbee and Khazanov employ it—is a narrower, (ostensibly) more descriptive and sociological designation. Yet, as we have seen, Western writers from Montesquieu to Tylor have tended to treat these concepts as overlapping and even synonymous when developing typologies of sociocultural evolution. Such an identification makes sense, for not only has barbarism traditionally been distinguished from savagery (Sinor 48) (just as pastoral nomadism has been distinguished from hunting), but the groups to which the term has been applied by imperial historians (the Germanic tribes, for example) have been highly mobile as well—often because they were mounted warriors or pastoralists renowned for establishing rival “nomadic Barbarian empires” of their own (55): “so-called nomadic-tribes such as Huns, Sarmatians, Avars, and Hungarians, who were known to Europe; Hiung-nu, Juan-juan, and Uigurs, who were known to the Chinese; Turks and Mongols, who were known from one end to the other of the great Eurasian continent; and the forest peoples living to the north of China, such as the Kitan, the Juchen, and the Mandju” (49). Khazanov, as we shall see, is fascinated by many of these very groups and by the periods of nomadic triumph which enter the discourse of imperial history under the sign of barbarism.

The implicit correlation of nomadism and barbarism in Toynbee’s *Study* continues this discursive tradition. Consonant with his conventional identification of nomads as

developmentally stagnant “monsters” (1.217), Toynbee frequently characterizes the incursions of steppe- or desert-dwelling nomads into the realm of sedentary civilizations using the morally-charged language of barbarism. Echoing Edward Gibbon, whose *History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (1776, 1781, 1788) established a canonical precedent for representing the encounter between civilization and its frighteningly mobile antagonists,²⁸ Toynbee likens “hordes of triumphant barbarians running amok amid the ruins of a civilization which they cannot appreciate” to “demons” (2.159), “vultures feeding on carrion or maggots crawling in a carcass” (2.150)—repudiations of the sort of “hard” primitivism that idealized “vigor” and was rooted in Toynbee’s discomfort with the rise of a Nietzschean “myth of a salutary barbarian ‘Nordic Race’ whose blood acts as an elixir of youth when injected into the veins of an ‘effete society,’” propounded by “prophets of a demonic German Neobarbarism” (2.159).

Even as it warns against primitivist celebrations of barbarian vigor, however, Toynbee’s *Study* sets out complementary terms for the meaningful and even positive recuperation of nomadism into a dialectical scheme of historical cycles in which the nomad (as barbarian) acts as a culture-bridge between the decline of one civilization and the emergence of a “higher” one. Transitions between the collapse of one civilization and the rise of another, Toynbee maintains, are usually effected by an “internal proletariat”: a “creative” minority that resides within the stultified “universal state” of a dying civilization, while remaining fundamentally alienated from its operations. This internal proletariat is all-important to Toynbee’s theological telos because its creativity is expressed in the rise of religion and the formation of “chrysalis-churches” which, in

decaying civilizations of the second generation (such as the Roman empire), provide a crucial “link between the defunct civilization and its newborn successor” (2.159). Yet, for civilizations of the first generation, Toynbee concedes that it is not the internal but the external proletariat—the “vulture-heroes” (2.160) drawn by the whiff of imperial decay and encamped in the shadow of the military *limes*—that ultimately perform this “humble service for Posterity” (2.159). Not surprisingly, given the religious bias of the *Study*, Toynbee maintains that “the internal proletariat that builds churches...obviously acquires and hands on to future generations a far richer heritage of the past” (2.160). But in surveying the “destinies of those civilizations of the second generation that were affiliated to predecessors by this tenuous barbarian link,” Toynbee discovers that these civilizations not only surpassed civilizations of the same generation linked to their predecessors through the “dominant minority,”²⁹ but that they were, in fact, the fountainheads of the “higher religions”—the real protagonists of Toynbee’s history: “the barbarian chrysalises of civilizations of the second generation (but not those of the third) would have to their credit the honour of having participated in the higher religions’ evolution” (2.161). Moreover, “higher religions” are not the only things to emerge from the “barbarian chrysalises” of Toynbee’s narrative; in the process of transmission, the predatory barbarians themselves have been transformed into something quite new and strange. Here, Toynbee recasts the venerable tradition of presenting barbarian invasions as the punitive instrument of enraged divinity in grandly Providential terms. For now, the “demonic” barbarian nomads assume a pivotal role in history, or, what Toynbee would call, a “vision of God revealing Himself in action” (qtd. in Winetroun 34).

Such an incorporation of barbarism into providential history in volume eight of the *Study* has already been prepared by the seemingly defamatory presentation of nomadism as an “arrested civilization” in volume three. For in stripping the nomadic war-bands of agency in their relations with universal states, Toynbee has also absolved them of any responsibility for the latter’s decline—an absolution which he confirms in his caustic reply to Gibbon that the Roman Empire did not succumb to “the triumph of Barbarism and Religion,” as the latter had claimed, but expired of “self-inflicted wounds” (1.304-05). Such an acquittal of barbarism has the rhetorical advantage of streamlining the *Study*’s presentation of the nomadic *actant*’s role in the larger scheme of Toynbee’s historical plot. As a *post facto* scavenger rather than an outright destroyer of civilizations, the barbarian is freed for his most important role as cultural transmitter in the evolution of religion. Indeed, Toynbee’s very notion of nomadic society as an “external proletariat”—an empty container readily filled by the cultural content of the adjacent universal state—seems determined precisely by its transitional function, as does nomadism’s unwilled shuttling from steppe to state, propelled by the twin forces of desiccation and imperial breakdown. This motiveless transit provides a stark metonymy of nomadism’s intrinsic insignificance, but functional indispensability.

Toynbee’s articulation of barbarism and civilization exemplifies the mode of representation that substitutes strictly historical affiliations for evolutionary ones, but not without retaining a certain measure of ambiguity in its expulsion of the primitivist implications that often attach to the latter. Ironically, the paradigm for this ambiguous shift from an evolutionary to an historical model of affiliation between barbarism and

civilization is anticipated by Toynbee's nemesis and intellectual forebear. For as Womersley points out, Gibbon's rejection of the evolutionary rapprochement between barbarism and civilization arranged by stadial theory did not preclude an historical appreciation of barbarism's "positive" contribution to the making of modern Europe by way of Ferguson's law of unintended consequences (liii). Commenting on Attila, for instance, Gibbon is forced to admit that "the savage destroyer undesignedly laid the foundations of a republic, which revived, in the feudal state of Europe, the art and spirit of commercial industry" (qtd. in Womersley lvi) and, as Womersley suggests, this made the Huns an unwitting "hinge" whose function was the "linking [of] barbaric Europe to the civilized republic of commercial states in which the history of that transition could itself be written" (lvi), their societies "forming crucial bridges across which precious elements of civilization were transmitted from the wreck of the ancient world to modern Europe" (lxiii). Indeed, Womersley reads Gibbon's characterizations of Attila and Alaric as expressive of "new paradigms of human character, in which qualities previously distinct or contrary had met and mingled"—characterizations which suggest that,

in *The Decline and Fall*, those leaders stood in a relation of metonymy to the historical role played by the nations over which they ruled in the history of Europe. Their scavenging of the putrescent corpse of the western empire contributed to the health and vigor of its offspring in ways which were unintended and unanticipated, yet nevertheless palpable. (lvii)

And yet, such a shift from evolutionary to historical representations of barbarian ancestry may ultimately be less significant than it appears. In an infamous passage on "degeneracy," for instance, Gibbon shows the degree to which historical representations

may carry the germ of a more old-fashioned evolutionary primitivism by lapsing plainly into the idiom of Jordanes:

the Roman world was indeed peopled by a race of pygmies; when the fierce giants of the north broke in, and mended the puny breed. They restored a manly spirit of freedom; and after the revolution of ten centuries, freedom became the happy parent of taste and science. (84)

An evolutionary appreciation of barbarian virtues and an historical appreciation for barbarian culture-bridges, in other words, are really two sides of a coin with which the nomadic apologist purchases the same prize: a qualified defense of barbarism from the charges of mere savagery and historical superfluity. For Gibbon, this “prize” was at best ambiguously sought, and its presence in the *Decline* attests more to the ascendancy of Gothic theory in Gibbon’s intellectual milieu than to any deeply held primitivist belief³⁰; for Toynbee, it was merely incidental: in Man’s journey toward the attainment of a “higher religion,” barbarism is a bridge to be traversed along the way, and in this sense his apology for barbarism is strictly functional. For a student of nomadic society like Khazanov, however, the historical defense of barbarism possesses an intrinsic value.



Khazanov is an anthropologist, not a metaphysician, but his treatment of nomadism follows a path that is strikingly similar to Toynbee’s in several key respects, not the least of which is its conspicuous historical turn. This turn is necessary because, for nomadism to be studied not only “as an aggregate whole with its inner and outer systems, structures, functions, and ties...but also as an essential and integral factor in human history” (12) would entail a massive methodological reorganization of the field. Khazanov is prepared to lead the charge:

it is necessary to put to an end the almost complete predominance of synchronic research and to return diachrony to its proper place in the anthropology of nomadism.... [M. I.] Finley is correct when he writes, "beginning with Malinowski, anthropologists over-reacted to the historical conjecturing of the unilinear evolutionism of their predecessors by rejecting not only their bad methods but the subject of their enquiry as well, a procedure which, though understandable, is not justifiable." (12-13)

Against this synchronic over-reaction, Khazanov proposes a "union, or at least [a] dialogue, between anthropology and history" that would necessitate a significant reappraisal of an earlier literature whose interest, Khazanov insists, is more than simply antiquarian.³¹

Of course, work with historical sources (as, incidentally, with any others) is linked with specific difficulties; of course, these sources are not complete, [sic] at times they are imprecise. Nevertheless, much useful and indispensable anthropological information can be extracted from them. A palaeontologist will not turn up his nose at a tiny piece of bone, in the same way as an archaeologist will not do so at the handle of a broken pot; they are satisfied with what they can find. In order to become a palaeo-anthropologist, an anthropologist must reconcile himself to the fact that he must make do with available historical material and learn to use it in the best possible way. (12-13)

"Fortunately," he reassures us, "since ancient times the sedentary world has not only been concerned with mythopoesis when dealing with nomads" (7) and thus, "The belittling of reports made by early travelers and observers of nomadism is quite unjustified" (13).

Statements such as these have the force of axioms in Khazanov's book, particularly since the means by which "useful and indispensable anthropological information" can be distinguished from "mythopoesis" is a question left to the discretion of the individual "palaeo-anthropologist." The clumsiness of the archaeological analogy, moreover, which attempts to manage the difference between material artifacts and textual interpretations, already suggests the dangers inherent in such a project and the ease with which palaeo-

anthropology may merge with the headier (and more treacherous) terrain of Toynbeeian philosophical history.

Whereas Toynbee's account of the "special place" of nomadism in "the evolution and history of mankind" focused on the barbarian's historic role as a culture-bridge between declining and ascending civilizations in the early development of religion, Khazanov's more cautious account of nomadic exceptionality is reflected in the restricted scope of his enterprise, which centers on an investigation of "nomadic states" in the final, climactic chapter of his book—a phenomenon that had briefly captured Toynbee's attention as well, in the third volume of the *Study* (1.206). Khazanov's main interlocutor in the culminating chapter of his own study is not Toynbee, however, but a collection of "conquest-theorists"—particularly Franz Oppenheimer and Richard Thurnwald—whose work in the first half of the twentieth century made nomadic conquests of sedentary farmers a central factor in evolutionary theories of state origin.

Khazanov's attitude to the more radical theorists of the nomadic origins of the state is one of skepticism, and when confronted with deterministic evolutionary approaches his inclination is to insist at every point on the historical particularity of individual cases. He insists neither on a universal theory of the nomadic state (i.e. that all states were, initially caused by nomadic conquest), nor that "every subjugation and conquest automatically entails the emergence of a state" (229). In this regard, Khazanov's reappraisal of the role of nomads in the origin of the state seeks to eschew the stereotypes of evolutionary discourse, as did his critique of pure nomadism. But as with his treatment of the latter, even the revised conceptualization of nomadic statehood

retains much of the character of the original. For the final chapter's "romp through 2,000 years of Old World history that will leave most readers breathless and bemused" (Ingold,

"Khazanov" 386) celebrates the apex of the nomad's power as an historical agent.

Moreover, whereas Toynbee, like Gibbon, offered only a weak appreciation of nomadism's historical significance by cloaking its praise in the moral paradox of unintended consequences, Khazanov bestows more robust honors on his subject.

Nomadism is special, he argues, because it is "a phenomenon" founded on a "paradox" of

David and Goliath-like proportions:

societies based on one of the most specialized types of food-producing economy, in which technology is relatively conservative and has changed little with time, have exercised an essential and, indeed, multifarious influence on the social and political functioning and evolution of non-nomadic societies in which the economy is more diversified and technology more advanced. (3)

Chapter Five's chronicle of the nomad's "multifarious influence" on sedentary, more

"advanced" societies constitutes the culmination, but also the narrative climax of the

nomad's interactions with "the outside world," for it presents not merely another

"adaptation" to sedentary societies' omnipresent external pressures (the subject of

Chapter Four), but a triumph—literal, as well as figurative, of the nomad over the

aggressions of the settled state. Whatever prestige the nomad may have lost in

Khazanov's rejection of conquest theory and its universal nomadic state, is made up for

in Khazanov's account of barbarian empires where the somewhat dubious compliment of

being an evolutionary catalyst for the state is replaced with the more stirring victory over

a primordial enemy.

That Khazanov regards settled society unsympathetically, as the enemy of nomadism—in both an abstract and a traditionally moral sense—and that his account of nomadic states has a kind of moral subtext, is repeatedly implied throughout the study. Perhaps the most remarkable feature of his treatment of nomadism in this regard is its insistence upon the fundamental egalitarianism of nomadic societies in their “pure” state. “In my opinion,” Khazanov writes, “social differentiation amongst nomads in general and differentiated and, particularly, stratified segmentary systems mainly develop [sic] as a result of specific relations between nomads and the outside world” (147). As both Ingold and Asad have noted, such an assumption is a hallmark of Western accounts of pure nomadism, but in the context of Soviet anthropology, the assertion of nomadic equality takes on an even greater significance, because Khazanov is deliberately departing from the Soviet tradition of evolutionary Marxist anthropology from which his writing emerges. This tradition, which posits a rigid evolutionary sequence of societies reminiscent of the four stages theory—“primitive, patriarchal or slave-owning, feudal, capitalist, communist”—has produced an extremely stratified vision of nomadism, because “with their private ownership of herds, all pastoral societies must be either slave-owning or feudal, or something is seriously wrong with the evolutionary paradigm” (Ingold, “Khazanov” 385). In purifying nomadism of these more severe forms of stratification, Khazanov performs a revision analogous to Toynbee’s absolution of barbarism from culpability in the decline of universal states like the Roman Empire. In the context of Khazanov’s own narrative of nomadism’s “special place,” the original egalitarianism of nomadic society gives the conflict between nomads and sedentaries that

culminates in the formation of the “early state” an allegorical aspect. The conquering nomads have of course, by this point, already been fatally tainted by the stratifying forces of sedentary society, but even thus transformed, the nomads still serve as the nemesis of a civilization whose own stratifying dynamics have returned to haunt it.

What drives the diachronic turn in Khazanov’s anthropology? Khazanov provides a clue when he laments,

The question as to whether nomadism can survive in the contemporary world raises serious doubts. Opportunities for nomadism to adapt itself to the outside world are few and far between. Once again Cain is killing Abel, slowly but surely and with very little standing in the way, this time insisting on the most noble of intentions. (6)

Remarking on the destructive pressure brought to bear on nomadic societies by sedentary civilizations, Toynbee had come to an identical conclusion, in exactly the same idiom:

though the Lord may have respect for Abel and his offering and not for Cain and his, no power can save Abel from being slain by Cain.... Nomadism was doomed in Eurasia from that moment in the seventeenth century when two sedentary empires, the Muscovite and the Manchu, stretched their tentacles round the Eurasian Steppe from opposite quarters. To-day our Western Civilization, which has now spread its tentacles over the entire surface of the globe is completing the extirpation of Nomadism in all its other ancient domains. (1.203, 204)

And such imperial nostalgia in a biblical vein is not all Khazanov and Toynbee have in common.³² Toynbee goes on to suggest that the triumph of the sedentary over the nomadic may be a Pyrrhic victory for the West, for “[w]hether Cain will prove to be the master or the victim of the industrialism that he has created remains to be seen”:

Abel has been slain by Cain, and we are left to inquire whether the curse of Cain is duly descending on his slayer.... In the year 1933, when the new economic order was threatened with breakdown and dissolution, it seemed not impossible that Abel might be avenged after all; and that *Homo Nomas, in articulo mortis*, might yet linger on to see his slayer, *Homo Faber*, go down, distraught, to Sheol. (205)

Toynbee is not the only one to find the theme of the nomad's revenge a tantalizing prospect; Khazanov too is captivated by the image of *Homo Nomas* striking back at his primal enemy from beyond the grave.

Thus, to the perception of nomadism in "its present rather sad state" (7), *Nomads and the Outside World* opposes a great dream of nomadic empires past. Remarking on its final grandiloquent chapter, Ingold complains,

Presumably, throughout history, the ordinary nomad has been on the move, tending his flocks and herds, raising his children, arranging their marriages, sacrificing to his gods or ancestors, fighting his feuds, burying his kin, and so on, regardless of who his political masters happened to be at the time. Yet of this, for an anthropologist the stuff of pastoral life, we learn next to nothing. ("Khazanov" 386)

But this occlusion of "the ordinary nomad," one might object, is precisely the point of Khazanov's book. In a perceptive reading of "ethnographic rhetoric" (77) in E. E. Evans-Pritchard's *The Nuer* (1940) and Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie's *Montaillou* (1975), Renato Rosaldo has noted the surprising degree to which the "freedom-loving independent shepherd" (86) of the literary pastoral organizes representations of real pastoralists in ostensibly "documentary" forms of writing. The function of this figure, he suggests, is to disguise the reality of unequal power relationships that underwrites the ethnographer-historian's authority and access, and thus to "make[] possible a peculiar civility in relationships that cross social boundaries"—the traditional function of courtly pastoral discourse (96):

Although militarily 'pacified' by colonial troops, the Nuer remain...indomitable in character. Symbolically, they represent an ideal of human liberty, even in the midst of colonial domination. (96)

The slide from synchrony to diachrony in Khazanov's study is an instance of just such a counterfactual suppression, writ large. For although Khazanov emphasizes the nomad's fundamental dependence on settled society, the substitution of the nomad as imperial conqueror for its dependent modern equivalent in the narrative structure of Khazanov's book, effects a compensatory fantasy of the first order, though with a less self-disguising agenda.³³ If "salvage" ethnography has as its theme "the vanishing primitive and the end of traditional society" and takes as its agenda "the record[ing] and interpretat[ation] of fragile custom" (Clifford, "On Ethnographic" 112, 113), Khazanov's "palaeo-anthropology" presents us not with salvage ethnography but with its historical equivalent, what we might call "revival" ethnography. For here the "disappearing" other is not collected but revived—metonymically displaced by a prior, more robust version of itself. Imaginatively, at least, Khazanov reverses history and Abel has his revenge: the nomad triumphs over the state instead of becoming its victim.

Hunters and Collectors: From General Nomadism to Pop Anthropology

Collecting—at least in the West, where time is generally thought to be linear and irreversible—implies a rescue of phenomena from inevitable historical decay or loss. The collection contains what "deserves" to be kept, remembered, and treasured. Artifacts and customs are saved out of time. Anthropological culture collectors have typically gathered what seems "traditional"—what by definition is opposed to modernity.

JAMES CLIFFORD, *The Predicament of Culture* (231)

Khazanov's study illustrates the real difficulty of approaching the myth of pure nomadism from a revisionist perspective. The impulse towards demystification in *Nomads and the Outside World* is fatally undermined by its foundational act of definition

in which nomadic mobility is tied to a pastoral economy—an act of definition which is rooted in, and inevitably projects, despite itself, an entire phantasmagoria of barbarian romance and pastoral nobility, howsoever these might be tempered and refashioned in the cool eye of historicism. Yet, the solution to this dilemma proposed by Salzman, Dyson-Hudson, Asad, and Koster and Chang is not without pitfalls of its own.

One path towards the subversion of the pure nomadism that remains so intractably, if ambiguously, mythologized in Khazanov's study has been impressively blazed by Ingold, along the trail first marked by Salzman and Dyson-Hudson. Like them, Ingold questions Khazanov's instantiation of the "persistent tendency to regard the pastoralist as the archetypal nomad, and to disqualify the 'nomadism' of hunters and gatherers" (167)—not merely on the grounds that this tendency reflects the evolutionary prejudice of its exponents, but also because, he claims, the differences between the social significance of hunter-gatherer and pastoral economies are less significant than they appear. Taking issue with the common distinction between "domestic" and "wild" animals to mark the traditional difference between a pastoralist "food-producing" economy and a hunter-gatherer "food-extracting" economy, Ingold points out that both forms of livelihood encode relations of "tenure"³⁴ between humans and animals that are similarly social in nature, for the seemingly "wild" animals pursued by hunters are in fact just as "'engaged' by the structure of social relations of the human community" as the pastoralist's "domesticated" herd, and "[i]t is on this social level that the link between pastoralism and nomadism is to be found" (168). Ingold thus seeks to minimize the difference between pastoralists and hunters by shifting the focus away from the relative

degrees of agency their animals are said to possess and by allowing for only minor variations in the particular form their social engagements take. While hunters “engage” their animals in “locales, where herds may be found or intercepted,” pastoralists “detach...social relations from their anchorage in fixed points in the landscape” and effect a “transfer of tenure...to the herds themselves”: “The pastoral animal is a vehicle in a dual sense: not only does it transport its owner’s effects, it carries around his social relations as well” (168). Such a revision of the very socioeconomic distinctions between hunter-gatherers and pastoralists that are the necessary presuppositions of Khazanov’s definition of pure nomadism is reinforced by Ingold’s reminder that “[n]omadism is no more necessarily entailed in hunting and gathering than it is in pastoralism” (179). Thus, his own definition of nomadism will eschew economic factors altogether, and focus exclusively on “varieties of nomadism understood as patterns of spatial mobility” (170):

[N]omadism signifies the mobility of persons in space quite regardless of their specific social and economic objectives. It has therefore to be distinguished from pastoralism, which refers to a determinate system of productive relations and practices, or rather more loosely to a “way of life.” Not all pastoralists are nomadic, and among the world’s nomadic peoples are included not only certain hunter-gatherer and pastoral societies, but also a motley assortment of groups for whom travelling is a condition of livelihood—itinerant tradesmen, migrant labourers, merchant seamen, and so on. Might we not, as Salzman suggests, learn more about the phenomenon of nomadism *per se* by comparing its manifestations among these very different categories of people? (166)

This strategy for avoiding pure nomadism’s socioeconomic obfuscations and latent evolutionism frees Ingold to present his own typology of nomadisms whose purely structural criteria concern the relations between “the *number of resting sites* and the *frequency of return*” in any given instance of relocation in space “such that, at the

sedentary pole, a small number of sites is linked to a high frequency of return, and *vice versa* at the nomadic pole” (175).

Inevitably, given his typological approach, remnants of pure nomadism continue to haunt Ingold’s categories (albeit in a different form), in the distinctions between “full nomadism” (“the ideal typical situation of unconstrained movement”) (184), “tethered nomadism (tied to a center, but without regular re-use of peripheral locations),” and “fixed-point nomadism (tied to a center, and with regular re-use of peripheral locations)” (187). But by cutting across socio-economic categories and resisting a necessary link to pastoralism, Ingold’s highly restricted definition of nomadism at least avoids the more overt forms of projection and fantasy that plague the discourse of pure nomadism in both its evolutionary and (ostensibly post-evolutionary) typological varieties. In speaking of “nomadism,” instead of a reified “nomad,” moreover, Ingold holds up the possibility of significantly different sorts of encounter and comparison, not only between mobile hunter-gathers and pastoralists, but between these groups and similarly mobile groups within capitalist economies as well—a move which further defuses pure nomadism’s necessary predisposition towards primitivist types of generalization. As Dyson-Hudson suggested a number of years earlier, “a spatial mobility model” would be able to encompass “many features beyond pastoral nomadism”:

gypsies in India and Scotland, say; New York-New England commuters; and that significant proportion of the U.S. population which moves about the country every year or two; and commercial travelers everywhere. A preliminary ordering of elements could be achieved here by asking whether movement is with or without households, within or between occupations, with or without capital resources, and so on. If nothing else, such a generalized approach would help to avoid the crippling but common assumption that a pastoral form of mobility is

always occasioned by, and only directed towards, the need for pasture. (“Study” 24)

More optimistically, such a generalized approach—what we might call a discourse of general nomadism—might also be the ally of what has become known, in postcolonial and cultural studies contexts, as “traveling theory,” a body of discourse whose interest in how alternative histories of “travel”—from the Middle Passage to “the immigrant experience”—might disrupt the ethnocentrism of Euro-American discourses of displacement that Dyson-Hudson’s call for broadly-based comparisons of “nomadic” mobility seems uncannily to prefigure. As Clifford writes in “Traveling Cultures,” the time has long since come “to thoroughly transform travel as a discourse and genre” (34) by “comparing and translating different traveling cultures” (35), a project that has more than a passing affinity with the comparativist project of general nomadism. An essential effect of Clifford’s valorization of “discrepant cosmopolitanisms” (36) would be the shattering of allochronic time, and in this sense, his work may be seen as one to answer Fabian’s challenge that “the radical contemporaneity of mankind is a project” (xi).

“Coevalness,” according to Fabian,

aims at recognizing cotemporality as the condition for truly dialectical confrontation between persons as well as societies. It militates against false conceptions of dialectics—all those watered-down binary abstractions which are passed off as oppositions: left vs. right, past vs. present, primitive vs. modern. Tradition and modernity are not “opposed” (except semiotically), nor are they in “conflict.” All this is (bad) metaphysical talk. What are opposed, in conflict, in fact, locked in antagonistic struggle are not the same societies at different stages of development, but different societies facing each other at the same Time. (154-55)

Clifford is getting at something very similar to this sense of “cotemporality” when he suggests that an emphasis on “cultures of displacement and transplantation” allows us to

avoid, at least, the excessive localism of particularist cultural relativism... And in this perspective the notion that certain classes of people are cosmopolitan (travelers) while the rest are local (natives) appears as the ideology of one (very powerful) traveling culture. (36)

The general nomadism of Salzman, Dyson-Hudson, and Ingold, which would encourage comparative studies of the nomadism of “natives” and “travelers,” arrives at this destination too, even if it is by a very different route.

As Clifford’s attempt to distance his project from “nomadology” demonstrates, the results of such an alliance between a rhetoric of general nomadism and comparativist agenda of traveling theory have been mixed, at least from the point of view of the latter. Within anthropology and its popular offshoots, the results have been similarly discouraging. True, the shift towards general nomadism in work like Ingold’s may have a useful demystificatory effect on the mythology of pure nomadism within anthropological debates; but its power to demystify seldom survives the transition to more popular discourses of nomadism. In these, particular similarities between hunter-gatherers and pastoralists collapse all too easily into a mobile version of what Torgovnick identifies as “generalized” and “intuitive” notions of the primitive in Western culture (22). Moreover, the encounter between urban nomads (Dyson-Hudson’s New York-New England commuters) and their “pre-capitalist” namesakes typically reinforces rather than subverts the primitivist dynamics of temporal distancing and idealization as the latter are inevitably made the representatives of the privileged category of an anterior “real nomadism.”



The allochronic dangers inherent in transferring the anthropological critique of pure nomadism outside its institutional context are implicit in Dyson-Hudson's own foray into that ambiguous border-zone between the staid disciplinary enclosure of *Anthropological Quarterly* and the exotic, professionally-lit spectacle of the travel brochure—*National Geographic*. As Catherine Lutz and Jane Collins suggest, The National Geographic Society occupies a singular place in American “infotainment” culture (7):

From the institution's second decade [ca. 1898], the funding and conduct of research was always marginal to the institution's main role of popularizing and glamorizing geographic and anthropological knowledge, yet it was sufficient to establish and retain its reputation as a *scientific* and educational organization. This made it possible for the *Geographic* to speak with the voice of scientific authority, while remaining outside of and unconstrained by the scientific community. (24)

In one sense, *National Geographic* resembles the “journalism and narrative travel accounts” of the eighteenth century, which “were essential mediators between the scientific network and a larger European public” (Pratt 29). Even more sensationally than these earlier media, however, the magazine's scientificity provides an alibi for exoticism, and in this sense, *National Geographic* is “the direct and lively descendant of the cabinet of curiosities, a close cousin of the natural history diorama” (Pauly qtd. in Lutz and Collins 23). Like the museum of natural history, it is organized according to the aesthetic, decontextualized, and thus “ahistoric” logic of the “collection,” and “like other collections, [it] has been a kind of souvenir: it collects the world between its covers, it is collected by subscribers, and relies heavily on the photograph, a technology that necessarily miniaturizes the real world” (23-24). The value and “cultural legitimacy” of

the *Geographic*-as-collection/collectible, argue Lutz and Collins, have been secured not only “by its connections to the state, national identity, and science,” but, just as importantly, by the magazine’s material attributes: “the stability maintained in size, format, and appearance” (7). Indeed, “the costliness of the paper and binding almost pushes the *Geographic* out of the category of magazine (with its somewhat lowbrow connotations) and into the category of book or encyclopedia” (7). In some cases, such an elevation from magazine to book is more than figurative. The Society’s Special Publications Division has produced a wide range of hardcover books—each of which has collected articles on specific subjects, a publication practice which has opened up still greater opportunities for conceptual and pictorial collection.

Nomads of the World (1971), one such Special Publications compendium to which Dyson-Hudson lent his professional anthropological credentials in the form of an introduction, illustrates the profound affinity between general nomadism and the ethnographic collection as it is manifested in the *Geographic*’s “present[ation of] ‘primitive’ peoples for western perusal” (Lutz and Collins 19). Dyson-Hudson’s introduction, “Inheriting—and Extending—Man’s Oldest Technique of Survival, Nomads Find Freedom and Identity in the Life They Follow,”³⁵ rehearses the theme of general nomadism in terms which precisely foreshadow those of his subsequent article, “The Study of Nomads,” and which thus seem to work against the exoticist principle of maximal difference (both between “primitive” and “modern” and within primitive cultures themselves) that governs collection-building. “Lumping hunters, herders, wandering traders, and shifting cultivators together as ‘nomads,’” he tactfully concedes to

his academic rivals, “soon makes us despair of being able to say anything useful” (15).

However, an overly narrow definition of nomadism, he warns, “can cost us a lot”

because, “if we consider societies which have movement for survival in common, though not much else, we immediately face questions that concern us all” (15):

If we think mainly about movement, we also see that nomads abound in our own society, and wonder whether the problems that nomads face are really so strange after all. Commuters who live in Connecticut but survive by exploiting resources in New York City follow a path as regular and distinctive as any Persian nomad on his migratory tribal road. Their concern about the unpredictability of suburban railroads fills just as much conversation as some other nomad’s concern about the unpredictable movements of rain or game. A commercial traveler for the garment industry may be separated by only one significant variable (household location) from a Gypsy, who also survives by putting his skills and his products on the road.

Officers and their families in the U.S. Foreign Service may run a cycle not too different from shifting cultivators. The migrant laborers on whom so much American agriculture depends are as ignored and distrusted by the settled groups through which they pass as any nomadic group elsewhere. And what of the family life of those nomadic households who move from one trailer park to another across America as their men build roads, or whose concessions for hot-dog stands take them from one state fair to another in an annual round? (16)

In one sense, this impressive catalogue is a classic embodiment of *National Geographic’s* liberal humanist mandate, as laid out in the “seven principles” of its official editorial policy, to represent the fundamental unity of humankind (Lutz and Collins 26-27). Yet, as Lutz and Collins also point out, *National Geographic’s* humanist philosophy of unity amidst diversity, in which the “two worlds” of traditional and modern are represented as “coexisting without conflict” (112) and are afforded “nearly equal value” (111), conceals a master-narrative of “soft evolutionism” (109), in which non-white, non-Western people represent the beginning stages in an optimistic narrative of progress that “reinforced America’s vision of its newly ascendant place in the world by showing ‘how

far we've come'" (19). Significantly, moreover, the *Geographic's* implicit temporal coding of cultural difference in its color photographs dovetails with its mandate to represent otherness only in the most attractive possible light, usually by domesticating the excessive difference of exoticism through the judicious use of the representational codes of soft primitivism: idealization, naturalization, and sexualization (89, 96). For this reason, assertions of universality within its pages, such as Dyson-Hudson's, are subject to certain qualifications. Sometimes, the rhetoric of cultural sameness implies an attitude of "good sportsmanship in the evolutionary struggle" (27); at other times, it may simply be a pretext for nostalgic recreations of "pre-Western" "authenticity." In the case of "special" collections like *Nomads of the World* and its sequel, *Primitive Worlds: People Lost in Time* (1973) (to which Dyson-Hudson contributed another article on nomads), *Geographic*-style humanism clearly runs in the latter direction.

Once translated into the visual language of *Nomads of the World*, Dyson-Hudson's general *cum* universal nomadism is immediately purged of its comparative thrust and the American commuters and mobile home-owners disappear. What seemed to challenge the very distinction between "traditional" and "modern" nomadism turns out to legitimize the book's collection of an encyclopedic, but strictly "primitive," nomadic diversity. The photographs accompanying Dyson-Hudson's introduction are, fittingly, a microcosm of the work as a whole. Bakhtiari herders in the Zāgros Mountains of Iran (8-9), painted Australian Aborigines (11), Afghan *kuchi* nomads at camp (14-15), the Yörük of Turkey (14-15), an Akuriyo Indian leader (17), a nomadic fisher from Tierra del Fuego (16), Lapps trekking across the ice in Norway (18-19), Mongolian "descendants of

Genghis Khan's world-famous warriors" (20-21), Samburu women dancing "The Ox" in Kenya (24-25)—collectively they represent a maximum geographic contrast between nomads (north-south, desert-jungle), a maximum difference in costume and decoration, and a maximum variation in the technologies of mobility, which, in the book as a whole, range from the stereotypical (foot, horse, camel), to the unexpected (stilts, cart-home, houseboat, skis).

Almost without exception, the photographs in *Nomads of the World* effect a profound disengagement from the *Geographic's* more binocular, (would be) cultural-relativist juxtapositions of old and new in harmonious arrangements—between the covers of a single issue, or even within a single photograph. In a particularly outstanding example of the quasi-relativizing type, one of the magazine's most ubiquitous stock characters—the bare-breasted "native" woman—looks through a microscope whose shape so uncannily duplicates her own (carefully posed) seated form that its protuberant metallic objectives are weirdly sexualized (Fig. 2). This image may be read in other ways—as enacting, for instance, an evolutionary narrative of colonial education, as suggested by the woman in the background at the chalkboard diagramming the (allegorical?) interaction of "white" and "red" corpuscles in a blood cell—but, however one reads its overdetermined juxtapositions, it is clearly very different in tone from the photographs of *Nomads of the World*—both from the majority, which feature conventional nomadic portraits and scenes (Figs. 3 and 4), and from the few examples of modern-primitive hybridity, such as the similarly-themed images of a Qashqāī boy before blackboard, "describ[ing] how a seed sprouts" (97) (Fig. 5) and the "tent-school"

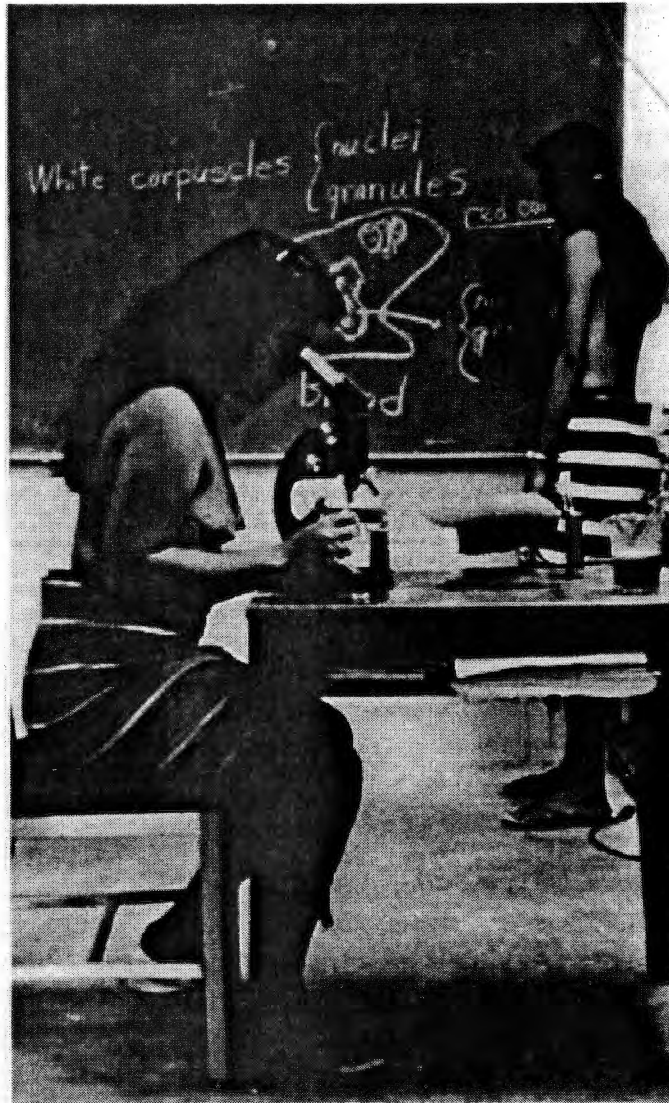


FIGURE 2
National Geographic
Primitive/Modern

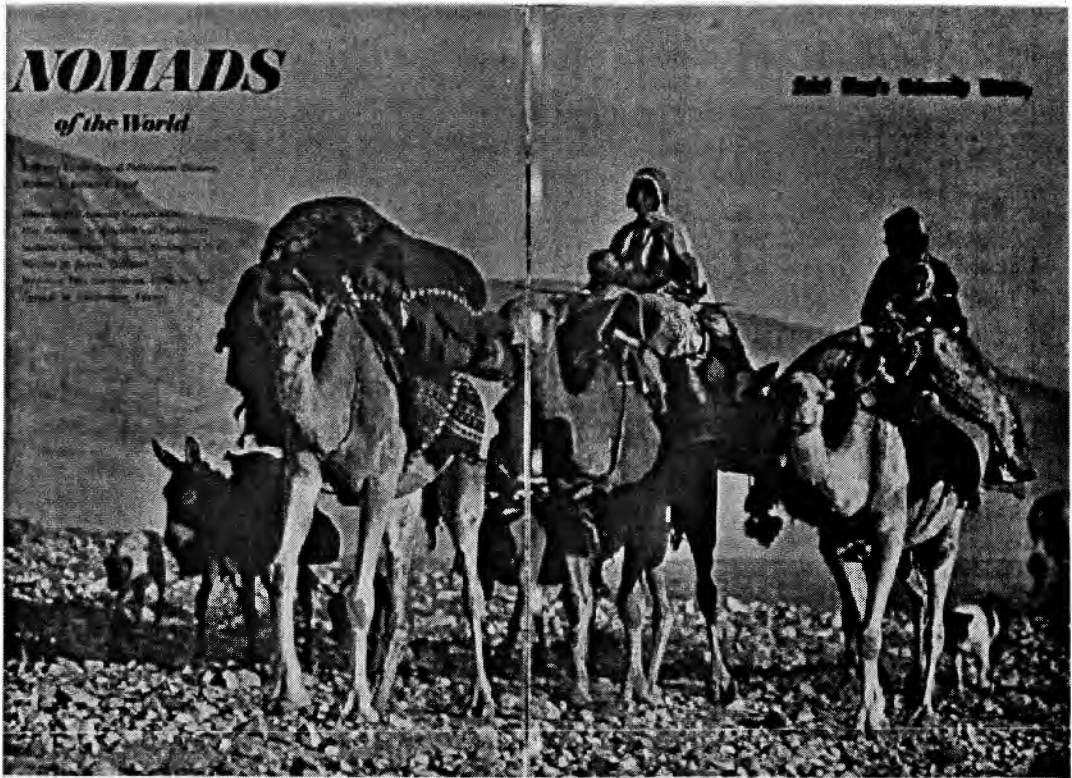


FIGURE 3
Nomads of the World
Nomadic Portraiture I

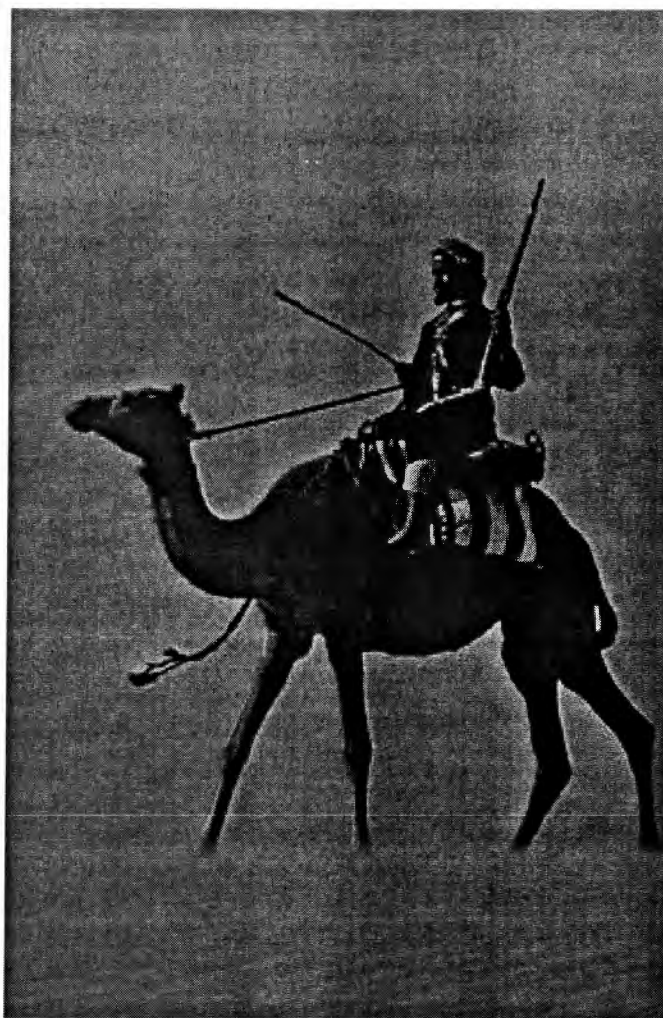


FIGURE 4
Nomads of the World
Nomadic Portraiture II

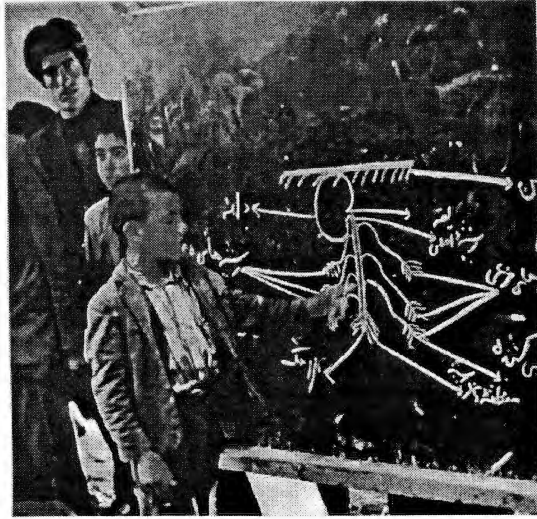


FIGURE 5
Nomads of the World
Sprouting

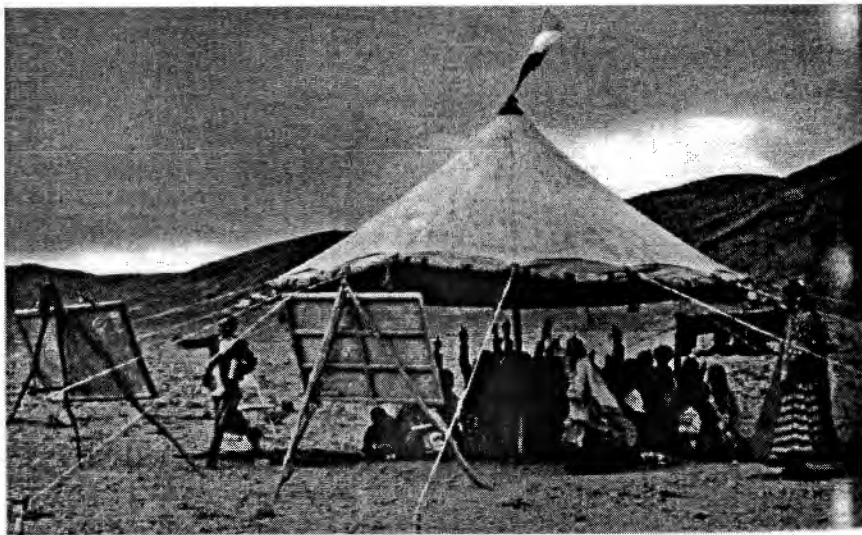


FIGURE 6
Nomads of the World
Tent-School

(97) that he attends (Fig. 6). As in the photograph of the women in the laboratory/classroom, the picture creates a mirroring effect between its human subjects and the objects with which they interact: just as the woman's posture in Figure 2 is reflected in the shape of the microscope, so the boy's own education process is represented both visually and symbolically in the anthropomorphic sprouting seed whose growth he elucidates. Here, however, the encounter between traditional and modern "worlds" is less starkly drawn because, unlike the dusky-maiden/sterile laboratory-classroom contrast of the first image, the scene of education places the young herder in a naturalized "nomadic" classroom—the tent-school which is, moreover, the innovation not of a cultural "outsider," but of the article's author, Mohammad Bahmanbegui, a Qashqā'i nomad who obtained a law degree and became Director of Iran's Office of Tribal Education. The pink and orange seed-diagram at which the boy points also contributes to the "tribal" atmosphere of this modern encounter. For not only do its lines and branches recall the stereotyped abstract patterns of "tribal" art (seen elsewhere in the collection in the body-painting of the Australian Aborigine and the Bororo tribesmen), but its color and placement align it symbolically with the "colorful," similarly placed "native" figure on the facing page who surveys the tent-school from outside (Fig. 6).

While such visually complex photographs heighten the diversity of nomadic types presented in the collection, another sort of photograph performs the opposite function, effectively containing this diversity in a single narrative of nomadism. More dramatic and more versatile than the mounted nomadic portrait (Figs. 3 and 4), because it does not depend upon any particular technology of movement, the panoramic caravan-shot

signifies the “essential” or “archetypal” nomadism of its subjects (Figs. 7 and 8).

Typically set off by a picturesque backdrop (horizon, sunset, desert) and taken at a wide-angle from a significant distance, the caravan-shot lays out the mobility of nomads as a highly stylized trek through two-dimensional space. Not clustered (as in the head-on tribal portraiture of Figure 3), but arrayed, the nomads signify their “nomadness” abstractly and diagrammatically—an effect which is heightened by the tendency of these shots to present their subjects in stark silhouette, with a light source behind them. Their abstraction of mobility is further abetted by the photographs’ abstraction of space through size, shape, and relation to other photographs in the layout of individual pages. Almost invariably presented as a two-page spread, often as a banner running at either the top or bottom of the page, the oblong dimensions of the caravan-shot are a metonymy for the ground covered in nomadic migration. More subtly, the two-dimensionality of the figures moving through the abstract space of the picture signifies movement by giving the appearance of time-lapse photography, much like Huxley’s arrangement of primate skeletons into an evolutionary allegory (Fig. 1)—only in this case, the allegory figures progress through space rather than time. Finally, these shots also suggest the relative importance of mobility to the *Geographic*’s definition of nomadic society. For their metonymic representation space—extending across two pages—visually “gathers” or “encompasses” the smaller photographs depicting momentary scenes of rest and relaxation below or above like objects in a saddlebag. The visual subordination of these scenes to the scene of the trek in the layout of the page produces a narrative of nomadism



FIGURE 7
 Nomads of the World
 Caravan I

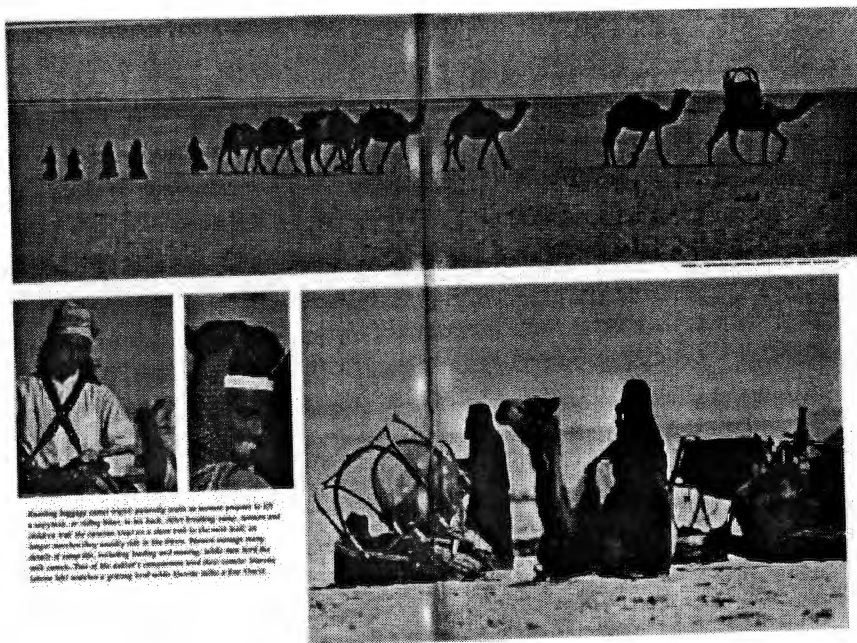
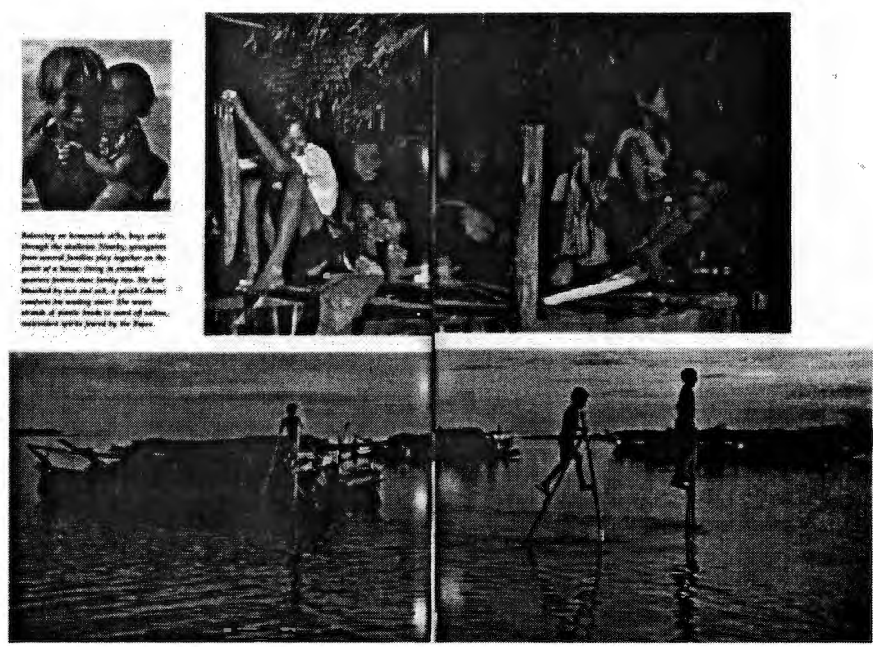


FIGURE 8
 Nomads of the World
 Caravan II

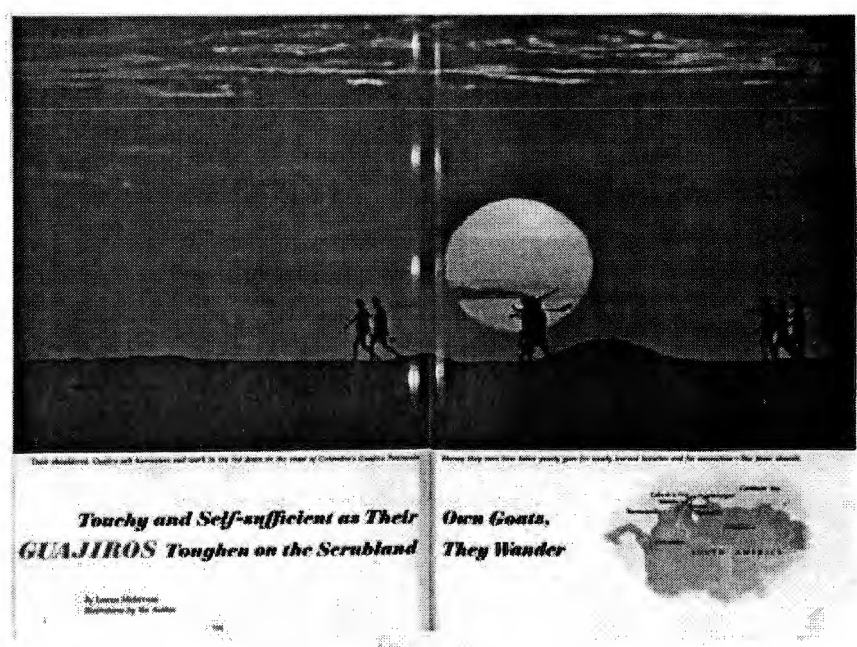
in which the sedentary aspects of nomadic life are secondary to the essential business of moving.

As its many instantiations in *Nomads of the World* suggest, the caravan-shot can produce the signifiers of “nomadism” out of a plethora of different—even resistant—cultural materials, and this is precisely its role in the *Geographic*’s construction of a master-narrative of general nomadism. In an article on the “boat-dwelling” Bajau nomads of the Tawitawi Islands in Philippines, for instance, the visual unconventionality of maritime nomadism (iconically represented by images of individual fishing boats and fishermen), is rendered recognizably “nomadic” through the contrivance of a maritime caravan-shot (Fig. 9). The boys “balancing on homemade stilts...strid[ing] through the shallows” (83), silhouetted against the *Geographic*’s trademark twilit sky, seem literally to emerge from the now-stationary houseboat on the left to produce, metonymically, a caravan array which the boats themselves do not. Even the page-layout contributes to the symbolic nomadization of the Bajau boats, as its dialogue with smaller images depicting scenes of rest with the encompassing function of the caravan-shot’s two-page spread is a visual quotation of the more classic representations of Āl Murrah Bedouin (Fig. 7) and the Lapps (Fig. 8). The title-page of an article on the Guajiros of Colombia provides another example of how a caravan-shot can mediate the integration of visually, and even categorically, resistant inductees into the collection of nomadic peoples (Fig. 10). “Anthropologists have classified these Indians as seminomadic, ‘temporary nomads,’ or ‘occasional migrants,’ for their activities fit no standard pattern” (162), the author admits, even as he notes the degree to which these (sometimes) goat-herders have become



Reluctant or handmade silk, boys stride through the wilderness. Heavy, primitive tools are used to play together on the point of a tent; living in crowded quarters forces them to live. The hair, washed by hot and cold, a patch (above) completes the working scene. The weary animals of people leads to most of nations, independent spirit found by the State.

FIGURE 9
Nomads of the World
 Caravan III



Touchy and Self-sufficient as Their
GUAJIROS Toughen on the Scrubland

Own Goats,
 They Wander



FIGURE 10
Nomads of the World
 Caravan IV

integrated into both Colombia's modern economy and the culture of the Nazareth mission that "hoped to change the children from *Indio* to *civilizado*" (170). The Guajiros's twice-annual journey to harvest salt occupies an ambivalent significance in the article itself, for although, as the technical director of the Concesión that buys the salt informs him, "the twice-a-year to the salt harvest is a mainstay of Guajiro culture"—from pre-colonial times—the salt harvest has now become the principal means by which the government can "inject some cash into their economy": "Goats are great for buying a wife but a bit awkward when paying for a spool of thread" (162). The role of the salt-harvest trek in the narrative of modernization is reflected in the allegorical opening photograph and caption, reading, "Tools shouldered, Guajiro salt harvesters end work in the red dawn on the coast of Colombia's Guajira Peninsula. Money they earn here twice yearly goes for newly learned luxuries and for necessities—like these shovels" (154-55). But the visual codes of the caravan-shot and the hint of more conventional noble savagery in the title, "Touchy and Self-sufficient as Their own Goats, GUAJIROS Toughen on the Scrubland They Wander" (154-55), work to contain these signs of modernization and any of the ambiguities of "seminomadism" or "occasional migration." The placement of the title beneath the photograph sets it in competition with the smaller caption, and the larger lettering leaves little doubt as to their relative weights and authority.

Such constructions of an abstract general nomadism through pictorial convention and the evacuation of modern Western nomads from the visual register of the collection are not sleights of hand, but a fulfillment of general nomadism's implicit utopian promise—a promise which has already been framed in the primitivist dynamics inherent

in both the Foreword and the introductory essay's textual assertions of nomadic universality. As Dyson-Hudson's article makes clear, universal nomadism has deep, and as this passage implies, perhaps even genetically encoded, historical roots:

For much of human history—even in hominid times—we have evidence of populations surviving by movement rather than in permanently settled communities. Olduvai Gorge in East Africa has yielded signs of transient settlement 1,800,000 years ago. At Torralba and Ambrona, in the limestone valleys of Spain, humans repeatedly gathered 300,000 years ago to hunt and butcher animals that migrated through the mountain passes. (16)

And as in all forms of primitivism, this venerable ancestry signifies a natural and original condition whose contemporary exemplars may teach “us” valuable moral lessons. “What is the right relationship between individual freedom and obligation to the political society that guarantees it,” Dyson-Hudson wonders? Fortunately, “[a]mong nomads, too, ‘freedom’ raises th[is] question that has long fascinated political philosophers, and citizens who vote, in societies of the West,” and we may find their answer illuminating:

More clearly, perhaps, than the rest of us, nomads see that freedom to make decisions goes step for step with accountability. They live, often, in a rigorous world where the margin for survival stretches very thin. Wrong decisions easily lead to disaster. The nomadic groups we see are the successful ones. The unsuccessful joined the sands of the desert, the litter of the forest, or the barren ground of the tundra long ago. (16)

Even as it sounds the keynote of this cautionary fable, the poetic touch of the last line confirms the elemental substance of its actors; the temerarious are absorbed back into nature, much like “the crowd of savages” who simply appear on the banks of the Congo in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, only to vanish “without any perceptible movement of retreat, as if the forest that had ejected these beings so suddenly had drawn them in again as the breath is drawn in a long aspiration” (55).

The primitivist subtext of the collection is spelled out more plainly still in Leonard Carmichael's Foreword, where universal nomadism's maxim, that "the nomadic life takes many forms" (5),³⁶ is deftly restructured into a contrast between modern and primitive forms, in which the latter provide classic primitivist insight into "fundamental" aspects of human behaviour. Thus, despite the affinities it will trace, the opening line of Carmichael's piece establishes the essential (and conventional) difference between modern sedentaries and traditional nomads: "Anyone who leads a reasonably settled life—as most of us do—finds a special appeal in the thought of far journeys and a life of travel" (5). Subsequent evocations of "people [in our culture] who move on with marked frequency" such as "[t]he modern Scandinavians who seek the sunny shores of the Mediterranean on a winter holiday," "retired residents of Maine or Montana who go to Florida in January," or even "the modern city-dweller as he turns his car for a Saturday outing on the open road"—a representation of the *Geographic's* projected "white, educated, middle-class" reader (Lutz and Collins 6, 214)—all exist within the orbit of this essential "modern" sedentarity, even if they periodically find themselves "fitting their lives into an age-old pattern" (5). Such recreations of the "pattern," Carmichael suggests, are manifestations of the "special appeal" we find in "the thought of far journeys and a life of travel"—an appeal felt equally (and tellingly) by the Romantic Goethe "who had felt the chill of north European winds," prompting him to write, "Know you the land where the lemon-trees bloom?... There, there I would go" (5). According to Carmichael, "the strength of this appeal suggests something deep-rooted in our nature," and for him,

this “something” is not merely sociobiological in origin, as intimated in Dyson-Hudson’s reference to hominids, but metaphysical:

C. G. Jung, certainly one of the most original thinkers of our time, wrote much about archetypes, or modes of thought and behaviour present in all of us and derived from the ancient races whose descendants we are. Many scholars dismiss this concept as unproved. But certain modes of thought and action can seem so fascinating and so compelling that they have an almost mystical and intrusive power in our lives. For many people, the idea of nomadism has just this kind of inner, unexplained, dynamic force. It is a rare person who can honestly say that he has not sometimes had an almost irresistible desire to pull up stakes and move on. (5)

While this archetypal “power” continues to make itself known in those who live a “*Wanderleben*, a roving life in which one follows his *Wanderlust*, or the siren call of the road,” it is most readily found amongst “nomadic tribes,” and even those non-Western societies “we might not consider nomadic at all.” These people, he points out, “[o]ften...move in response to changes of environment,” but the real source of their mobility is, as we might expect, more “deep-rooted,” and Carmichael—on a momentary sojourn from the Jungian realm of mystical speculation—enlists the recent findings of “scientists [who] have actively studied the causes of yearly migration of mammals, birds, and fish such as salmon” to make his case:

These studies also illuminate the movements of people who live by hunting and gathering food. Thus an annual rainy season brings changes in grasses and shrubs; herbivorous animals move to feed on these plants; and hunters follow them. If a herding life supercedes hunting, men move according to a similar cycle to lead their animals at the proper seasons to new pastures. Comparable cycles marked the life of many American Indian tribes, who would journey to rivers to catch fish that return from the oceans each year to spawn.

In passages like this one, the distinction between being “in harmony with nature” and being of it is rather slippery. And indeed, Carmichael slides easily from this to more

flagrantly dehumanizing suggestions of identity between “cyclical changes of the hormone balance in animals” and “internal biological clocks that are basic in releasing inborn migration patterns” in humans.

Ultimately, of course, Carmichael’s remarks are not to be taken seriously. They offer no “theory” of nomadism; their purpose is simply to evoke a sense of primitive and modern affinity through the expedient of a kind of generalized nomadism. In their own way, fish, Goethe, modern Scandinavians, and nomadic tribes all hear “the siren call of the road”—that is a sufficient basis for universal (“archetypal”) nomadism, and within this narrative, each one has a part to play. Goethe’s romantic impulse for sunnier climes aggrandizes the *Geographic*-reader’s armchair travel, and beneath the spatial north-south axis of his fantasy lurks the temporal-evolutionary axis of present-past with salmon at one end, Scandinavians at the other, and nomadic tribes somewhere in between (though rather closer to the salmon than to the Finns), adding a further layer of metaphysical weightiness to this collection of primitivist escape-literature for sedentary nomads.

If there is a difference between Carmichael’s and Dyson-Hudson’s primitivist idealizations of nomadism, it is that the latter’s is strategic rather than naïve. “Separating the sometimes muddled notions of nomadism and pastoralism,” Dyson-Hudson suggests, in a gesture that seems to set up a typical primitivist punch-line, “has the advantage of reminding us that the nomadic way of life is an ancient as well as a persistent human experience” (16). But where Carmichael hopes that recognitions of this sort will lead the reader to “a new perspective on his own experience” (5), Dyson-Hudson uses assertions of nomadic universality as prolegomena to a political critique:

Ancient, widespread, and varied as the nomadic life is, the forms shown in this book could nonetheless disappear in our lifetime, eliminated by fear, by shame, by greed, above all by ignorance.... [B]ureaucrats, who find nomads offensively untidy for their filing systems, often strengthen popular distrust. As new states set out to become strong modern nations, this bureaucratic irritation readily becomes official disapproval. Nomads who shun a part in the cash economy, who wear traditional clothing or none at all, who lack formal education, are considered as hindering the nation's development, as shaming it before outsiders. Discouraging, even abolishing nomads becomes a patriotic urge; but it also destroys unique skills, a unique commitment, and so destroys a people's identity.

(23)

In this context, the primitivist fable derived from the nomad's knowledge that freedom must be tempered with accountability appears in a more complex light. It is clearly directed at the unhindered and incautious "freedom" of state-sponsored settlement campaigns, whose actions, Dyson-Hudson warns, have deleterious and far-reaching consequences. Citing UNESCO's arid zone report on the settlement of Saharan nomads, he argues that

the world should not "let a region which feeds a million individuals return to the desert, at a time when a third of mankind is suffering from hunger."

There is a place for nomads in the world, often enough a place we cannot use without them. We must not steal it from them, for if we do, we reduce the richness of human life—we rob ourselves. (24)

Here, the rhetoric of universal nomadism serves not (or not only) a process of Western self-reflection—Carmichael's prediction that "the reader may find that he understands more of himself and also [secondarily] of his fellow men as he turns the pages" (5)—but a response to state-oppression in which the personal and the political meet and intertwine, working a variation on the strategy whereby "anthropologists [use]...the notion of the 'vanishing savage' to criticize the destructive intrusions of imperialism and its colonial regimes" (Rosaldo, *Culture* 82).

Dyson-Hudson's retelling of his initiation into Karimojong society fifteen years previously, when he was still an untried anthropologist, must also be seen in this light. At one level, his highly idealized account of the Karimojong and of this experience of going-nomad bear all the markers of the type of nomadic romance that captivated Fredrick Barth and Walter Goldschmidt: the evocation of nomadic freedom (15-16), admiration for "the nomad's readiness to celebrate the harsh places of the earth as if they were the finest, and to consider the perpetual struggle for survival the best life of all" (23), and a memorialization of their spontaneous kindness and generosity, which are contrasted with the anthropologist's own knee-jerk "uncharitab[ility]" and "unfair suspicion" (24). Yet, the idealizations inherent in the account of his initiation have the same strategic purpose as those which mark his more general comments on nomadism. In this case, they help dramatize his transformation from ignorance to knowledge regarding "the pastoral nomad's intense absorption with livestock" that "outsiders often find hard to understand" (10)—the very transformation he hopes to effect in his reader. Since Dyson-Hudson's "first field trip" (10) is not only an initiation into Karimojong society but a "rite of passage" into professional anthropology as well, the position he describes is almost perfectly aligned with that of the non-professional *National Geographic* reader, to whom he now acts as field-guide in order to engage his imaginative sympathy. His gradual acceptance by the Karimojong following his acquisition of an animal, marked by his subsequent renaming as "Aपालongoronyang—Father of the Roan Ox with the Tan Face" (23), developed by his singing of the ox's "praises at dances, as a man should for the ox which is his identity" (23), and confirmed

by the 30-40 mile journey of neighboring Karimojong concerned to rally his spirits following the death of his name-ox lest he commit suicide (24), dramatize a transformative emotional experience between cultures that is both a template for the reader's own journey and an allegory of neighborly "kindness" in the face of tragedy that provides another counterexample to the less tolerant "neighborliness" of aggressive states.

This allegory is developed still more intensively in the relationship between man and ox that Dyson-Hudson posits as the organizing principle of Karimojong society:

In their kindness, they revealed much of themselves. People feel such grief where they regard their animals as in some sense companions, tied to their own being—not merely as objects to be possessed and disposed of. Their commitment to herding springs from this sense of being-in-cattle, I believe. This merging of identities makes bearable an otherwise intolerable round of labor in harsh circumstances.... For a small herdboys, shivering naked under a tree in a wet-season storm with rain cold on the skin, the chill is more endurable because cattle are life and not just labor to him. (24)

In this representation of men who regard their cattle as "tied to their own being," the basis of their identity in more than simply name, is a second, indirect riposte to those of us whose "suppress[ion]" of nomads will not only "reduce the richness of human life" but effect a form of self-robbery (24). The "merging of identities" represented by "being-in-cattle," moreover, furnishes Dyson-Hudson with the ultimate image of sedentary society's imaginative responsibility to merge sympathetically with nomadic difference, rather than simply obliterating it through settlement. As he concludes: "to abolish nomads because they have other skills, know other things, hold other aspirations, and live by other customs than ours—in short, because they are different—is as unwise as it is unworthy" (24). It is not merely a coincidence that Dyson-Hudson records the moment

when the Karimojong “taught me my battle cry, which contained my ox-name, so I could assert who I truly was when I needed courage and charged my enemies” (23).

Of course, the political “charge” behind such strategic primitivism does not render it unproblematic; rather, the agenda of nomadic conservation itself could be seen as symptomatic of a particularly ambiguous moment in the history of “nomad”-state relations, where imperial nostalgia and political activism intersect in mutually reinforcing ways. Whether or not such speaking for “nomads” is merely presumptive, and whether or not the “conservationist” argument Dyson-Hudson outlines is either sustainable in practice, or even desirable (on the part of those people whose lives it would affect most directly) remain open and contentious questions, though the tone of recent debates is considerably more pessimistic than that of Dyson-Hudson’s article of thirty years ago. Speaking in a slightly narrower context, Khazanov suggests, for instance, that mobile pastoralists who neither “modernize” nor “diversify” their traditional economy, “face the risk of being further marginalized and encapsulated (like Bedouin in Egypt) or becoming zoo groups, attractions for romantics and tourists for whom the allegedly eternal and unchanging pastoralists represent ‘the other,’ the inventory of a living museum... Under these circumstances, social consequences may be destructive in any case” (Introduction xlvi; see also Lavie; Khazanov, *Changing*). As we have seen, Khazanov has his own axe to grind where “modern” incursions onto the terrain of pure nomadism are concerned, and his eulogies for the latter’s demise—“mobile pastoralism in its traditional and particularly pure nomadic forms, as it existed for several thousand years and the remnants of which some of us can witness in our fieldwork, is, if not already completely dead, then

dying. It is dying because it has proved to be incompatible with modern, industrial society” (xlvi)—reproduce the cultivation of nomadic “zoo groups” at a discursive level of salvage ethnography. Nevertheless, such comments problematize Dyson-Hudson’s own political project and its affinity with the nomad fantasies of “romantics and tourists.” It is tempting, in other words, to view Dyson-Hudson’s intensive involvement in *National Geographic*-style primitivism as a graphic confirmation of Asad’s suspicions that his calls for the dissolution of pure nomadism conceal an unspoken fantasy of the nomad, whose articulation is simply deferred. For even if there exists a real tension in *Nomads of the World* between Dyson-Hudson’s more strategic idealizations of nomadism and those which are products of the Geographical Society’s editorial vision, the former is rather too easily incorporated into the colorful cavalcade of the latter.



Any ambiguities and subtleties which may still be detected in Dyson-Hudson’s general nomadism are decisively swept away in the nomad-centric pop anthropology of art critic, traveler, archaeologist, philosophizer, and master-collector, Bruce Chatwin. For Chatwin’s oeuvre reveals the ease with which the discourse of general nomadism may become the ally of a reinvented primitivism on a considerably more ambitious philosophical scale. The outlines of this oeuvre, which will be explored in more detail in the following chapter, are sketched in their roughest, but also their most revealing form in a February 1969 letter Chatwin wrote to Jonathan Cape editor, Tom Maschler, outlining a project that synthesized his enduring obsessions with travel, anthropology, and art: a “book on nomads” which Chatwin intended as “a kind of Anatomy of Restlessness” (“Letter” 75, “I Always” 12). The book, as Chatwin envisioned it in 1969, was not to be

“a history of nomads” *per se*. Such a subject was too vast for even as encyclopedic a thinker as Chatwin to attempt, and also too dry—at least when unalloyed by the sort of quasi-metaphysical speculation for which Chatwin is alternately *fêted* or abused. He wanted the book to be “general rather than specialist in tone” and to answer the question, “Why do men wander rather than sit still?” (“Letter” 75). To Maschler he proposed the working title, “The Nomadic Alternative,” adding, “we obviously won’t use it. It is too rational a title for a subject that appeals to irrational instincts. For the moment it has the advantage of implying that the nomad’s life is not inferior to that of the city-dweller’s” (75). Indeed, it implies a great deal more, and much of the book’s thesis is already discernible in these opening remarks. If nomadism appeals to “irrational instincts,” then the answer to Chatwin’s organizing question must be that men wander to recover what the “regimentation and rational behaviour” of “literate urban civilization” have repressed (75). Giving a romantic turn to Freud’s psychoanalytic definition of civilization as a social structure which captures and sublimates libidinal energies for the greater social good, but to the detriment of individual satisfaction, Chatwin planned an analysis of restlessness as the neurosis of modern life, buttressed by a sociobiological hypothesis about the evolution of human behaviour. Drawing upon Konrad Lorenz’s comparative behaviouralist studies of humans and animals, Chatwin derived two foundational propositions: (1) “Wandering is a human characteristic genetically inherited from the vegetarian primates” and (2) “All human beings have the emotional, if not an actual biological, need for a *base*, cave, den, tribal territory, possessions, or port”—a need, he added, which humans “share with the carnivores” (77). On the basis of these postulates,

Chatwin spun a creation myth for the human species that aspired to nothing less than a metaphysics of mobility. As he put it in a synopsis of the argument fourteen years later,

in becoming human, man had acquired, together with his straight legs and striding walk, a migratory “drive” or instinct to walk long distances through the seasons;...this “drive” was inseparable from his central nervous system; and...when warped in conditions of settlement, it found outlets in violence, greed, status-seeking or a mania for the new. This would explain why mobile societies such as the gypsies were egalitarian, thing-free and resistant to change; also why, to reestablish the harmony of the First State, all the great teachers—Buddha, Lao-tse, St Francis—had set the perpetual pilgrimage at the heart of their message and told their disciples, literally, to follow The Way. (“I Always” 12-13)

On the one hand, Chatwin implies, sedentary civilization—whose emblem is the Western metropolis as materialist shrine—represents an imbalanced reification of the genetic dialectical imperative—in short, a regrettable triumph of the sedentary impulse over the nomadic. Yet the biological basis of his speculations also suggests that civilization’s false opposition of dwelling and wandering, like its equation of “home” with a fixed location and permanent structures, can never quell humankind’s nomadic urge to take to the desert or flee to the steppe because both desires, however seemingly contradictory, are instinctual and irreducible.

As even this brief précis suggests, Chatwin’s project employs an extremely broad, ultimately universalizing discourse of general nomadism. His proposal outlines subsequent chapters that would afford havens for all the exiles driven from the steppes and deserts of pure nomadism, and many more: “omnivorous weapon-using ARCHAIC HUNTERS,” “Australian Aboriginals” (77), “‘Herdsman’ (or ‘Pastoralists’),” “great nomad cultures” such as “the Scythians, the Huns, the Germanic ‘waves,’ the Dorian Greeks, the Arabs, the Mongols, and the Turks” (79), “the Gypsies, the American

Indians, the Lapps and the Zulus,” “nomads within highly civilized societies” such as “tramps” and “hobos,” “the Beja in the Eastern Sudan, the Fuzzy-Wuzzies of Kipling” (80), and “the Jewish diaspora” (82). Even this last, Chatwin admits, is “a daunting subject,” but he is undeterred; Chatwin welcomes them all, for all are further grist for the mill of a universal restlessness whose traces can be found even among the civilized, from “tramps” and “hobos” to the neurotic membership of “the International Set” of “mobile rich” who “wander—from tax-haven to tax-haven” (83). Echoing Salzman and Dyson-Hudson, moreover, Chatwin suggests an essential affinity between Persian nomads and New York commuters, particularly now that “[m]uch of the world’s population is on the move as never before, tourists, businessmen, itinerant labour, drop-outs, political activists, etc: like the nomads who first sat on a horse, we again have the means for total mobility” (84).

While such an expansion of general nomadism into a universal principle of restlessness cutting across the conventional primitive/modern divide might seem to subvert the temporal distancing inherent in representations of pure nomadism which reify the nomad as a singular identity, any trace of subversiveness in Chatwin’s theory is short-lived. For although the universality of the nomadic instinct briefly holds out the possibility of radical contemporaneity, the opposition between healthy and neurotic nomadism in Chatwin’s “Anatomy of Restlessness” immediately reinstates the temporal distancing of conventional primitivist hierarchies and reinvents the “true nomad” (76) against whose example all other wanderers—particularly the civilized ones—will be measured. “True nomads,” in Chatwin’s scheme are immediately recognizable as those

who are traditionally characterized as primitive or barbaric, and the two categories are rather ingeniously merged into a nearly seamless whole. That Chatwin should wish to merge them is not surprising, given his characterization of civilization as, variously, “an anti-natural accident” (78), an oppressive state that “was *lashed* into place” (79), “something to escape from” (78). But since the universal restlessness of Chatwin’s theory has ruled out the possibility of a simple opposition between general nomadism and sedentarity, Chatwin-the-romantic must seek means other than mobility by which to distinguish true (healthy) nomads from false (neurotic) ones, and to convince us that “the pastoralist ha[s] much in common with the hunter” (79). His solution is essentially metaphoric and turns on the notion of balance that is central to his theory of humanity’s apparently conflicting drives to wander and to dwell.

His model for nomadic authenticity is clearly the itinerant pastoralist of pure nomadism. “True nomads,” he says, “have no fixed home as such; they *compensate* for this by following unalterable paths of migration. If these are upset it is usually by interference from the civilised or semi-civilised half-nomads. The result is chaos” (76). The perfect dialectical synthesis of the migratory and homing “drives” that Chatwin finds in “true pastoral nomadism” (79) would seem to disqualify what Kroeber called the less predictable “primitive nomadism” of hunter-gatherers from inclusion in Chatwin’s class of “true nomads.” But Chatwin has anticipated this problem and solved it in advance with the help of Lorenz’s distinction between vegetarian primates and carnivores, who are, he claims, the genetic sources of the migratory and territorial “drives” respectively. Enter: “the *omnivorous* weapon-using ARCHAIC HUNTERS” who “can be traced from

the lower Palaeolithic to the present day” (77; emphasis added). Like the pure pastoral nomads, though less paradigmatically, these hunters have a way of life that combines wandering and dwelling: “They *follow* their food supply; they return home to *base*” (77). But this combination alone is not enough to qualify them as “true nomads” because the circuit of field and base makes them seem more like precursors to implicitly inauthentic nomads such as the neurotic, tax-haven-jumping “International Set” who must periodically make “an occasional raid on the source of their wealth—their *base*” epitomized by the “American expatriate” who bemoans “the prospect of a visit to his trustees in Pittsburgh” (83). What they lack in dialectical elegance, however, they more than make up for in symbolic value, for these “weapon-using hunters” are gatherers as well, and their “omnivorous” diet perfectly synthesizes, in symbolic form, what their slightly more awkward combination of wandering and dwelling in practice does not: the integration of vegetarian and carnivorous drives. Indeed, the abstract nature of the hunters’ symbolic synthesis of these drives gives them an ideal-typical gleam in which it is tempting to discern not only Chatwin’s conceptual ideal, but the figuration of his own omnivorous intellect. It will, after all, and despite a series of brief articles on pastoralists, ultimately be these hunters—already identified with “the Australian Aboriginals” (77)—who will command his attention in *The Songlines*, his only major work on nomadism and one which Roger Clarke has decried as the “shattered remains” of Chatwin’s unwritten *Nomadic Alternative* (Meanor 179).

Such a coordination of primitive and barbarian nomads into interchangeable instantiations of “true nomadism,” on the basis of their conflation of wandering and

territorial drives roots Chatwin's universal theory of restlessness in a rather conventional temporal opposition of primitive and modern that is simply overwritten by the healthy/neurotic binary. Far from dissolving "nomadism" into a general characteristic of human experience, this theory recreates the nomad as a mobile primitive whose function is that of all primitives: to embody and authenticate "natural" alternatives for the frustrated primitivist that, as Torgovnick argues, inevitably connote a "return to origins" (185). Beneath Chatwin's sociobiological theory of universal nomadism, in other words, we find a reinvention of the old nomad-sedentary binary in its most starkly primitivist form. It was there all along in the original distinction between the migratory imperative of the vegetarian primates and territorial imperative of the carnivores; for as much as Chatwin emphasizes the unity and equality of these primordial "drives," the connotative differences between vegetarians and carnivores ultimately represent fossilized deposits of the earlier, unreconstructed nomadic nostalgia which continues to animate Chatwin's more subtle theoretical pretensions. For their part, the benign vegetarian primates seem to prefigure "some Asian hunting tribes" whose "legends of a Vegetarian Paradise [preserve] a folk memory of our vegetarian primate days" and affirm our "lingering idea that eating animals is sinful" (81). But they also embody Chatwin's "true nomads" more generally, for among the principal similarities between pastoralists and hunters is that both "believed in a mystical bond between animal and man" (79)—a bond also implied by vegetarianism, despite taking a diametrically opposite form: the refusal to consume animals rather than the sanctification of their consumption. Conversely, the carnivore's "need for a *base*, cave, den, tribal territory, possessions or port" (77) seems to provide a

figure for the moral condemnation of civilization at its most predatory. In a passage with strong echoes of Toynbee, Chatwin remarks that “Mass extermination is a speciality of the civilised. The ‘Neo-barbarism’ of Hitler was Civilisation in its most vicious aspect” (77-78).³⁷ Admittedly, Chatwin does invoke the traditional criticism of pastoralists that, “from the techniques of herding and killing domesticated animals, they discovered those of human coercion and extermination” (79), but this censure pales before that which he reserves for Anu and Enlil, the Mesopotamian gods of “Order” and “Compulsion,” or “the architect of the Great Pyramid” under whose eye “2.5 million blocks were hauled up by fettered labour” (78-79). Thus, not only will Chatwin defend the nomads—who “have been blamed out of all proportion to the material damage they cause” (75) and who “have never (to [Chatwin’s] certain knowledge) destroyed [a civilization]” (83)—he will largely reassign their fabled despotism to civilization.

The primitivism underwriting general nomadism’s claim to universality in Chatwin’s thought is ultimately best illustrated in the notion of the “nomadic alternative” itself. For in this idea, general nomadism’s expressly anti-evolutionary orientation and explicit disavowal of primitivism are subject to a most surprising and symptomatic reversal. In a key exposition of pure nomadism, upon which his theory of complementary drives is based, and whose new origin supplies his proposed study with its working title, Chatwin makes his central claim for his theory’s rejection of the dynamics of temporal distancing:

The herding of domesticated animals was one of the technical advances that led towards the formation of Civilisation, but it was always combined with some sort of agriculture, and was, therefore, always reasonably settled. True pastoral

nomadism, with herds on the move all the time and no agriculture, was not a stage towards Civilisation. It developed as an *alternative* to it. (79)

Ostensibly, the notion of the nomadic alternative neatly dispenses with evolutionary structures. Reprising the original allegorical fraternity of Cain and Abel, it not only negates the evolutionary priority of nomadism by suggesting the contemporaneity of agriculture and pasturage, it also reverses the traditional representation of pure nomads as mindless forces of nature by ascribing agency to them rather than to their sedentary brothers from whose civilization they deliberately flee. The latter of these moves is the most telling, for in having the nomad reject civilization as a conscious choice, the narrative reactivates the moral structure of the Cain-Abel myth that Toynbee had exploited to such great effect. This reversion to a moral binary is a sure sign that this cultural rivalry remains secretly animated by its classic chronological dimension, for to present the nomad as the original critic of civilization is of course the primitivist's highest compliment.

Here is the first expression, Chatwin suggests, of nomadic ideology: through a bizarre reversal, this ideology reveals that Western primitivism—"the longings of civilised men for a natural life identified with that of nomads or other 'primitive' peoples" which Chatwin proposed to treat in a chapter to be entitled "Nostalgia for Paradise" (80)—is actually a second-order primitivism, the pale imitation of a principled aboriginal choice. A later article entitled "The Nomadic Alternative," which Chatwin wrote for an exhibition catalogue on nomadic art, suggests the function of this remarkable doubling. After rehearsing how, "On the steppe, from Mongolia to Hungary and beyond,

[the barbarian] gave up his agriculture and opted for a 'Nomadic Alternative'" (86),

Chatwin returns to a favorite, deeply personal theme:

There were...obvious attractions for the city dweller in a society where "all were born noble" and where there was less slavery (for it was too troublesome). In times of despair the "Nomadic Alternative" was too tempting to resist.... The eunuch Chung-hsing-sho, a defector to the Hsiung-nu, described the complications of city life, its useless silks, elaborate foods, ornate houses and tiresome social obligations; he contrasted them with the simplicity of felt and leather clothing, comradeship, cheese and plain meat. (89)

The generalizability of the nomadic alternative presented here—available to all of those who become disenchanted with civilization's silks, foods, and tiresome social obligations—is precisely what Chatwin has been seeking all along, for Chatwin's oeuvre is populated by a plethora of figures like the eunuch-defector Chung-hsing-sho whose flight from civilization to the primitive replicates and appears to justify Chatwin's own nomadic flights. To identify with the nomads directly would be to court the very charges of naïve primitivism Chatwin would evidently prefer to avoid. By making nomadism into an ideological "alternative," he is able to have his cake and eat it too, for nomadism, he can insist on the one hand, has never been truly primitive, even as, on the other hand, his own primitivist ideology is covertly authorized by the "primitive" primitivism of the nomads themselves.

Anatomy of Nomadism: General, Pure, Universal

Evolution intended us to be travelers... The few 'primitive' peoples in the forgotten corners of the earth understand this simple fact about our nature better than we do. They are perpetually mobile.

BRUCE CHATWIN, "It's a Nomad, *Nomad World*" (102)

Despite the perennial focus on spatial mobility in both popular and academic discussions, nomadism retains a profoundly temporal chain of associations and implications. Yet, as anthropological debates over the definition of nomadism reveal, the nomad's temporal relation to the "modern" Western observer is highly unstable. When mobility is the only criterion, as it is in general nomadism, the nomad becomes, in effect, simply a mobile primitive, and his temporal relation to Western modernity is defined by the binary structure of primitivism in both its cultural and chronological forms; where the primitive and the modern had been, the nomad and the sedentary appear (Fig. 11). As the examples of Chatwin and the *National Geographic* illustrate, by collecting hunter-gatherers and pastoralists under the umbrella of a common, loosely defined "mobility," general nomadism's characteristic feature is the formal effacement or analytic non-observance of temporal-evolutionary distinctions between what Kroeber once called "Primitive Nomadic" and "Pastoral Nomadic" "culture groups" (323, 325). In practice, this erasure usually announces a second, more general, but ultimately less complete, blurring of the distinction between primitive and modern "nomads," the product of which is a kind of pseudo-universal nomadism, which continues to feed off an irreducible primitive-modern contrast.

The powerful pull towards universality in a species of nomadism that defines itself exclusively in terms of mobility should not be surprising. As Ingold points out, perhaps betraying a touch of romanticism himself, "movement is surely the very condition—even the substance—of life itself: as Fernandez has succinctly put it, 'we move, are moved, or we die'" (*Appropriation* 172). No doubt; and Ingold brings home

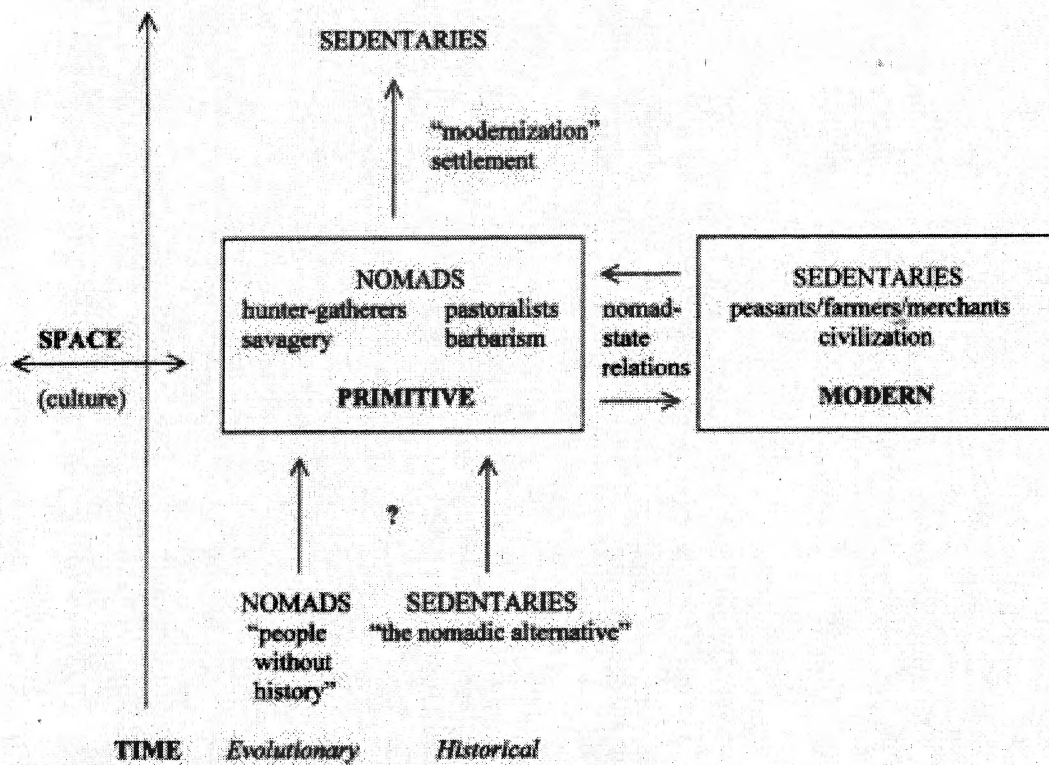


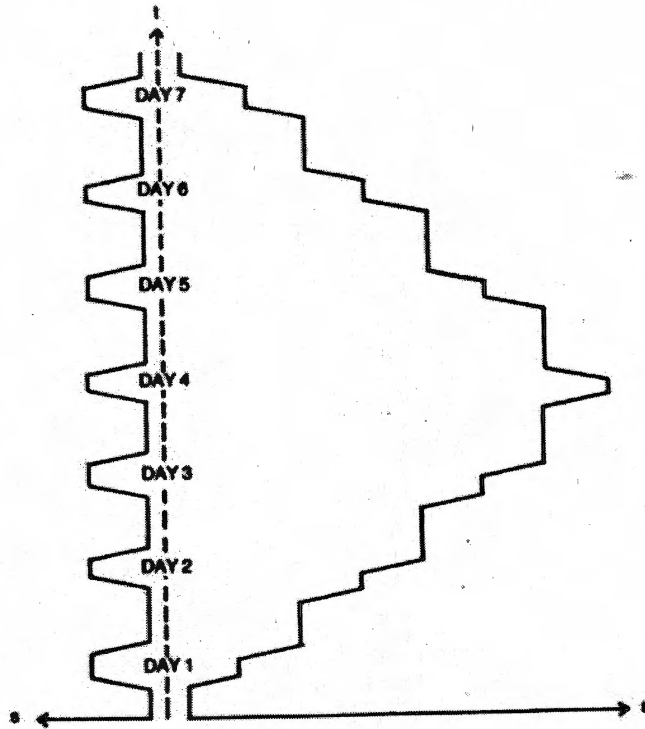
FIGURE 11
General Nomadism

the point that “cycles and rhythms characterize the life-processes of virtually all human groups, including those we would normally regard as sedentary” (180) in an illuminating comparison of the space-time trajectories of two hypothetical foragers: one “who always returns to the same place” and another “who rests at a different place each night before coming back to his starting point” (172) (Fig. 12):

Even this simple comparison...suffices to establish a point that is easily overlooked: the actual distance covered by the two foragers, over an equal number of days, is *identical*. Yet the first, if he kept up his pattern of daily return on a continuous basis, could hardly be called a nomad. Thus, sedentary foragers, who maintain such a pattern, may travel just as much as—if not more than—nomadic ones whose pattern of return is less frequent and regular. (173-74)

As this thought-experiment suggests, it is a small step from general to universal nomadism—and it is for this reason that Ingold seeks to limit his particular anthropological definition to include only the second forager: “The mere fact that most hunter-gatherers...‘have to move around in order to get food’ does not suffice to establish the nomadic character of their style of life” (174). In the popular sentiment that “we are all nomads at heart,” brakes of this sort on the generalizability of general nomadism are precisely what is avoided. The specific qualifications on types of movement from anthropological definitions of general nomadism all tend to disappear—all, at least, but the one which grounds the inevitable moment of authentication:

If we ask what moves, in a nomadic regime, that remains stationary in a sedentary one, the answer cannot be the individual—who moves as much in both—but his destination, which is moved “in his mind” in advance of the journey itself. In its material aspect, nomadic movement is that component of actual “on-the-ground” movement occasioned by the displacement of the point of arrival from the point of departure, and the nomadic track is a path connecting these points. Where the points of arrival and departure are the same, there is no nomadic movement, and no track. (175)



Comparison of space-time trajectories for two foragers, one who returns every day, the other who returns at the end of a week. The latter can travel further afield than the former, but the distance covered by both is identical.

FIGURE 12
Tim Ingold, *The Appropriation of Nature*
Space-Time Trajectory of Two Foragers

Ingold's point is that nomadism should be defined by the particularity of the spatio-temporal alternations created by the individual's movement towards an ever-shifting destination, but he has also fortuitously described the formula of universal nomadism in its "general" form. Rephrased in the metaphysical language of Chatwinian nomadic primitivism it is a reminder that, for some "true" nomads at least, "it is the journey that matters, not the destination."

When the nomad's mobility is tied to a pastoral mode of subsistence, as it is in the discourse of *pure nomadism*, primitivist platitudes of this sort become more difficult to sustain, and this difficulty may be attributed directly to the transformation pastoralism effects on the temporal structure of nomad-sedentary relations (Fig. 13). In the economic evolutionary hierarchies of the four stages theory or Victorian sociocultural evolutionism, the nomadic pastoralist constitutes a temporal mid-point between the "truly" primitive hunter-gatherer and the "truly" modern capitalist. Technically, of course, as the third of four stages of sociocultural development, agriculture had a similarly ambiguous temporal status, making it a privileged object for the special types of georgic idealization—such as the English country house, "feudal" values, etc.—whose complex trajectory Raymond Williams charts in *The Country and the City*. As Williams points out, however, the particular "structure of feeling" which the relation between town and country encoded in English literature of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries expressed (or attempted to "manage") the fundamental interdependence of these two locations. In this sense, agriculture thus enjoyed not only a spatial but a temporal proximity to the modern city that was significantly closer than the temporal distance between pastoralism and

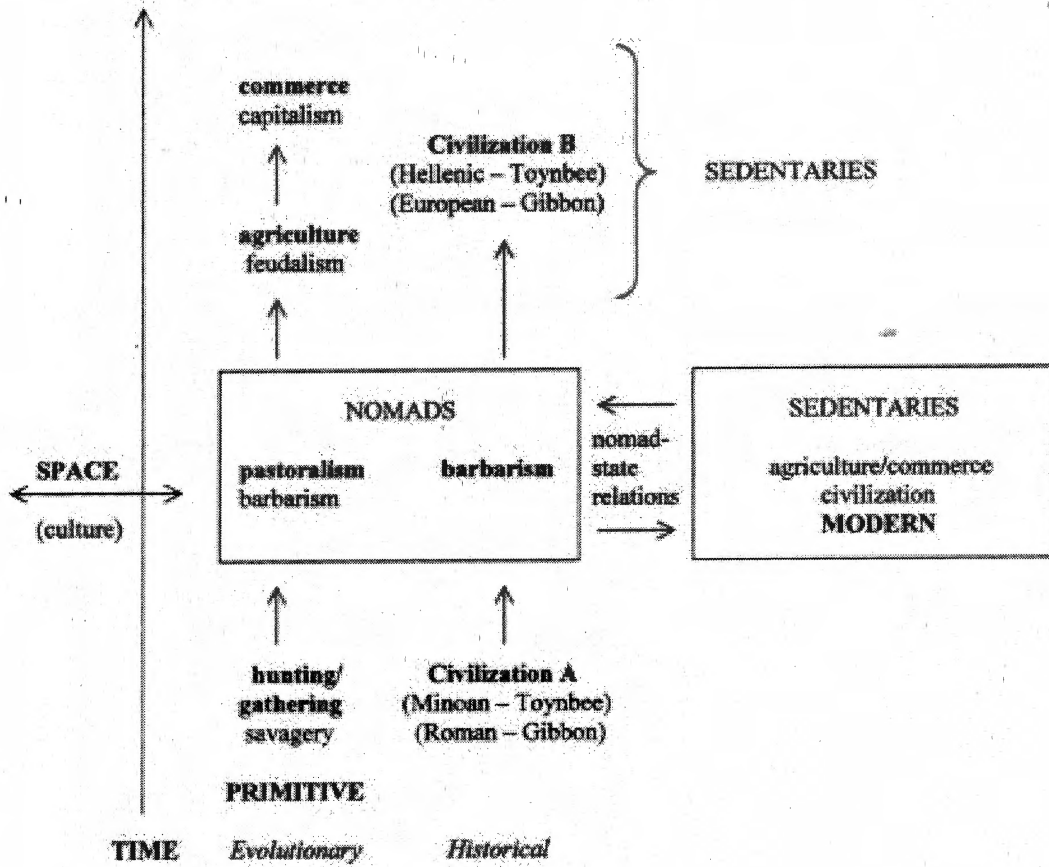


FIGURE 13
Pure Nomadism

agriculture.³⁸ Since agriculture and its political correlate, feudalism, were so closely identified with the commercial stage of society by the four stages theory, on the one hand, and since Victorian sociocultural evolutionism's anthropological focus meant that it was really only concerned with the broader tripartite distinction between savages, barbarians, and civilized men (as Tylor would have it), on the other, the nomadic pastoralist imaginatively occupied the temporal mid-point in what often amounted, in practice, to a three- rather than a four-stage theory of progress.³⁹

The pure nomad's temporal in-betweenness in evolutionary discourse was reprised and reinforced throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries by his conceptual affinity with the barbarian and the mediatory role played by the latter in philosophico-historical narratives of the fall and rise of "civilizations." In the source narratives of these encounters written by sedentary historians of the harried or expanding empire "from the ground," so to speak, the representation of barbarism typically replicates the binary structure of cultural primitivism (whether in its idealizing or denigrating mode). As Denis Sinor has shown, the ancient literature of the imperial frontier is an archive of invective against barbarians projected as the very antithesis of civilization and to whom "there are no horrors that have not been attributed" (58). Conversely, the nomadic Scythians, mythologized most memorably in Herodotus's *Histories*, are the quintessential embodiments of the barbarian as noble savage, seen through the idealizing lens of "hard" primitivism—that is, a primitivism which emphasizes the benefits of physical hardship, endurance, renunciation, and self-discipline rather than a more hedonistic dream of "soft" Hyperborean satisfaction (Johnson 252;

Lovejoy and Boas 10). In philosophical histories such as Gibbon's *Decline and Fall* or Toynbee's *Study*, however, because the barbarian is now seen not from the point of view of an afflicted or envious neighbour, but, retrospectively, from the dialectical perspective of a "civilization" busily involved in the creative genealogizing that Eric J. Hobsbawm calls "the invention of tradition," the barbarian (almost invariably a pastoral nomad himself) reprises the pure nomad's transitional role of mediator in civilization's march of progress—though now in an historical rather than an evolutionary sense.⁴⁰ The affinity between the pure nomad's temporal position in historical and evolutionary narratives of progress is confirmed by the presence, in each case, of what Womersley identifies as "metonymic" features linking the pure nomad (as either barbarian or mobile pastoralist) to the new social order that he will inaugurate (historically) or into which his society might one day evolve; just as the nomadic pastoralist's herds anticipate the importance of private property in commercial society, so the barbarian's adoption of the dying civilization's most precious habits anticipates the new civilization he will found.

For this reason, the primitivism of discourses of pure nomadism is more complex than it appears. The historico-evolutionary status of the pure nomad and/as barbarian, between stages of the progress of civilization or between earlier and later civilizations themselves, produces a structural tension between pure nomadism's spatial and temporal coordinates. Whereas the dyadic nature of general nomadism means that it organizes the nomad-sedentary opposition in such a way that distance in space (cultural primitivism) and distance in time (chronological primitivism) form mutually reinforcing binary pairs, the spatial binary of nomad and sedentary in pure nomadism is coordinated not with a

symmetrical temporal pair, but with objects that are constituted on a sliding scale of temporal distance. The “binary” opposition of sedentary and nomad in the discourse of pure nomadism—where the nomad is neither quite savage nor quite civilized—will thus support a more complex structure of potential meanings than it is able to organize in the more conventional (and symmetrically balanced) discourse of general nomadism, inaugurating the possibility of more nuanced—but no less allochronic—forms of primitivism.

The tension within the time-space structure of pure nomadism that is the source of its peculiar semantic difference entails, moreover, a second-order conflict between pure and general nomadism themselves. This broader conflict is clearly visible in the semantic straining of barbarians and pastoralists to burst from the confines of a general nomadism that attempts to contain them in the name of a simpler mobile primitivism. As we have seen, Chatwin’s plans for the ambitious—and perhaps symptomatically, unwritten—*Nomadic Alternative* provide a representative example of this struggle in their fastidious whitewashing of barbarism’s black reputation among civilized men.

What is a problem for the nomadic primitivist, however, has increasingly been viewed as an opportunity by a host of postmodern nomadologists. For the complication of the binary structure of primitivism by the ambiguous temporal-evolutionary position of the pure nomad bears a striking (but, I will argue, superficial) resemblance to poststructuralism’s critique of binary modes of thought. Thus, as we shall see in Chapter Three, the nomadic herder’s conventional economic affinity with modern capitalism that Chatwin so studiously undermines becomes a lever with which Deleuze and Guattari will

attempt to pry loose nomadology's "true" nomad from the more conventionally primitivist discourse of general nomadism, in order to divest themselves of the nomadic hunter-gatherer who is abjected as the primitive remainder of their postmodern, ostensibly post-primitivist and "anti-evolutionary" philosophical "toolbox." The irony of such a theoretical gambit, which sustains the operation of a semiotic structure still organized by the primitive-modern binary in order to idealize one "advanced" primitive in a bid to outmaneuver this very structure, is paradigmatic of nomadology's rhetorical cul-de-sac.

The title of the present chapter may thus be seen as a route-marker for the argumentative path subsequent sections will follow, for it is meant to signal the profound ambivalence entailed in contemporary endeavors to exploit the poetic dislocations of pure nomadism by turning the more complex temporal structure of this discourse against the simpler dualisms of its spatial dimension. The nomad, in both its guises, walks "in the footsteps of the primitive" in the sense that it follows and depends upon the latter conceptually, representing only a specialized, spatial (and in the case of pure nomadism, also quasi-temporal) defamiliarization of that recognizable evolutionary category. In both professional and popular versions of anthropological writing, this defamiliarization has been so profound that the primitive base has been almost entirely written out of celebrations of the general nomad as a sign of "universal" spatial mobility and paradoxically disavowed in more theoretically savvy celebrations of pure nomadism whose intelligibility remains anchored by primitivist typologies and evolutionary structures. Consequently, the abstractly spatialized general nomad and the ambiguously

“evolved” pure nomad still walk in the footsteps of primitivism as well. The shift from the primitive to the nomad that characterizes so much contemporary writing about the cultural politics of globalization and about postmodern or postcolonial “conditions” is not a conceptual evolution but a rhetorical regression. To walk in the footsteps of the primitive is also to retrace the path of primitivism, to be consigned to a trail that is implicitly evolutionary and inescapably allochronic; it is the same trail walked by Tylor’s resplendent human goddess, and like her, the nomadologist who walks it is prone to “backward steps” and “helpless stumbling.”

Chapter 2

Gone Nomad: "Transcendental Homelessness" Reconsidered

When versions of the primitive show specific historical and cultural variations, they expose different aspects of the West itself. Primitivism is thus not a "subtopic" of modernism or postmodernism: to study primitivism's manifold presence is to recontextualize modernity.

MARIANNA TORGOVNICK, *Gone Primitive* (190)

In her important critique of Western obsessions with "primitive" art and culture in the twentieth century, Marianna Torgovnick argues that, by and large, modern primitivism is symptomatic of a generalized experience of "transcendental homelessness." The phrase, borrowed from Georg Lukács, is suggestive of a profoundly nostalgic modern mentality that is, in her words, "secular but yearning for the sacred, ironic but yearning for the absolute, individualistic but yearning for the wholeness of community, asking questions but receiving no answers, fragmented but yearning for 'immanent totality'" (188). Primitivism, thus formulated, provides a kind of temporal-existential balm for a modern mind that is at once wounded, alienated, and unsettled, for the persistence of evolutionary associations, even after the discipline's Boasian turn towards cultural relativism, meant that "going primitive," like "going home," was "inevitably a metaphor for the return to origins" (185). However, this motif of homecoming in modern representations of the primitive, Torgovnick suggests, is not always reassuring. On the one hand, there are the essentially pastoral visions of primitive wholeness, which Torgovnick associates especially with the soft-atavism of Edgar Rice Burroughs's *Tarzan* fantasies, the zen-like "organicist, oceanic yearnings" (220) of Lévi-

Strauss's *Tristes Tropiques* and Lorne and Lawrence Blair's counter-cultural "tripping," and the transgressive homosexual Edens of anthropologists Margaret Mead and Tobias Schneebaum. On the other hand, there are the decidedly non-pastoral, neo-Victorian visions of primitive origin associated, archetypally, with Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, and subsequently with Freud's horrified retreat from the ego-threatening (and feminine, Torgovnick suggests) "oceanic" in *Civilization and Its Discontents*. Hovering somewhere between these two extremes, the violent sacrificial fantasies of D. H. Lawrence, Michel Leris, and Georges Bataille promise "immanent totality" by effecting a transvaluation of Conradian "darkness."

Torgovnick's reading of the primitive's shifting value as a signifier of transcendental homecoming for these authors is more subtly textured than I am able to indicate in so brief a summary.¹ However, her study's historical and conceptual homogenizations often circumscribe rather than enable the analysis of nomadism's shifting function in twentieth-century Western culture. At an early point in the book, Torgovnick asserts:

We have become accustomed to seeing modernism and postmodernism as opposed terms marking differences in tone, attitude, and forms of economic and social life between the first and second half of the twentieth century. Yet with regard to views of the primitive, more similarities exist than we are used to acknowledging. The real secret of the primitive in this century has been the same secret as always: the primitive can be—has been, will be (?)—whatever Euro-Americans want it to be. (9)

This is a rather breezy formulation, as Torgovnick is aware. She anticipates one possible objection in a footnote attached to this paragraph that lists "the various ways"—chronological, stylistic, economic, political—in which "[d]istinctions between

modernism and postmodernism can be made" (253). She concludes with the reassurance that although her study "demonstrates more continuities than discontinuities between modernism and postmodernism," it does not "ignore the distinctions...between modernism and postmodernism, which are real and worth respecting" (253). The verbose repetition of "modernism and postmodernism" in this note is telling, for Torgovnick seems uncertain how she wishes to characterize these two terms—are they periods? styles? economic formations? Often, it hardly seems to matter; the averred "distinctions" turn out to be irrelevant. "Postmodernism" rarely appears by itself in *Gone Primitive*—it is almost always invoked as modernism's "sequel" (9), usually in the throw-away designation "modernism and postmodernism" which seems to reference a nearly homogeneous twentieth-century aesthetic category (79-80, 83-84, 193, 245). When it does appear alone—elucidated by Margaret Mead and Stanley Diamond's flight from "alienating statist structures" (240-41), for instance—its distinctiveness from modernism can be difficult to make out. In other words, even the few recent examples of primitivism explored in *Gone Primitive* appear to be essentially modernist artifacts. This would not be problematic if, indeed, representations of the primitive had not changed substantially over the past hundred years; as we shall see, however, this is not the case. The presupposition behind most of Torgovnick's references to "modernism and postmodernism" is not only that, in strictly socio-economic terms, postmodernism does not represent a significant departure from a prior modernist moment, but that postmodernism's differences in "tone and style" (253) represent aesthetic choices that are essentially independent of larger sociocultural and economic shifts in "the era of

multinational capitalism" (253).² By so reducing the distinctiveness and cultural impact of postmodernity, Torgovnick's study makes it difficult to appreciate the ways in which variations among contemporary primitivist figures reflect a sensitivity to particular historical shifts.

Equally in need of unpacking is Torgovnick's suggestion that, as far as the primitive is concerned, there is nothing new under the sun, that "the primitive can be—has been, will be (?)—whatever Euro-Americans want it to be." Clifford suggests much the same thing when he writes, "the category of the primitive...[is] an incoherent cluster of qualities that at different times have been used to construct a source, origin, or alter ego confirming some new 'discovery' within the territory of the Western self" (*Predicament* 212). I agree with such assertions, as far as they go; the secret of primitivism's persistence is surely its superlative flexibility and responsiveness to fluctuations emanating from the source of projection. Clifford and Torgovnick obviously wish to emphasize the allochronic element common to all primitivist representation, and thus project a very general category of the primitive as the object of analysis, an "inexact expressive whole" (20), a "composite" figure that "conforms to no social or geographical entity and, indeed, habitually and sometimes willfully confuses the attributes to different societies" such as: "village life," "agrarian, herding, or hunting economies," "rudimentary technology," "the legality of custom," "the presence of traditional leadership roles," "the paramount importance of kinship in social and economic organization," "the importance of ritual for individual and group expression," and "a relative indifference to Platonic modes of thought" (Torgovnick 22, 21). As we have seen, the concept of general

nomadism, a nomadism defined exclusively in terms of spatial mobility, represents precisely the type of reshuffling of the primitivist deck that Clifford and Torgovnick describe because the binary (temporal) basis of the primitivist “alter ego” remains fundamentally unchanged, no matter which card is turned over and placed on top of the stack. Yet, as the evolutionary discourse of pure nomadism suggests, the relation between primitivisms can also be more complex, even if the resulting spectrum remains organized by a structural contrast between modern and primitive. As an identification of allochronic discourse, Torgovnick’s assignation of “agrarian, herding, or hunting economies” to a general “composite” primitive is astute, but it may unduly homogenize and thus overstate the interchangeability of those terms, for in this context, the binaristic basis of the temporal primitive-modern dichotomy is precisely what is, if not fundamentally upset, then at least internally diffracted. When set on a scale of temporal-evolutionary distance from the present, the non-Western “primitive” remains, by definition, at the furthest reach from the Western “present.” But between these temporal anchors a new array of intermediary others now appear—the pure nomad, the husbandman, even the feudal landlord—whose own “incoherent cluster of qualities” make possible a more complex and relational poetics of otherness. Torgovnick is undoubtedly correct when she asserts that the primitive always “tells us what we want it to tell us” (9); but such an approach to the primitive tells us very little about the relational poetics and specific functions of the “primitivisms” that appear as transitional points on the scale of evolutionary time. Even though these conceptual figures fall under the general rubric of primitivism, their associations can often destabilize (even if they do not

in any meaningful sense “subvert”) simple binaries between primitive and modern, and their rhetorical function is consequently rather different than that of, say, Margaret Mead’s *Samoans* or Bronislaw Malinowski’s *Argonauts of the Western Pacific*.”

Torgovnick’s foreclosure on what I take to be the quintessentially postmodern primitivist figure of the nomad reflects her study’s modernist bias—a bias that is symptomatic of her subtle but insistent defense of certain specifically modernist versions of the primitive. In a footnote that attempts to manage the problem of discursive homogenization, Torgovnick notes Clifford’s critique that Said constructs a “monologic version of Orientalism” and promises to “try to avoid making either primitive societies or the West seem monologic and [to] try to acknowledge the different accents given primitivist discourse in different countries, and decades, and by different writers” (253). The problem with Torgovnick’s “accentual” approach is that, rather than conceding that the primitive itself is always already a discursive construction, it wishes to hang onto “the reality and multiplicity of the societies we have tended to call primitive” (20). Consequently, her analysis of what the primitive reveals about the West’s own “obsessions” tends to lapse into a problematic kind of moralism that implicitly sorts out “accurate” and “inaccurate” representations of the primitive and seeks to distinguish primitivist representations characterized by “a rhetoric of control” (which is bad) from those characterized by “a rhetoric of desire” (which, although sometimes bad, is “ultimately more interesting” and, Torgovnick laments, “undeveloped”) (245, 247). Torgovnick evidently hopes that, if properly stimulated, this latter line of Western primitivism, “a history in which primitive societies were allowed to exist in all their

multiplicity, not reduced to a seamless Western fantasy,” could yield “alternative visions of primitive peoples and of the primitive more generally” (247), a conclusion that is tellingly less radical than Trouillot’s injunction: “the time is ripe for substantive propositions that aim explicitly at the destruction of the savage slot” (40).³

Foremost among the type of primitivism of which Torgovnick approves is the critical variety she discovers in the early volumes of the *Tarzan* series in which Burroughs uses the primitive “for social commentary and the projection of alternative possibilities” (45). In a chapter significantly entitled, “Taking Tarzan Seriously,” she insists that these novels “are not just an epiphenomenon of primitivism” but “are in many ways the best place to begin to understand what modernity had at stake in its encounters with the primitive” (46). This assertion is less strictly analytic than it sounds, for Torgovnick soon reveals that she too has something “at stake” in this encounter. “The Tarzan I like best,” she confides, “is the doubt-filled Tarzan, willing to learn from blacks and women, willing to ask and examine the question What does a man do?” (70). Although, in later installments, Tarzan ends up “affirming Western hierarchies in his seemingly irresistible urge to rise to the top” (70), Torgovnick claims a subversive potential for the early books’ “fleeting images of significantly altered relations whites and blacks, men and women: Tarzan joining the Waziri in *their* dance and functioning within *their* societal norms, and Tarzan stroking Jane’s hair and imitating the nurturing ‘maternal’ role” (69). Tarzan’s cultural sensitivity, in other words, seems to promise that “primitivism need not be either repulsive or oppressive” (71), but could “potentially make us change our ideas about ourselves and change our social forms” (46)—a potential

exemplified in the idyllic fantasies of the early Burroughs, but also present as an unmined seam in darker modernist visions of Africa such as Conrad's. Torgovnick's reading of "the circularity between the [similarly degraded] concepts of 'female' and 'primitive'" in *Heart of Darkness* (156), for instance, identifies what is essentially a negative inversion of her reading of Tarzan. Her elliptical conclusion, that Conradian primitivism is "deeply political in ways that the humanists and formalists cannot see and that have not interested the Marxists and anti-imperialists enough" and that "[t]racking down what Conrad means by 'going primitive' means traveling with *and beyond* Conrad farther than critics have previously been willing to go" (158; my emphasis), confirms this connection, harkening back to the explicitly utopian sentiments that attended her qualified defense of Burroughs's primitivism.

The primitive's utopian potential, Torgovnick implies, is too valuable to squander—particularly now. For although Torgovnick tends to homogenize "modernism and postmodernism" when addressing the consistency of twentieth-century primitivism, she ultimately makes one very significant distinction between these two moments. In modernism, the primitive could still function as a sign of difference, and thus figure the kinds of alternative to Western modernity Torgovnick seeks; "[i]n the deflationary era of postmodernism," however, when a "hodgepodge of the indigenous and the imported, the native and the foreign" is the rule rather than the exception, "the primitive often frankly loses any particular identity and even its sense of being 'out there'...[and] merges into a generalized, marketable thing—a grab-bag primitive in which urban and rural, modern and traditional Africa and South America and Asia and the Middle East merge into a

common locale called the third world which exports garments and accessories, music, ideologies, and styles for Western, and especially urban Western, consumption” (37). Formally, there is no significant difference between this specifically postmodern “grab-bag” primitive and the more general “composite” primitive Torgovnick identified earlier; both are fundamentally imaginary constructions assembled “intuitively” from diverse discursive materials. But Torgovnick often equivocates when speaking of the latter— “[t]he primitive has *in some ways* always been a willful invention by the West” (38; my emphasis)—in order to preserve a space from which to critique what she regards as a degraded postmodern pastiche of primitive signifiers. Her study, in other words, covertly reinscribes and defends modernist versions of primitive difference and authenticity to counter the emergence of a postmodern culture that seems in danger of being swept away by an attitude “of *sprezzatura*, of carnivalesque rejoicing, of celebrating the crossing and recrossing of things, of believing that contact and polyphony are inherently liberating” (40). Torgovnick frames this critique of “the postmodern *mélange* of us and them” (41) in terms of a salutary warning against the representational obfuscation of substantial economic differences between “third” and “first” world (40-41). But her implication that such differences could appropriately be signaled by the perpetuation of primitivist discourse—however complimentary, sensitive, or “enlightened” the new primitivism might be—speaks to the degree to which her critique remains in thrall to a modernist poetics in which the primitive could still appear to lay claim to an aura of authentic difference.

With an eye to challenging such foreclosures and retrenchments, I wish to complicate Torgovnick's reading of twentieth-century primitivism as both symptom and cure for transcendental homelessness by attending more closely to differences between modernism and postmodernism, on the one hand, and by setting it against the—at times competing, at times sympathetic—discourses of pure and general nomadism, on the other. I argue that the particular constitution of modernism's primitive as the temporal origin and "home" of modern man opened a space for pure nomadism as a competing discourse of otherness through which moderns troubled by the implications of an emergent line of what K. K. Ruthven calls "savage primitivism," celebrating the release of libidinal forces and primal energies, could construct alternative, more conservative visions of personal and cultural homecoming. In popular versions of postmodernism, however, the functional significance of pure nomadism changes. Instead of providing a more austere, marginally more civilized alternative to mainstream modernist primitivism (on the basis of its intermediate position on the scale of evolutionary time), it tends to become submerged within the simpler primitivist binarisms of general nomadism, where spatial concepts like mobility assume increased importance and the coordinating role of subtler evolutionary discriminations either declines or gets reinterpreted. This rapprochement between nomad and primitive in postmodernism, I argue, reflects a larger transformation in contemporary Western imaginings of "home"—a transformation which is itself symptomatic of the new experiential priority assumed by space over time that Fredric Jameson has seen as a fundamental feature of the cultural dominant of "late" capitalism. The autobiographical writings of T. E. Lawrence and Bruce Chatwin provide

points of departure for charting this shift in popular representations of nomadism from pure to general across the modern/postmodern divide, not only because their major works of nomadic autobiography, *Seven Pillars of Wisdom* (1926; 1935) and *The Songlines* (1987), are marked so profoundly by the preoccupations of modernism and postmodernism respectively, but because both are “celebrity nomads” of comparable stature in their respective periods whose popularity is inseparable from powerful personal identifications with nomadism. Their works thus constitute particularly revealing points of intersection between private and public fantasies of nomadism in the twentieth century.

Even as they exemplify how the poetics of nomadism may be read as historically responsive to the cultures of modernity and postmodernity, Lawrence and Chatwin point to ways in which the correlation of pure and general nomadism with modernism and postmodernism respectively is not nearly as tidy as it seems. Chatwin’s work in particular, like that of the postmodern travel writer and biographer Michael Asher, suggests that, rather than diluting the temporal poetics of pure nomadism, the postmodern turn towards general nomadism incorporates these poetics dialectically, employing them to new ends. For these postmodern nomadologists, I argue, pure nomadism’s temporal poetics of ambiguous evolutionary development and general nomadism’s spatial poetics of mobility form a mutually reinforcing system that privileges various forms of hybridity, impurity, and metamorphosis.

**Modernity’s Blond Bedouin:
T. E. Lawrence and the Mark of (Pure) Nomadism**

It was not merely his costume, nor yet the dignity with which he carried his five feet three, making him every inch a king or perhaps a caliph in disguise who had stepped out of the pages of "The Arabian Nights." The striking fact was that this mysterious prince of Mecca looked no more like a son of Ishmael than an Abyssinian looks like one of Stefansson's red-haired Eskimos. Bedouins, although of the Caucasian race, have had their skins scorched by the relentless desert sun until their complexions are the color of lava. But this young man was as blond as a Scandinavian, in whose veins flow Viking blood and the cool traditions of fiords and sagas.

LOWELL THOMAS, *With Lawrence in Arabia* (3-4)

With what astonishment must the Apollinian Greek have beheld [the votary of Dionysus]! With an astonishment that was all the greater the more it was mingled with the shuddering suspicion that all was actually not so alien to him after all, in fact, that it was only his Apollinian consciousness which, like a veil, hid this Dionysian world from his vision.

FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE, *The Birth of Tragedy* (41)

In its "official" form, as it was promulgated by the American journalist Lowell Thomas in the years following World War One, the "Lawrence of Arabia" myth did not encourage a primitivist reading of Lawrence's Bedouin obsessions—despite appearances to the contrary. As John M. Mackenzie argues, the myth tended to paint Lawrence as the "last exemplar" of a tradition of nineteenth-century British imperial heroes like David Livingstone and Charles Gordon, whose function was essentially propagandistic (155). Within this tradition, "exoticism was a necessary backdrop to heroic stature" (152), so even as Thomas obviously exploits his audience's appetite for the orientalist "Romance of Araby" in the famous anecdote about his first view of Lawrence in a crowded Jerusalem bazaar, the scene is played as a patriotic drama of unveiling and recognition. The exoticism of Lawrence's "Arabian Nights" apparel defers and enhances the climactic moment of *anagnorisis*, while the Nordic containment of Lawrence's desert affiliations is

emblematic of the official myth's desire to manage the potentially more ambiguous cross-cultural identifications that Lawrence's Bedouin disguise threatens to evoke. In a reading of cultural masquerade in Kipling's *Kim*, Gail Ching-Liang Low glosses the fundamental dynamics underwriting Thomas's rhetorical strategy when she notes that "more rather than less symbolic power accrues to the figure who crosses boundaries":

The change effected by native costume leaves Kim with a sense of adventure and freedom far beyond the narrow worlds of his white peers. But the narrative thrust in *Kim* is also to remind the reader of the real body underneath his clothes; the story harnesses the real purpose of cross-cultural dress to espionage. (230)

Significantly, Lawrence himself often encouraged such a reading of his "going-native." He repudiated his identifications with "the Arabs"—sartorial and otherwise—as politically expedient "affectations" (Mackenzie 162) both before and after his popularization as "the Uncrowned King of Arabia," most substantively in his now infamous piece on spy-craft for the *Arab Bulletin*, "Twenty-Seven Articles" (1917), where he advocates cultural mimesis as a technique of imperial control (Silverman 19; Tidrick 173). Moreover, Lawrence's confessional account of his Bedouin masquerade in *Seven Pillars of Wisdom* often strikes a similar note, as when it anatomizes two "classes" of "Englishmen in the Middle East": one, a "John Bull of the books who became the more rampantly English the longer he was away from England," the other, evidently a Satanic self-portrait,

subtle and insinuating, [who] caught the characteristics of the people about him, their speech, their conventions of thought, almost their manner. He directed men secretly, guiding them as he would. In such frictionless habit of influence his own nature lay hid, unnoticed. (354)

On this matter of Lawrence's "primitivism," E. M. Forster is unequivocal: "To regard [Lawrence] as 'gone native' is wrong. He belonged body and soul to our islands" (qtd. in Tabachnick 74).

Such disavowals of primitivist identification, and the propagandistic context of the heroic myth itself, have become central pieces of evidence in the political reading of Lawrence as imperialist inaugurated by Phillip Knightly and Colin Simpson's biographical exposé of his *Secret Lives* and developed, with varying degrees of hostility, ever since. Mackenzie, for instance, locates Lawrence squarely in the "liberal and idealist wing of imperialism" advocating indirect-rule represented by the Round Table group (157, 160) and charges that "[t]he myth within the myth that he was an 'Arab nationalist' or a 'pan-Arabist' is transparent nonsense" (156). Kathryn Tidrick concurs, calling Lawrence "a liar" and confessing her struggle as a biographer "between dislike of a man who assiduously propagated his own legend and a desire to be fair to someone who presents himself as too easy a target for ridicule" (170). As Said argues in *Orientalism*, however, recognitions of Lawrence's imperialism need not preclude an acknowledgment of his profound psychic identification with "the Arabs" generally, or with the nomadic Bedouin with whom he fought, in particular. On the contrary, the "unresolvable conflict within Lawrence between the White Man and the Oriental," which precipitates his quest to embody "the representative Oriental, unlike earlier participant observers such as [Edward William] Lane, for whom the Orient was something kept carefully at bay" (242), is precisely what lends the incorporative imperialist moment he represents its peculiar power. Taking note of "the extraordinary 'porousness' of Lawrence's

subjectivity” and “the ease with which he was able to discover himself within the Other” (12), Kaja Silverman’s critique of “recent discussions of masquerade [which] have stressed the dislocation between subjectivity and the role which is thereby assumed” confirms this essential point: “The figure of T. E. Lawrence eludes this paradigm, for there seems to have been no such distance or dislocation between him and the clothing he adopted during the different periods of his life” (11). Behind the veil of the official Lawrence myth and subsequent critiques of his role as an imperial agent, in other words, one may still legitimately explore Lawrence’s profound psychic identification with the primitive and trace a powerful metanarrative of transcendental homelessness in his attraction to the nomadic Bedouin.⁴

Since the early 1970s, when the reappraisal of Lawrence as a serious writer began in earnest to separate itself from the “fan club” atmosphere of the so-called “Lawrence Bureau” (Mackenzie 150), assessments of *Seven Pillars* have tended, either explicitly or implicitly, to locate Lawrence’s desert masquerade within the mainstream of a modernist tradition of writing about the primitive. Writing in 1973, Jeffrey Meyers was the first to situate Lawrence in this way, noting that, “Like Rimbaud, Conrad, Gide, D. H. Lawrence and Forster, Lawrence was deeply attracted to a more primitive setting and traditional culture, and he found in the Arabs a means of self-discovery through contact with chthonic and destructive forces” (11)—an encounter which Meyers goes on to associate with Nietzsche’s account of “Dionysian chaos” (111) and Lawrence’s own use of “self-immolation as a means to self-perfection” (107). Subsequently, Conrad’s fictions of empire, particularly *Heart of Darkness*, have assumed an increasingly important place

among the interpretive lenses through which Lawrence's attraction to the "primitive" Bedouin may be viewed. Thomas J. O'Donnell characterizes Lawrence's primitivism by contrasting it with "Kurtz's reversion to the horrors of savagery" in a way that nonetheless implies their complementarity:

Lawrence's struggle is precisely the opposite [of Kurtz's]. Kurtz resists becoming savage and loses value as he moves toward primitive darkness; Lawrence finds a source of value in the Bedouins and seeks to emulate them as he moves toward the blinding light of the desert. He is dismayed by his failure to become like them. (96)

Said reads Lawrence's obsession with the "primitive simplicity of the Arab" (230) in similar, but less sympathetic terms, noting that, "Like Conrad's Kurtz, Lawrence has cut himself loose from the earth so as to become identified with a new reality in order...that he might be responsible for 'hustling into form...the new Asia which time was inexorably bringing upon us'" (242). More recently, in his monograph for Twayne's English Authors Series, Stephen Tabachnick develops the Conradian comparison in a third direction, reversing O'Donnell's contrast and reading *Seven Pillars* as Lawrence's "journey into the heart of his own savage darkness" wherein the protagonist "increasingly identifies himself with the warlike values of the Bedouin and outlaw town Arabs and pays the price for this affinity": "It is the same journey Kurtz makes; if Kurtz goes farther, it is because he has no Allenby—and no conscience—to lean on" (89). Moreover, Tabachnick concludes, "Lawrence's pilgrimage into mindless violence" (89) through his encounter with the primitive yields the ultimate Conradian self-knowledge: "If there is any fitting message of *Seven Pillars*, it is Kurtz's 'The horror! The horror!'" (102).

As a means of grasping the peculiarities of Lawrence's "primitivism" as a form of transcendental homecoming, the Conradian optic of these accounts is both helpful and distorting. K. K. Ruthven points out that *Heart of Darkness*, as "the *locus classicus* of savage primitivism" (41), is merely the "negative," "decadent," or "ferocious" inversion of D. H. Lawrence's later, more optimistic and highly sexualized vision of personal liberation and cultural revitalization through contact with primitive authenticity and wholeness. Torgovnick expands on this linkage, arguing that the "ritualized enactment[] of violence and death" implied by Kurtz's headhunting exemplifies a "flirtation[] with boundary dissolution" which anticipates the violent oceanic yearnings encoded in the primitivist "thanatophilia" of Georges Bataille and his liberated alter ego, l'Homme Acéphale (151). For all of these modern writers, the primitive "becomes a means of access to 'the essential'" (151), the content of which is pre-rational, violent, and sexually charged. Conrad's revulsion at this elemental "horror" lurking beneath the veneer of all human civility makes *Heart of Darkness* the master-text of transcendental homelessness for modern primitivism to which the primitive transcendental homecomings of Bataille and D. H. Lawrence may be seen as responses. But because Conrad's primitive is not substantially different from that of either of his more overtly romantic successors, readings which position T. E. Lawrence as a sort of Arabian Kurtz implicitly project a vision of "home" on Lawrence's Bedouin that reflects the modern primitivists' preoccupations with authenticity and oceanic self-transcendence. Tabachnick provides the most explicit example of such a projection when he presents Lawrence's initial attraction to the Bedouin in terms of late-romantic "Mahlerian death 'trips'" (34) in

which the interconnected themes of love, death, and “the delirium of the brave” (as James Notopoulos calls the Bedouins’ “Homeric” warrior spirit) “all contribute to the loss of self-consciousness and to the opening of the self to the world spirit” (39, 41). This “merging of the self with the universe,” Tabachnick claims, “remains [Lawrence’s] ultimate, absolute goal” and constitutes his principal attraction to the “world of heroic glory that he glimpsed sometimes among the Bedouin” (41).

There is some justification for such a reading. Lawrence’s account of the Bedouin often does seem to reflect a conception of the primitive as the gateway to an authentic or primary state of undifferentiated being. Like Bataille, and especially like D. H. Lawrence, whose *The Plumed Serpent* he read and admired (O’Donnell 103), Lawrence structures the European’s encounter with the primitive as a contrast between the problematic self-consciousness of “man-rational” and the metaphysical confidence of “man-instinctive” (565). For Lawrence, the attraction of the latter is his “universal clearness or hardness of belief,” his refusal of “half-tones in [his] register of vision,” his “despising [of] doubt, our modern crown of thorns,” his incredulity before “our metaphysical difficulties, our introspective questionings” (36). The source of this enviable metaphysical state, as one might expect, is “unconscious” (36) and pre-rational: “their convictions were by instinct, their activities intuitional” (37). Because they deal in “axiom[s]” and “assertions” rather than “arguments,” the Arabs eschew “great systems of philosophy” and “complex mythologies” for the certainties of “prophets,” “creeds” and “revealed religions” (37). For Lawrence, the metaphysical implications of “instinctual”

religion are symbolized by the sublimity of the desert itself, the birth-place of the

“Semitic” creeds and a zone to which the desert-dwelling nomads have a unique access:

The Bedouin of the desert, born and grown up in it, had embraced with all his soul this nakedness too harsh for volunteers, for the reason, felt but inarticulate, that he found himself indubitably free.... In his life he had air and winds, sun and light, open spaces and a great emptiness. There was no human effort, no fecundity and Nature: just the heaven above and the unspotted earth beneath. There unconsciously he came near God. God was to him not anthropomorphic, not tangible, not moral nor ethical, nor concerned with the world or with him, not natural: but...a comprehending Being, the egg of all activity, with nature and matter just a glass reflecting Him. (38-39)

In passages like this, the Bedouin plainly embodies the romantic imperialist’s own transcendental yearnings for sacred experience and oceanic dissolution as he “unconsciously” embraces a cosmic Being who is, himself, likewise disembodied and intangibly diffracted. Indeed, moments earlier, Lawrence has presented his introduction to this envied state in a parable of would-be self-transcendence:

A first knowledge of their sense of the purity of rarefaction was given me in early years, when we had ridden far out over the rolling plains of North Syria to a ruin of the Roman period which the Arabs believed was made by a prince of the border as a desert-palace for his queen. The clay of its building was said to have been kneaded for greater richness, not with water, but with the precious essential oils of flowers. My guides, sniffing the air like dogs, led me from crumbling room to room, saying, “This is jessamine, this violet, this rose.”

But at last Dahoum drew me: “Come and smell the very sweetest scent of all,” and we went into the main lodging, to the gaping window sockets of its eastern face, and there drank with open mouths of the effortless, empty, eddyless wind of the desert, throbbing past. That slow breath had been born somewhere beyond the distant Euphrates and had dragged its way across many days and nights of dead grass, to its first obstacle, the man-made walls of our broken palace. About them it seemed to murmur in baby-speech. “This,” they told me, “is best: it has no taste.” My Arabs were turning their backs on perfumes and luxuries to choose the things in which mankind had had no share or part. (38)

It is tempting to read this poetically rendered reminiscence as an emblem of Lawrence’s primitivism. Here, in a condensed and highly structured form, would seem to be a map

of all of Lawrence's subsequent preoccupations. On the one hand, recalling Shelley's "Ozymandias," the perfumed Roman ruin allegorizes civilization at its most decadent—a decadence Lawrence will characteristically associate, as he does here, not only with towns, cities, and fixed structures of all kinds (including his own "Seven Pillars"), but with heterosexuality and with the fecund vegetation of this heterosexuality's mythic home, the biblical Eden and its symbolic correlate, the desert oasis.⁵ Later, for instance, Lawrence will describe his war-party's premature departure from "the green garden of El Kurr" (238) this way:

To the townsmen this garden was a memory of the world before we went mad with war and drove ourselves into the desert: to Auda [Lawrence's Bedouin warrior-ideal] there was an indecency of exhibition in the plant-richness, and he longed for an empty view. So we cut short our second night in paradise, and at two in the morning went on up the valley. It was pitch dark, the very stars in the sky being unable to cast light into the depth where we were wandering. (240)

Rejecting these "perfumes and luxuries," the Arab boy Dahoum (the S. A. to whom *Seven Pillars* is suggestively dedicated), seems to embody the metaphysical lessons Lawrence associates with the stereotyped "Bedouin of the desert" (38) and with Auda's own "long[ing] for an empty view." Following his sexual assault at Derra, Lawrence reverses his position and bitterly laments the loss of "the citadel of [his] integrity" (456)⁶; here, however Lawrence anticipates the dissolution of his body's citadel in high romantic fashion. Conflating the anthropomorphized "gaping window sockets" of the ruin's "eastern face" with their own "open mouths," Lawrence's narrative voice makes it seem as if he merges first with "the man-made walls of our broken palace," before ultimately opening himself to the numinous "breath" of the "empty, eddyless wind of the desert" itself. As the conflicting references to death and birth suggest, this opening is

simultaneously annihilating and creative; the wind's "murmur in baby-speech" about the "obstacle" of the "man-made walls" identifies the object of Lawrence's yearnings as a state of pre-symbolic wholeness—the divine "egg of all activity" (39) at whose oceanic promise Lawrence may as yet only weakly gesture with synaesthetic images of the "sweetest scent" that "has no taste" and the initiates' "dr[inking]" of the desert wind. Subsequently, in his more overtly "nihilistic" moments, Lawrence identifies this process of romantic merging with the nomadic journey itself, though now through the uncompromisingly scatological lens of the materialist rather than the sublime lens of the mystic: "While we rode we were disbodied, unconscious of flesh or feeling: and when, at an interval this excitement faded and we did see our bodies, it was with some hostility, with a contemptuous sense that they reached their highest purpose, not as vehicles of the spirit, but when, dissolved, their elements served to manure a field" (477).⁷

Beyond this oceanic/nihilistic desire for self-dissolution through the intermediacy of the bestial ("dog"-like) Arab guides and especially Dahoum, the figure in whom Lawrence's attraction to the Bedouin is libidinally as well as symbolically represented, Lawrence's ambiguously confessional accounts of the Bedouins' homosexual desert partnerships and his infamous theory of Arab "masochism" also bear certain superficial similarities to the savage primitive developed by Bataille and D. H. Lawrence in elaborately constructed scenarios of transgressive sexuality and transcendence through debasement, as well as in fetishizations of sacrifice or bodily mutilation as routes to "sacred" experience. Lawrence is clearly fascinated by the desert as a theatre of homoerotic cruelty, and by such "ethnographic" details of Bedouin life such as "the

ancient and curious nomad penance of striking the head sharply with the edge of a weighty dagger again and again till the issuing blood had run down to the waist belt” (425). Even the most neutral report of such a custom inevitably acquires an erotic charge in the overheated prose of *Seven Pillars* where its author routinely expostulates on how his Bedouin bodyguards “took pleasure in subordination; in degrading the body,” “had a gladness of abasement” (475), and found “[p]ain...a solvent, a cathartic, almost a decoration, to be fairly worn while they survived it” (476). In the extensive “ethnographic” chapter on the “Semitic race,” Lawrence makes the Bedouins’ vaunted metaphysical “freedom” and “belief” contingent upon precisely such “masochism.” “Each individual nomad had his revealed religion, not oral or traditional or expressed, but instinctive in himself” (39), Lawrence claims, even if “[t]he desert dweller could not take credit for his belief”:

He arrived at this intense condensation of himself in God by shutting his eyes to the world, and to all the complexities latent in him which only contact with wealth and temptations could bring forth.... His sterile experience robbed him of compassion and perverted his human kindness to the image of the waste in which he hid. Accordingly he hurt himself, not merely to be free, but to please himself. There followed a delight in pain, a cruelty which was more to him than goods. The desert Arab found no joy like the joy of voluntarily holding back. He found luxury in abnegation, renunciation, self-restraint. He made nakedness of the mind as sensuous as nakedness of the body. He saved his own soul, perhaps, and without danger, but in a hard selfishness. His desert was made a spiritual ice-house, in which was preserved intact but unimproved for all ages a vision of the unity of God. (39-40)

As the suggestively coextensive “nakedness” of mind and body suggests, Lawrence’s attraction to the Bedouin as a guide to the desert’s oceanic vistas has an irreducibly sexual component which has already been made explicit in a crucial earlier passage that anticipates Dahoum’s direction of Lawrence away from the desert-palace of the civilized

(heterosexual) self. "Gusts of cruelty, perversions, lusts ran lightly over the surface without troubling us," Lawrence writes of his Bedouin army,

The body was too coarse to feel the utmost of our sorrows and of our joys. Therefore, we abandoned it to rubbish: we left it below us to march forward, a breathing simulacrum, on its own unaided level, subject to influences from which in normal times our instincts would have shrunk. The men were young and sturdy; and hot flesh and blood unconsciously claimed a right in them and tormented their bodies with strange longings. Our privations and dangers fanned this virile heat, in a climate as racking as can be conceived....The public women of the rare settlements we encountered in our months of wandering would have been nothing to our numbers, even had their raddled meat been palatable to a man of healthy parts. In horror of such sordid commerce our youths began indifferently to slake one another's few needs in their own clean bodies—a cold convenience that, by comparison, seemed sexless and even pure. Later, some began to justify this sterile process, and swore that friends quivering together in the yielding sand with intimate hot limbs in supreme embrace, found there hidden in the darkness a sensual co-efficient of the mental passion which was welding our souls and spirits in one flaming effort. Several, thirsting to punish appetites they could not wholly prevent, took a savage pride in degrading the body, and offered themselves fiercely in any habit which promised physical pain of filth.

(27-28)

As Daniel Bivona argues, this passage accomplishes "a peculiar ascetic sublimation, whereby the sensual is somehow transmuted into a 'mental passion' which, working in the service of the de-individuating experience of warfare, ultimately promotes the high ideal of nationhood (the 'flaming effort')," even as the masochism of those who refuse such sensuality is "both [a] refusal of sexual pleasure and a substitute realization or displacement of it" (140). Moreover, in his ambivalent refusal to identify either with the "some" who "began to justify this sterile process" in the name of "the collective responsibility and group-brotherhood of the desert" (Lawrence 263) or with the "several" who seek "to punish appetites they could not wholly prevent" through self-punishment, Lawrence confirms the essential interpenetration of the "supreme embrace" and "physical

pain and filth” in his fantasy of Bedouin transcendence. (Both the “some” and the “several” are obviously masks for Lawrence himself, who assumes both of these positions at various points in *Seven Pillars*.)

Yet, the reading of Lawrence’s Bedouins as “savage primitives” in the modernist sense also reaches its limit with these transparently autobiographical projections, for Lawrence’s positing of a masochistic basis for transcendental homecoming clearly implicates the Bedouin in a very different relation to the primal libidinal “appetites” embodied by the primitive in the more outré erotic scenarios of other modern primitivists. Psychoanalytic readings of Lawrence’s ethnography like Bivona’s necessarily underscore the sexual element of its masochism, insisting that, “[f]or Lawrence, discipline and submission have assumed a powerfully attractive erotic charge connected with an erotics of self-negation” (144). Rutherford similarly observes that Lawrence’s “identification with the Bedouin had been motivated by the allure of the male body and by his desire to secure for himself a sense of belonging” (93). Like Tobias Schneebaum among the Asmat, Lawrence almost seems to discover a way “to justify homosexuality to his Western readers” and “emotionally and physically...[to find] a home” among the Bedouin (Torgovnick 183, 185). But such psychoanalytic readings also point out that Lawrence’s sense of homecoming amongst the Bedouin depends fundamentally on their ability to serve as emblems of his own complex “self-restraint” and “self-denial” (40), for as Rutherford argues, echoing Bivona, “Lawrence’s masochism played with the tantalizing proximity of his repressed homosexuality, embracing it and simultaneously denying it” (95).

This denial, I would argue, marks the difference between T. E. Lawrence's desert nomads and D. H. Lawrence's Mexican primitives or Conrad's homologous African savages and suggests a significant degree of artistic self-consciousness in Lawrence's manipulation of primitivist tropes. For unlike the savage primitivists of literary modernism, T. E. Lawrence's search for home is not a search for "authenticity" *per se*, but a search for "purity" and "cleanness," states which imply not the loosening of "unnatural" restraints (civilization, culture, identity), but, on the contrary, processes of discipline and control. If Bataille's *Homme Acéphale*—headless, stripped naked, his genitals replaced with a skull—may be taken as the zero degree of modernism's savage primitivism as an aesthetics of liberation, Lawrence's "affectation" of hiding his body beneath Arab dress might be said to figure, iconically, if not psychically, a complementary aesthetics of primitive repression. "[T]here were moments too strong for control when my appetite burst out and frightened me," Lawrence confesses in the introspective "Myself" chapter of Book 9 (580). Conscious that "there lurked always that Will uneasily waiting to burst out" (581) and desiring "to choke at length this furnace of my brain" (582), Lawrence eventually finds that the "voluntary slavery" of "[s]ubjection to order...was cold-storage for character and Will, leading painlessly to the oblivion of activity" (582)—a solution embodied in idealized form by the Bedouin who finds the desert "a spiritual ice-house" (40). In this light, Thomas's refrigerating rhetorical containment of the blond Bedouin's desert disguise with allusions to "Viking blood and the cool traditions of fiords and sagas" may unintentionally furnish a richer gloss on the significance of Lawrence's "primitivism" than initially supposed. It is of course possible

to speak of an “*erotics* of submission” in Lawrence (Bivona 137; my emphasis), but to the extent that these can only be articulated through an admiration for the Bedouins’ ascetic discipline—their “abnegation, renunciation, [and] self-restraint” (40)—his “primitives” more closely resemble the puzzling cannibals aboard Marlow’s steamer in *Heart of Darkness* whose inexplicable “restraint” in not eating him leaves Marlow utterly confounded, than the unrestrained primitive embodied by the “savage and superb” African woman (56) or by Kurtz’s frightening atavism.

The way in which the “primitive honor” that leaves Marlow incredulous in *Heart of Darkness* can become the keynote of Lawrence’s Bedouin homecoming in *Seven Pillars*, even though both texts display recognizably “modernist” preoccupations with the problem of the primitive as savage, reflects the interaction of two quite different primitivist traditions in Lawrence’s representation of Bedouinism—an interaction which stems as much from Lawrence’s ambiguous historical position as from an accident of geography. The Thomas-Lawrence collaboration of the late teens and early 1920s had sought to identify Lawrence, “the Uncrowned King of Arabia,” with an essentially Victorian tradition of imperial hero-worship—an endeavor which met with considerable popular success. Lawrence’s own extravagantly afflicted account of his wartime adventures, however, cast his imaginary monarchy in a rather different light. For some early reviewers like Herbert Read in 1928, the revelations of *Seven Pillars* exposed Lawrence as “a lame duck in an age of lame ducks; a soldier spoilt by introspection and self-analysis” (qtd. in Howe 20). Others, however, saw Lawrence’s account of the Arab Revolt as exploring the distinctively modern territory of Hemingway, Pirandello, and

Max Weber, for like them, Irving Howe insists, Lawrence presents a modern mind “confronting the sense of the void, the sense that human life had entered a phase of prolonged crisis in which all of its sustaining norms had lost their authority” (36). In Howe’s appreciation, Lawrence thus emerges as a new kind of hero, “a representative man of our century” who shows “courage and vulnerability in bearing the burden of consciousness” (36). Borrowing its title from Howe’s coronation of Lawrence, “a prince of our disorder” (36), biographer John E. Mack thus characterizes him as “a transitional hero, standing...between the neo-medieval romantic heroes of the nineteenth century and the moral realists of the twentieth” (xxiv). Tabachnick concurs, calling Lawrence’s life “a paradigm of the conflicts experienced by many late romantic, essentially nineteenth-century, intellectuals who had to confront World War I” (12).

Such characterizations of Lawrence as a transitional figure provide an essential context in which to interpret his primitivism, for Lawrence’s Victorian background furnished him with an imaginative sense of the nomadic Bedouin that was structurally, conceptually, and even temperamentally at odds with the Conradian primitive of the early twentieth century. Tracking images of Arabia in European traveler writing, Tidrick notices a significant shift at the end of the eighteenth century from the dominant tradition of representing the Bedouin as a “wild Arab,” notable mainly for his banditry, to a new convention celebrating the “noble Arab” as the exemplar of “independence, faithfulness and hospitality” (18)—qualities which made the Bedouin “a convenient metaphor for the complex ideas about personal liberty and national independence which were becoming central to European political thought” (20).⁸ Subsequently, the detailed reports of Swiss

traveler Jean Louis Burckhardt developed this convention into an elaborate praise of the “true Bedouin” of Nejd whose “purity” and “honor” had been preserved by their supposed isolation from corrupting influences in the central deserts of Arabia in the early decades of the nineteenth century (29, 158).

Significantly, the noble Arab convention implied not only a reversal of the previous stereotype, but its evolution. Because the code of the English gentleman, which emphasized “frankness, naturalness, and self-assurance” rather than “the elaborate manners of the courtier,” bore “a remarkable resemblance to the Bedouin manners Burckhardt described,” the Bedouin became an object of “sympathetic identification” for Englishmen, especially those with aristocratic backgrounds or aspirations like Sir Richard Burton, Wilfrid Scawen Blunt, and Lawrence himself. Accordingly, the Bedouin venerated by members of “the cult of Arabia” (157) appeared considerably more civilized than he had in his earlier “wild” incarnation (30-31, 53). Throughout the nineteenth century, such relative civility was bolstered by an emergent discourse of Arab chivalry that interpreted the Bedouin’s mythologized concern with blood and honor through the lens of the medieval revival—a movement and aesthetic school that had been a feature of British political and cultural discourse since the eighteenth century, and which was experiencing renewed vigor during the nineteenth century in the nostalgic yearning for a paternalistic and “organic” feudal order that characterized the Victorian protest against utilitarianism in the works of Thomas Carlyle, Benjamin Disraeli, John Ruskin and William Morris.⁹ Burton’s provocative praise of the Bedouin as a sword-wielding “*société leonine*” in which chivalric manners and honor are seen as the outgrowth of the

rule of the strongest (72) and Blunt's eccentric promotion of aristocratic ideals by "wearing Bedouin dress on his English estate" to "identif[y]...the Bedouin sheikh with the English squire" (125) epitomize this type of Bedouin medievalism whose ultimate expression was Blunt's revisionist claim, contra the early neo-medievalist Bishop Percy, that the origin of chivalry was not Gothic, but Arabian (Allen 39-40). To say that Lawrence was influenced by this literature would be an understatement. As M. D. Allen has shown, Lawrence's extensive early reading was drawn in equal parts from the English medieval and neo-medieval tradition—Malory, Tennyson, Ruskin, and Morris—and from the literature of Arabian travel—particularly the works of Doughty and Blunt. It is thus with good reason that Allen argues that "*Seven Pillars* can be regarded in the light cast by medieval and neo-medieval romance" (131); in fact, Lawrence himself solicits such a reading, famously retrieving Malory's *Morte d'Arthur* from his saddlebags when his enthusiasm for the desert campaign flagged and confessing: "It relieved my disgust" (495).

In light of the significant difference between neo-medievalism, which tends to stress the need for freedom to be balanced with "order" and thus typically rejects extreme expressions of primitive lawlessness (Chandler 31-32), and modernist primitivism, which tends to press through such limitations in its exploration of humanity's original freedom, the tendency to conflate the Victorian noble Arab and the modernist primitive in the accounts of Lawrence's work that I have been considering seems precipitous. Indeed, it appears to be the byproduct of quite separate debates over Lawrence's literary reputation in the second half of the twentieth century. Since Meyers first lamented that "*Seven*

Pillars of Wisdom is more often praised than read” (11), critics hoping to legitimize Lawrence as a serious artist have sought to identify both the man and his work with the styles and themes of European modernism, a strategy which involved simultaneously distancing him from his Victorian models. Prior to Meyers’s pioneering treatment of *Seven Pillars* as “essentially and primarily a work of literary genius” (11) in *The Wounded Spirit*, Lawrence was commonly regarded as a Victorian adventurer manqué whose infatuation with Doughty’s *Arabia Deserta* and the literature of the medieval revival made him a curious literary anachronism. Lawrence himself had a painful presentiment of this reception, even before the first edition of *Seven Pillars* appeared in limited release in 1926. In a letter to Sydney Cockerell, Lawrence reflected on the unsettling experience of reading T.S. Eliot’s *Collected Poems* while “correcting proofs of an old-fashioned book you can guess the name of” (*Letters* 488). Calling T. S. Eliot “the most important poet alive,” Lawrence wrote:

It’s odd, you know, to be reading these poems, so full of the future, so far ahead of our time; and then to turn back to my book, whose prose stinks of coffins and ancestors & armorial hatchments. Yet people have the nerve to tell me it’s a good book! It would have been, if written a hundred years ago: but to bring it out after *Ulysses* is an insult to modern letters—an insult I never meant of course, but ignorance is no defense in the army! (*Letters* 488)

The offending “old-fashioned book” is, of course, Lawrence’s own *Seven Pillars*, and its unfavorable comparison to the modernist masterpieces of Joyce and Eliot on the basis of its literary archaism proved prophetic. Leonard Woolf’s scathing review of *Revolt in the Desert* (the abridged “popular” version of *Seven Pillars* published in 1927) blasted: “So imitative of Doughty as to be near parody” (qtd. in Tabachnick 2). Meyers’s comparison of *Seven Pillars* to *Remembrance of Things Past*, *The Magic Mountain*, and *Ulysses* in

the introduction of *The Wounded Spirit*, clearly calculated to challenge Lawrence's perennial self-loathing and the narrow critical judgments it anticipated by reframing his "imitation" of Doughty as ironic revision rather than unintentional parody, set the tone for future scholarship.

Tabachnick's modernist reading of Lawrence's primitivism—first as transcendental homecoming then as its negative inversion, an Arabian *Heart of Darkness*—clearly belongs to this school of promotional interpretation that picks up where the "Lawrence Bureau" leaves off. His *T. E. Lawrence* is a sustained defense of the artist that includes not only the usual cataloguing of Lawrence's affinities with respected modernist writers, but an extensive "Literary Evaluation" Chapter in which it is proven that, with *Seven Pillars*, "he produced a classic literary work" (103).¹⁰ For the architect of the modernist Lawrence, Lawrence's debt to Doughty, and indeed to the whole nineteenth-century tradition of Orientalist medievalism in his construction of the Bedouin in *Seven Pillars* is far too great to simply ignore—Tabachnick will certainly grant that "Doughty's literary influence on Lawrence is all pervasive. For it is Doughty among living writers who provided Lawrence with the artistic 'clue to the heroic' [in his heroic view of the Bedouin] that he lacked in life and found elsewhere only in the far-removed Homer, Malory, and Crusader castles" (31). Yet, through an ingenious reversal, this debt is cancelled when it is read allegorically as the representation of the Victorian heroic tradition which Lawrence must ultimately reject as a fraud. Lawrence's drastic changes in attitude towards the Bedouin—his oscillation from Doughtyesque idealization ("desert knights") to Conradian disgust ("Yahoos," "brutes")—are thus explained as an

allegory of Lawrence's "disillusionment" with heroic ideals that *Seven Pillars* endlessly rehearses (Tabachnick 42, 46).

By positing a swing from idealization to demonization, such a reading has the effect of equating the Victorian noble Arab with the more ambiguous savage primitive of the modernist culture critics, as Tabachnick's emphasis on the transcendental aspects of Lawrence's primitivism, prior to disillusionment, illustrates. What this interpretation must suppress or distort, however, are the relations between multiple primitive figures within the narrative and the distinctiveness of their conceptual structures. What it obscures, in other words, is the degree to which Lawrence actively reinterprets the neo-medieval Bedouin of his Victorian predecessors through the optic of savage primitivism in ways that do not imply simple substitution or reversal, but relative degrees of civility and competing models of "home." Even if the oscillation between attraction and repulsion to the Bedouin means that Lawrence ultimately rejects a certain fantasy of nomadism, this rejection must be understood as his response to the breakdown of a projected solution to transcendental homelessness that has never been "primitive" in the Conradian sense at all, but a slightly more civilized alternative—a possibility contingent in the first place upon the pure nomad's special evolutionary position as an intermediary between the abjectly primitive and the decadently civilized. Of course, such a reinterpretation on Lawrence's part in no way compromises the conceptual coherence of these terms as "primitive." Every primitivist figure is subject both to praise and censure, as well as to "savage" and "noble" or "hard" and "soft" manifestations. What makes Lawrence's use of nomadism particularly noteworthy (and prescient) is that it is rooted in

the assumption that “hard” primitivism, as embodied in the pure nomad’s nobility and austerity, represents an evolutionary advance over brute savagery and thus projects a sort of primitivist revisionism that becomes a significant feature of postmodern nomadology.

In *Seven Pillars*, Lawrence develops a nomadic alternative to primitive homecoming by setting both possibilities on a single scale of “racial” development whose coordinates reflect an essentially Nietzschean problematic of artistic drives and their implication in larger cultural narratives of decadence and renewal. Like his colleague at Basel, Jacob Burkhardt, Nietzsche framed a genealogical critique of Christian Europe with an idealization of ancient Greece at one end, and a prediction of Hellenic cultural renewal at the other. Like Burkhardt, moreover, his praise of Hellenism was rooted in an image of robust humanity and characterized by the vigorous embrace of life “beyond good and evil” whose presence he discerned in the tragic affirmation of Sophoclean drama.¹¹ Nietzsche was later to identify the elements of tragic affirmation with the will to power itself. In *The Birth of Tragedy*, however, he explained the Greek ideal as a synthesis of complementary instinctual drives: the Dionysian and the Apollonian. The former receives its name and principal features from pagan festivals in which “the most savage natural instincts were unleashed, including even that horrible mixture of sensuality and cruelty” that Nietzsche associates with intoxication, ecstasy, and destruction—“the real ‘witches’ brew” (39). Conversely, the shining image of the “sculptor god” Apollo, “rising full of pride [and holding] out the Gorgon’s head to this grotesquely uncouth Dionysian power” epitomizes the “measured restraint” and “freedom for wilder emotions” Nietzsche attributes to the form-giving function of the latter drive

(39). As even so cursory an overview indicates, Nietzsche was anything but a savage primitivist; his view of human nature was closer to Hobbes's than to Rousseau's and he repeatedly insisted that the primordial Dionysian Greek "needed to become Apollinian [sic]" (*Will* 540)—but only so much.¹² For Greek society became decadent precisely when the form-making drive overwhelmed the Dionysian instincts, giving birth to a grim new type of humanity: "theoretical man," the ancestor of modern Europeans and the prototype of Lawrence's "man-rational." Although Nietzsche identifies the beginning of Greek decline with the theoretical optimism of Socrates, it is Plato's relocation of reality to a world of ideal forms that for him most starkly prefigures the life-denying metaphysics of Christianity whose founding myth was only just beginning to crumble in nineteenth-century Europe.

Insofar as Nietzsche envisioned cultural renewal as a contemporary recommitment to pre-Socratic balance following the collapse of decadent culture, his scheme was a *temporal* structure of critical nostalgia which sought, like all "*nostos*-theories," to use "the past as a stick with which to beat the present" (Perl 13). But the cultural correlates of Nietzsche's polarities suggest that the renaissance he envisioned was not only historical, but "Oriental," drawing heavily upon the romantic idea of "the regeneration of Europe by Asia" (Said, *Orientalism* 115). If Apollo, in his negative form-giving aspect is associated with the imperial terror of Rome and its decadent European legacy, Dionysus has a consistently Asian association in Nietzsche's work, originating in the orgiastic festivals of Asia Minor, Babylon, and Sanchaia and leading (if left unchecked) to the "will-negating" path of Indian Buddhism. "The Greeks succeeded

in inventing a third form," Nietzsche proclaimed, precisely because they were located—geographically and temperamentally—"between India and Rome" (*Birth* 125). The typology of cultures accompanying Nietzsche's diagnosis of European decadence in *Beyond Good and Evil*, further maps this contrast between a pallid West and a fevered Asia onto an internal contrast between Northern and Southern Europe so that, in a tour de force of cultural, psychological, geographic, and historical compression Nietzsche exhorts humanity

to rediscover the South in one and to spread out above one a bright, glittering, mysterious southern sky; to reconquer southern health and hidden powerfulness of soul; step by step to become more comprehensive, more supranational, more European, more Near Eastern, finally more *Greek*—for the Greek was the first great union and synthesis of everything Near Eastern, and on that account the *inception* of the European soul, [but also] the discovery of *our "new world"*: whosoever lives under such imperatives, who knows what he may not encounter one day? Perhaps—a *new day!* (*Will* 542)

In his important study of the *Heirs of Dionysus*, Foster points out that for some modernists, Nietzsche's optimistic "glorification of the tragic Greeks could encourage a version of primitivism" emphasizing "the Dionysian element lost to the modern world yet necessary for a fully integrated personality" (110)—D. H. Lawrence's "presentation of a cultural rebirth [which] relies on Dionysian primitivism" in *The Plumed Serpent* provides his prime example (113). In such works, the primitive typically embodies the Dionysian principle in its "unalloyed" form, and rather than serving as one element in a synthesis, often seems to become the vehicle for a celebration of "basic aggressive and sexual drives in their most brutal degraded forms" (Foster 48).

T. E. Lawrence's allusion to his own will to power in the romantic apostrophe to "S. A." in the opening poem of *Seven Pillars*—"I loved you, so I drew these tides of men

into my hands / and wrote my will across the sky in stars / To earn you Freedom” (1-3)—clearly situates him within the modernist line of Dionysian heirs. As he confided in a letter to his friend, the publisher Edward Garnett in 1922, the would-be prophet hoped to make *Seven Pillars* worthy of a place alongside Nietzsche’s *Zarathustra* on his shelf of “Titanic” books. Yet, T. E. Lawrence’s adoption of Nietzschean themes was evidently more attentive than D. H. Lawrence’s to the subtle question of balance and synthesis. For in spite of Meyers’s hyperbolic characterization of the former as “a Faustian seeker to the extremes of madness...[who], more than any other modern figure, represents an intellectual adoption and actual embodiment of Nietzsche’s ideas...ultimately destroyed by his Dionysian chaos” (111), T. E. Lawrence, like Nietzsche himself, remained profoundly uncomfortable with the type of “extreme” Dionysian primitivism that so fascinated Conrad and D. H. Lawrence (Foster 48). Ruthven notes that “[D. H.] Lawrence is in agreement with Conrad in regarding the triumph of Apollo as something peculiar to nineteenth-century Europe, and like Conrad he thinks of Africa as the one place where Dionysus, the Savage God, or whatever one calls him, survives in all his ancient power” (50). It seems telling, therefore, that the “cleanliness” of Lawrence’s deserts in *Seven Pillars* should perennially be threatened by the specter of a specifically African savagery from which Lawrence recoils in a parenthetical comment on the cultural variants of Islam:

It had avoided metaphysics, except in the introspective mysticism of Iranian devotees: but in Africa it had taken on colours of fetishism (to express in a loose word the varied animalities of the dark continent)... (365)¹³

The threat of a primitive African “fetishism” can also be detected in Lawrence’s account of his self-mortifying insistence on “tramping all day restlessly up and down [the] coral paths [of Wejh] in sandals or barefoot, hardening [his] feet, getting by slow degrees the power to walk with little pain over sharp and burning ground”:

Poor Arabs wondered why I had not mare; and I forbore to puzzle them by incomprehensible talk of hardening myself, or confess I would rather walk than ride for sparing of animals: yet the first was true and the second true. Something hurtful to my pride, disagreeable, rose at the sight of these lower forms of life. Their existence struck a servile reflection upon our human kind: the style in which a God would look on us; and to make use of them, to lie under an avoidable obligation to them, seemed to me shameful. It was as with the Negroes, tom-tom playing themselves to red madness each night under the ridge. Their faces, being clearly different from our own, were tolerable; but it hurt that they should possess exact counterparts of all our bodies. (175-76)

Lawrence seems almost to quote Marlow’s famous affirmation of “kinship” with the “wild and passionate uproar” of African savagery in *Heart of Darkness* (32), and it is difficult to imagine that Lawrence did not have this scene in mind when describing his “hurt.” Noting the parallel in his excavation of the Conradian subtext of *Seven Pillars*, Tabachnick attempts to defuse the “negative, stereotypical element” of the passage, arguing that it does not convey “blind racism” but “Lawrence’s shock of immersion in a foreign culture” that he experiences as a threat to his identity (88). Tabachnick implies that such “shocks,” in which English imperialists “recognize themselves in the tribesmen rather than feeling ‘above’ them,” destabilize their identity to such a degree that the question of racism becomes moot. Yet his selective quotation of the Conrad passage to the point of distortion¹⁴ and the slippage of his own discourse into the register of Conradian racism—when “recognizing themselves in the tribesmen” slides incautiously into the claim that, “As the book progresses, Lawrence the Oxford aesthete experiences

more and more frequently this journey into the heart of *his own* savage darkness and becomes more and more capable of unquestioning brutality” (89; my emphasis)—seriously undermine the defense. In any case, Lawrence’s effortless analogizing of “lower forms of life” such as animals with “the Negroes, tom-tom playing themselves to red madness each night” not only recalls the pounding drumbeats of Africa’s “heart of darkness” in Conrad’s novella, but the bestial nature attributed to the Africans themselves, the “black and incomprehensible frenzy” that “howled leaped, and spun,” which leave Marlow and his crew “secretly appalled, as sane men would be before an enthusiastic outbreak in a madhouse” (32). With such evocations of Dionysian “frenzy,” *Seven Pillars* decisively rejects the discourse of primitivist “authenticity” as a desirable transcendental home.

Lawrence’s idealization of the nomadic Bedouin comes into focus against the backdrop of this baseline primitive state, coded as “African” in *Seven Pillars*. That is not to say, however, that his Bedouin differ fundamentally in kind from the tom-tom players of Wejh: like Marlow, though more subtly, they are subject to the quintessentially modernist dilemma of “kinship.” The relation of pure nomads to abject primitives in *Seven Pillars* is implicit in Lawrence’s exposition on “the Semitic race” as a people of stark extremes who “hovered between lust and self-denial” (40), states which Lawrence ascribes to town Arabs and desert Arabs respectively. Whereas the materialistic townsman indulges all his basest appetites without restraint, the nomad is his polar opposite: an embodiment of the world’s great “Semitic creeds” whose common basis was “the ever-present idea of world-worthlessness” and whose mission was “to preach

bareness, renunciation, and poverty" (38). That Lawrence regards the "tribesmen and townsmen in Arabic-speaking Asia...not [as] different races, but [as] just men in different social and economic *stages*" (36; my emphasis) confirms the importance of the evolutionary paradigm for understanding Lawrence's "primitivism." For beneath the stark polarity of desert and town, Lawrence locates a common instinctual motor in what he calls "the Semitic capacity for enjoyment" (40). "The Bedu were odd people," he writes of the nomads,

For an Englishman, sojourning with them was unsatisfactory unless he had patience wide and deep as the sea. They were absolute slaves of their appetite, with no stamina of mind, drunkards for coffee, milk or water, gluttons for stewed meat, shameless beggars of tobacco. They dreamed for weeks before and after their rare sexual exercises, and spent the intervening days titillating themselves and their hearers with bawdy tales. Had the circumstances of their lives given them opportunity they would have been sheer sensualists. Their strength was the strength of men geographically beyond temptation... (226-27)

Such a reduction of the difference between lust and self-denial to a mere accident of geography could be viewed as a covert disclosure or anticipation of the ambivalence Lawrence feels, particularly near the end of *Seven Pillars*, towards the Bedouin he usually idealizes—by robbing them of agency, he implicitly mocks their "strength." As we will see momentarily, however, the earnestness of Lawrence's Bedouin portraits belies this possibility. In any case, Lawrence's undercutting of the Bedouins' apparently accidental strength in this key passage merely reflects the ambivalence that inheres in all primitivist idealization. Since primitivism idealizes downward, without really conceding the foundational supremacy of the source of enunciation, a certain amount of ambivalence is built into every idealization. In this sense, E. M. Forster's insistence that Lawrence did not "go native"—to say nothing of Lawrence's own multiple confirmations

of this point—is essentially correct. Moreover, given Lawrence’s theory of the “civilization disease” he brings to the Orient, the fragility of the Bedouin ideal to geographic correlates is a structural necessity; as he brings the Bedouin closer to civilization, their ideal will accordingly be corrupted.

The more important point is that, by locating indulgence and self-denial on a single continuum of instinctual drives, Lawrence’s account of the appetitive underpinnings of Semitic asceticism allegorizes the derivation of higher from lower in a suggestively Nietzschean fashion. Just as Nietzsche describes the Hellenic ideal emerging from the Greek’s “struggle with his Asiaticism”—that is, from the growth of “Greek Apollinianism [sic]...out of a Dionysian subsoil”—so Lawrence figures the Bedouin’s asceticism as a drama of the self-overcoming of the will to power in which his agency is subtly restored: although “[t]he desert dweller could not take credit for his belief” (39) because “[h]is sterile experience...perverted his human kindness to the image of the waste in which he hid,” nonetheless “he hurt himself, not merely to be free, but to please himself,” “found no joy like the joy of voluntarily holding back,” “found luxury in abnegation, renunciation, self-restraint,” “made nakedness of the mind as sensuous as nakedness of the body” (40).

The paradoxical merging of “cruelty” and “self-restraint” with “joy” and “sensual[ity]” in Lawrence’s fantasy of Bedouin masochism provides a theoretical figuration for the “life-affirming” Nietzschean synthesis of Dionysus and Apollo in *Seven Pillars*—a synthesis which has already been implied in Lawrence’s account of the Semites as a people whom “inconsistents seemed to possess...at once in a joint sway”

(36; my emphasis). Lawrence's "erotics of discipline" undoubtedly have a libidinal origin, but their articulation is undergirded by a Nietzschean philosophical system which finds its expression here. In its ideal form, this synthesis is embodied in the warrior-nomads whom Lawrence most admires, particularly Auda Abu Tayi, whom he hails as "the master type" of the Howeitat, "nomad clans [who] prided themselves on being true Bedu" (229-30):

His hospitality was sweeping; except to very hungry souls, inconvenient. His generosity kept him always poor, despite the profits of a hundred raids. He had married twenty-eight times, had been wounded thirteen times; while the battles he provoked had seen all his tribesmen hurt and most of his relations killed. He himself had slain seventy-five men, Arabs, with his own hand in battle: and never a man except in battle. Of the number of dead Turks he could give no account: they did not enter the register....

After his robber-fashion, he was as hard-headed as he was hot-headed, and in his maddest exploits there would be a cold factor of possibility to lead him through. His patience in action was extreme: and he received and ignored advice, criticism, or abuse, with a smile as constant as it was very charming. If he got angry his face worked uncontrollably, and he burst into a fit of shaking passion, only to be assuaged after he had killed: at such times he was a wild beast, and men escaped his presence. Nothing on earth would make him change his mind or obey an order to do the least thing he disapproved; and he took no heed of men's feelings when his face was set.

He saw life as a saga. All events in it were significant: all personages in contact with him heroic. His mind was stored with poems of old raids and epic tales of fights, and he overflowed with them on his nearest listener. If he lacked listeners, he would very likely sing them to himself in his tremendous voice, deep and resonant and loud....At times he seemed taken by a demon of mischief, and in public assembly would invent and utter on oath appalling tales of the private life of his hosts or guests: and yet with all this he was modest, as simple as a child, direct, honest, kind-hearted, and warmly loved, even by those to whom he was most embarrassing—his friends. (230)

Auda may seem less "self-restrained" than the archetypal but nameless "desert dwellers" of Lawrence's theoretical exposition, but the fundamental terms of veneration have not changed; his portrait clearly draws on the essential contradictions of Bedouin

masochism—lust and self-denial—now elevated to the Nietzschean register of Homeric heroism.¹⁵ As such a portrait suggests, we should not be misled by the apparent contradiction of Lawrence's locating the Nietzschean formula for Greek synthesis in the very "life-denying" asceticism Nietzsche despised. Given the autobiographical basis of Lawrence's narrative, he was obviously constrained by the Arabian context of his experiences and the distinctiveness of his own obsessions. Having "discovered" a race of Semitic supermen in the biblical lands of Arabia, he faced the unusual challenge of adapting a Nietzschean theory of drives to a people associated in the English imagination with the origin of revealed religions. His solution sexualizes asceticism and embodies this synthesis in the heroic image of the balanced Dionysian-becoming-Apollonian.¹⁶

The fact that Lawrence's theory of the pure nomad's productive harnessing of "the Semitic capacity for enjoyment" ascribes a healthy level of Apollonian control to the desert Arab and has the ostensibly "civilized" town Arab play the role of unrestrained Dionysian primitive, says more about Lawrence and Nietzsche's differing conceptualizations of "decadence" than it does about any substantive difference between their ideals. For Nietzsche, "decadence" has mutually overlapping cultural and psychological correlates, each of which suggests an excessive and unhealthy suppression of Dionysian chaos by Apollonian form. Culturally, it refers to the domination of "a system of values" whose "capacity to affirm life fully and directly has slipped to a marked degree or has never existed" (Foster 85)—Christianity's "underlying hatred of life," its "inability to accept life on the terms that it presents itself to human perceptions" being Nietzsche's favorite example (93-94). Psychologically, it refers to "the deception

of a theoretical mode of consciousness” and “the alienation from existence arising from a suppression of the instincts, or the problem of disintegration among the energies of the self” (87). Anticipating T. S. Eliot by several decades, Nietzsche thus characterizes “the desolation and exhaustion of contemporary culture” as a desert waste awaiting rain:

In vain we look for a single vigorously developed root, for a spot of fertile and healthy soil: everywhere there is dust and sand; everything has become rigid and languishes. One who is disconsolate and lonely could not choose a better symbol than the knight with death and devil, as Dürer has drawn him for us, the armored knight with the iron, hard look, who knows how to pursue his terrible path, undeterred by his gruesome companions, and yet without hope, alone with his horse and dog....But how suddenly the desert of our exhausted culture, just described in such gloomy terms, is changed when it is touched by the Dionysian magic! (*Birth* 123)

Given such a sense of cultural and psychological exhaustion, Nietzsche’s tendency to romanticize Dionysian “magic” is not surprising: his sense of “decadence” as illness or aridity projects a counternarrative of (often primitivist) revitalization.¹⁷ But Lawrence’s perspective on the “decadence” (though he does not use this word) of both civilization and the modern individual, is the inverse of Nietzsche’s; where Nietzsche sees a waste land, Lawrence sees a society that has already reverted to the basest savagery. In its connection of Brighton and Damascus, Lawrence’s horrified report of Arabian village life is transparently a metonymy for European civilization, to say nothing of its function as an image of his own crumbling “citadel” of self:

To live, the villager or townsman must fill himself each day with the pleasures of acquisition and accumulation, and by rebound off circumstance become the grossest and most material of men. The shining contempt of life which led others into the barest asceticism drove him into despair. He squandered himself heedlessly, as a spendthrift: ran through his inheritance of flesh in hasty longing for the end. The Jew in the Metropole at Brighton, the miser, the worshipper of Adonis, the lecher in the stews of Damascus were alike signs of the Semitic capacity for enjoyment... (40)

Lawrence's vision of modern decadence is a waste land too—but this time it is T. S. Eliot's abjectly sexualized Metropole, not Dürer's arid field. Given such a vision of civilization, Lawrence's dilemma is not to discover a principle of primitive "rejuvenation" but a model of nomadic asceticism:

[The] Arab townsman or villager is like us and our villagers, with our notion of property, our sense of gain and our appetite for material success. He has our premises as well as our processes. The Beduin, on the other hand, while his sense is as human and his mind as logical as ours, begins with principles quite other than our own, and gets further from us as his character strengthens. He has a creed and a practice of not possessing, which is tough armour against our modern wiles. It defends him against all sentiment. (qtd. in O'Donnell 91)

So "armour[ed] against our modern wiles," Lawrence's Bedouin are more joyful versions of the gloomy knight that Nietzsche had disparaged, "fine-drawn Arabs [whose features] generations of in-breeding had sharpened to a radiance ages older than the *primitive* blotched, honest Englishmen" (560; my emphasis).¹⁸ Nietzsche seeks a qualified Dionysianism; Lawrence seeks a qualified Apollinianism. Beginning from opposite ends, they tend towards a common middle.

No doubt because of Lawrence's penchant for self-scrutiny, readings of his Nietzscheanism have understandably focused on his private obsessions, extravagant claims, and ambitions. As the correlation of Brighton with Damascus suggests, however, Lawrence's nomadic identifications also imply a broader narrative of cultural rejuvenation along Nietzschean lines. Such a narrative of cultural regeneration is implied in Lawrence's analysis of the history and cultural geography of the Arabian peninsula, which he describes in terms of the ebb and flow of population groups between the desert and the sown:

[W]e see clans, born in the highlands of Yemen, thrust by stringer clans into the desert, where, unwillingly, they become nomad to keep themselves alive. We see them wandering, every year moving a little further north or a little further east as chance has sent them down one or other of the well-roads of the wilderness, till finally this pressure drives them from the desert again into the sown, with the like unwillingness of their first shrinking experiment in nomad life. This was the circulation which kept vigor in the Semitic body. There were few, if indeed there was a single northern Semite, whose ancestors had not at some dark age passed through the desert. The mark of nomadism, that most deep and biting social discipline, was on each of them in his degree. (35)

The “northern Semites” of this passage are the Sherifs of Mecca—the leaders of the revolt whom Lawrence idolized precisely because of their Bedouin heritage, emblazoned as a disciplinary “mark of nomadism”—a reference to their tradition of “retain[ing] nomad dress and manners and sen[ding] their children to be brought up in tribal tents” (Tidrick 174). Filtered through the quasi-racial¹⁹ lens of Lawrence’s cultural diagnostic, this courtly tradition becomes an allegory not only of healthy bodily “circulation” but of a vigorous body politic, whose Conradian message of “restraint” is directed as much at “the Metropole at Brighton” as at “the stews of Damascus.”

Thus, even as Lawrence’s attraction to the Bedouin may be explained in psychoanalytic terms as ego-ideals (images of his “spiritual self” or as figures of “sublimation”), his obsession with the “mark[s] of nomadism” he receives while fighting in the deserts of Arabia—scars, scorpion stings (204, 387), wounds (Christ-like and otherwise) (254, 509)—suggests that *Seven Pillars* also records an attempt to play out this disciplinary fantasy of cultural rejuvenation allegorically, on his own body. With Lawrence, Said points out, “[t]he Orientalist has now become a figure of Oriental history, indistinguishable from it, its shaper, its characteristic *sign* for the West” (238). But the reverse is also true: Lawrence remains, simultaneously, the representative figure of an

ailing West, pining for an Oriental renaissance. With typical self-mockery, Lawrence suggests that submission to this “deep and biting social discipline” to achieve greater individual and cultural health will be more than mildly uncomfortable:

I was afraid that perhaps I was going to be really ill, and the prospect of falling into the well-meaning hands of tribesmen in such a state was not pleasant. Their treatment of every sickness was to burn holes in the patient's body at some spot believed to be the complement of the part affected. It was a cure tolerable to such as had faith in it, but torture to the unbelieving: to incur it unwillingly would be silly, and yet certain; for the Arabs' good intentions, selfish as their good digestions, would never heed a sick man's protesting. (192)

Despite the stock ironic touches of this anecdote—the slightly nervous bemusement of the imperialist with the witch-doctor's native remedies—the echo in Lawrence's account of the depraved (allegorical) townsman, whom “the barest asceticism drove...to deep despair” (40), suggests quite plainly his longing to be among those with “faith” for whom the scarifying cure could take. His insistence upon the “biting” mark as a sign of meaningful identification with Arab culture was evidently lasting. Later, to affirm the sincerity of his commitment to the Arab cause, Lawrence writes: “Like a tedious pensioner I showed [the doubting Arab advocates] my wounds (over sixty I have, each scar evidence of pain incurred in Arab service) as proof I had worked sincerely on their side” (qtd. in Mack 314).

The personal and cultural levels of Lawrence's idealization of Bedouin discipline achieve their greatest measure of integration in Lawrence's prophet-fantasy. For despite his projection of the Homeric/Medieval Bedouin as an heroic self-image, and despite his attempt to bear the outward sign of this discipline as an authenticating scar, the role with which Lawrence could most readily identify, and which held out the most “realistic”

prospect for authentic self-transformation (both personally and culturally) was that of the Zarathustra-like desert prophet. Like Lawrence himself,

None of [the prophets] had been of the wilderness, but their lives were after a pattern. Their birth set them in crowded places. An unintelligible passionate yearning drove them out into the desert. There they lived a greater or lesser time in meditation and physical abandonment; and thence they returned with their imagined message articulate, to preach it to their old, and now doubting associates. (37)

As O'Donnell points out, "Lawrence is...indirectly writing about himself when he describes the pattern of the Eastern prophets" (92). But where O'Donnell sees Lawrence's prophecy as a parodic inversion of the pattern in which Lawrence first reverses the direction of creed-making by bringing a "Western" creed of nationalism to the desert, only to then lose faith in it and become the ironic prophet of the "chilly creed" of nihilism (92-93), I would argue that the "ironies" of Lawrence's prophet-fantasy are so many self-protecting masks (like the irony in his presentation of the nomad-cure) concealing the grandiose ambitions whose contours are unmistakable in the closing lines of *Seven Pillars*:

I had dreamed, at the City School in Oxford, of hustling into form, while I lived, the new Asia which time was inexorably bringing upon us. Mecca was to lead to Damascus; Damascus to Anatolia, and afterwards to Bagdad; and then there was Yemen. Fantasies, these will seem, to such as are able to call my beginning an ordinary effort. (684)

Like Chatwin's account of "the nomadic alternative," as we saw in the preceding chapter, this portrait of the prophet as townsman gone-nomad raises the legitimating function of primitivism to a second level becoming, in effect, a meta-primitivism which legitimates, in advance, the action of cultural transvestitism by attributing it to the "primitives"

themselves. Significantly, the “pattern” of the prophets repeats the pattern of the nomads whose “circulation...kept vigor in the Semitic body” exactly:

The congestion of Yemen, therefore, becoming extreme, found its only relief in the east, by forcing the weaker aggregations of its border down the slopes of the hills along the Widian, the half-waste district of the great water-bearing valleys of Bisha, Dawasir, Ranya and Taraba which ran out towards the deserts of Nejd. These weaker clans had continually to exchange good springs and fertile palms for poorer springs and scantier palms, till at last they reached an area where a proper agricultural life become impossible. They then began to eke out their precarious husbandry by breeding sheep and camels, and in time came to depend more and more on these herds for their living.

Finally, under a last impulse from the straining population behind them, the border people (now almost wholly pastoral) were flung out of the furthest crazy oasis into the untrodden wilderness as nomads. This process, to be watched today with individual families and tribes to whose marches an exact name and date might be put, must have been going on since the first day of full settlement of Yemen....There was the source of migration, the factory of nomads, the springing of the gulf-stream of desert wanderers....

The camel markets in Syria, Mesopotamia, and Egypt determined the population which the deserts could support, and regulated strictly their standard of living. So the desert likewise over-populated itself upon occasion; and then there were heavings and thrustings of the crowded tribes as they elbowed themselves by natural courses towards the light. (33-34)

Lawrence thus homologizes three distinct tripartite journeys: his own journey from England to Arabia and back, the journey of the prophet from the town to the desert and back, and the journey of the “Semites” from townsman to nomad and back. On the basis of this triple homology, *Seven Pillars* dramatizes a wished-for narrative of cultural renewal in which Lawrence, like Nietzsche’s Zarathustra, could identify himself as the nomadic prophet of both a “new Asia” and a new West who makes himself the embodiment of an ancient disciplinary creed.

Famously, gratuitously, Lawrence fails. He becomes, in Meyers’s words, “a burnt-out Zarathustra” whose “dancing star” goes nova. This collapse of Lawrence’s

psycho-historical fantasy of becoming-Bedouin forms the main narrative line of *Seven Pillars* in which the masochistic drama of bodily marking as the sign of a healing discipline increasingly degenerates into self-recrimination over the hollowness of his imitation of the nomadic ideal: the dream of wounds and scars is itself parodied in Lawrence's sense that his marks are merely shabby vestments or a "mantle of fraud" (515), part of a dress-up game in which he indulges in "play-acting as a Bedouin" (261). Lawrence's account of the Bedouins' parallel "degeneration" may thus be read as, simultaneously, a compensatory self-justification (the Bedouin ideal is unsustainable, even for them) and an acute self-indictment (his presence has corrupted them). For in *Seven Pillars*, the Bedouins' ideal "Greek" or "medieval" balance is also constantly in danger of regressing to the savage state out of which it ostensibly grew, particularly because of Lawrence's sense of his own corrupting influence in bringing a "civilisation-disease" to Arabia.²⁰

This disease is physical, material, moral, mental, all you will. It is the civilization-disease, the inevitable effect of too-close contact with the West. The aborigines of Australia got it when they met us, and they died of it. There were biological reasons why their frames were too weak to stand contact with a body social so different from their own. Asia is tougher, older, more numerous, and will not die of us—but indubitably we have made her very ill. Europe is not a thing easily digested. (*Oriental* 72)

If Auda's temperamental rejection of the jungle-like "plant-richness" of the oasis for the "empty view" of the desert (240) may be read symbolically as an allegory of the Africanist-Orientalist dialectic of Lawrence's pure nomadic "primitivism" (in which the Bedouin literally turns his back on the abjectly primitive oasis where he may rest, but

does not dwell), then Lawrence's account of Howeitats Epicureanism is its threatening inverse:

These people were achieving in our cause the height of nomadic ambition, a continued orgy of seethed mutton. My heaven might have been a lonely, soft arm-chair, a book rest, and the complete poets, set in Caslon, printed on tough paper: but I had been for twenty-eight years well-fed, and if Arab imagination ran on food bowls, so much the more attainable their joy....In 15 meals (a week) we had consumed them all [i.e. the sheep] and the hospitality guttered out. Digestion returned, and with it our power of movement. (278)

The shift from the corrupting luxuriousness of a stasis where appetites are indulged without restraint to the movement that brings "digestion" figuratively develops the emergence of a moderate Apollonianism out of a Dionysian "orgy" implicit in the oasis allegory (even as the Howeitats' feasting ironically undermines Lawrence's projection of pure nomadism as an austere discipline). Here, however, the emphasis is on the appetitive excess of Dionysianism, and Apollonian moderation comes no longer as a principled choice, but as the necessary consequence, or scatological "gutter[ing] out," of the nomads' lust—portrayed as the gustatory equivalent of the townsman's need to "fill himself each day with the pleasures of acquisition and accumulation" (40).

Throughout the early portions of *Seven Pillars*, Lawrence dramatizes his attempt to preserve his idealization of the Bedouin synthesis against such regression, most pointedly through the construction of a scapegoat who is, appropriately, "a little ragged boy" who is a goat-herd:

The lad was of the outcast Heteym pariahs of the desert, whose poor children were commonly sent on hire as shepherds to the tribes about them....Shepherds were a class apart....From infancy they followed their calling, which took them in all seasons and weathers, day and night, into the hills and condemned them to loneliness and brute company. In the wilderness, among the dry bones of nature, they grew up natural, knowing nothing of man and his affairs; hardly sane in

ordinary talk; but very wise in plants, wild animals and the habits of their own goats and sheep whose milk was their chief sustenance. With manhood they become sullen, while a few turned dangerously savage, more animal than man, haunting the flocks, and finding the satisfaction of their adult appetites in them, to the exclusion of more licit affections. (205-06)

Like the African tom-tom players of Wejh, the shepherd is “hardly sane” and still more abjectly “savage”—his “illicit” appetites implying not only bestiality, but incest, since his flock has replaced the human community symbolized by “the ordinary Arab hearth” which is “a university” wherein circulates “the best talk, the news of their tribe, its poems, histories, love tales, lawsuits, and bargainings” (206). At the same time, he is in the employ of the Turks, the other sedentary power of the book whose depravity exceeds that of the Arab townsman in the same proportion that the goat-herd’s exceeds that of the tom-tom players (the climax of *Seven Pillars*, Lawrence’s assault/rape at Derra, occurs at the pleasure of the Turkish Bey). As a shepherd, however, this desert-pariah is nonetheless symbolically related both to the Bedouin, who is a camel-breeder (34), and to the desert-prophet who is similarly described as “uncouth, a man apart” (40). He is, in effect, the matrix of all of Lawrence’s primitive obsessions and fears, an abject alter ego for the “pure” Dahoum, and thus for Lawrence himself.²¹

The dramatic context of his appearance further underlines his function as a representation of the Bedouins’ “inner savage,” for he arrives inconveniently during Lawrence’s surveillance of a Turkish camp, threatening to expose them. Lawrence’s men are thus forced to capture and, when he proves uncompliant, bind and silence him, a point to which Lawrence (fetishistically) returns several times in his report of the incident:

This one cried continually, and made efforts to escape as often as he saw his goats straying uncared-for about the hill. In the end the men lost patience and tied him

up roughly, when he screamed for terror that they would kill him.... For hours after the shepherd had been suppressed only the sun moved in our view.... At dusk we climbed down again with the goat-herd prisoner.... The shepherd was tied up behind my sleeping place, because he had gone frantic when his charges were unlawfully slaughtered.... [H]e would not be comforted, and afterwards, for fear lest he escape, had to be lashed to his tree again. (205-07)

Significantly, Lawrence leaves his prisoner's fate unresolved, remarking only that they "loos[ed] the still unhappy shepherd boy, with advice to wait our return" (208). Whether their disciplinary interventions were successful in "taming" him or not, Lawrence does not say, and this ellipsis, which leaves the scapegoat's symbolic reintegration into "the Arab hearth" of nomadic society suggestively incomplete ("He refused to taste the supper; and we only forced bread and rice into him by the threat of dire punishment if he insulted our hospitality. They tried to convince him that we should take the station the next day and kill his masters; but he would not be comforted" [207]), anticipates the direction of the Bedouins' own downward trajectory and the consequent collapse of Lawrence's ideal.

The nomads' degeneration is heralded by the return of Dionysian discourse in Lawrence's narration. Following the successful attack on a Turkish train, for instance, Lawrence describes how his men immediately began,

like *wild beasts*, to tear open the carriages and fall to plunder.... Our greatest object was to destroy locomotives, and I had kept in my arms a box of gun-cotton with fuse and detonator ready fixed, to make sure such a case.... [T]he sizzling steam made me fear a general explosion which would sweep across my men (*swarming like ants* over the booty) with a blast of jagged fragments....

The valley was a weird sight. The Arabs, gone *raving mad*, were rushing about at top speed bareheaded and half-naked, screaming, shooting into the air, *clawing* at one another *nail and fist*, while they burst open trucks and staggered back and forward with immense bales, which they ripped by the rail-side, and tossed through, smashing what they did not want. (377-78; my emphasis)

Because it is in no way mystified by the heroic rhetoric of battle-glory or the codes of honorable revenge (as later examples are), the aftermath of the train-wrecking is Lawrence's plainest depiction of the instability of the Bedouin ideal and the frightening ease with which the productive containment of Dionysian instincts by an as yet unpetrified Apollonian spirit may abruptly be cast aside. The Bedouins' plunder and destruction of the train is symbolic, for in the process of stripping it the "bareheaded, half-naked" tribesmen are also stripping themselves, revealing the bestial "madness" of the tom-tom players that lurks beneath Auda's warrior-ideal.

In the end, the Bedouin as Lawrence presents them in *Seven Pillars* are unable to withstand the "civilisation-disease" carried by Lawrence himself to the deserts of Arabia. "[L]ike any savage race," he writes, "[i]f forced into civilized life they would have succumbed...to its diseases, meanness, luxury, cruelty, crooked dealings, artifice; and like savages, they would have suffered exaggeratedly for lack of inoculation" (227). Before they succumb, however, they provide a glimpse of the more conservative, more moderate alternative to savage primitivism that *pure nomadism* made possible in the era of modernism, thanks to its intermediary position on the vertical axis of evolutionary time. As the ultimate expression of imperial nostalgia, Thomas's hybrid vision of Lawrence the blond Bedouin—a strange mixture of Arabia and Scandinavia, Bedouin skin and Viking blood—could be said to figure, however indirectly and imperfectly, an image of Nietzschean synthesis that Lawrence himself plainly sought as a transcendental home. Perhaps that is why Lawrence found himself haunting the gallery of Thomas's reel-and-lecture circuit on "Lawrence of Arabia" (Mack 276). However much Lawrence

may have been “genuinely repulsed” by his “matinee idol” image (Mack 276-77), for better or worse, that image had come to supplant the perfect synthesis represented by the Bedouin whom he felt he had destroyed. The last imperial hero simultaneously found himself—in his own eyes, at least—the last of his tribe.

The Walking Cure: Bruce Chatwin and the New Homelessness

What is the state of dwelling in our precarious age?

MARTIN HEIDEGGER, “Building Dwelling Thinking” (363)

Nomad and planter are the twin arms of the so-called “Neolithic Revolution,” which, in its classic form, took place around 8,500 BC on the slopes of the Fertile Crescent, the well-watered “land of hills and valleys” that stretches in an arc from Palestine to south-western Iran. Here, at altitudes of 3,000 feet or so, the wild ancestors of our sheep and goats would browse over stands of wild wheat and barley.

Gradually, as each of these four species was domesticated, the farmers spread downhill onto the alluvial floodplains, from which the first cities would arise. The herdsmen, for their part, took to the summer uplands and founded a rival order of their own.

BRUCE CHATWIN, *The Songlines* (191)

Like Lawrence, Chatwin makes pastoral nomads and settled agriculturalists into morally-charged embodiments of “rival order[s]” that have metaphysical as well as socioeconomic implications. Retracing the ascending and descending stages of the “Dantean journey” (101) that Patrick Meanor discerns as a recurrent Chatwinian motif, the original herdsmen who “took to the summer uplands” and the farmers who “spread downhill onto the alluvial floodplains, from which the first cities would arise” ground Chatwin’s obsession with nomadism in a structure that derives its authority from a basic appeal to historical truth, but which rides on an appeal that is insistently mythic. For

Chatwin will repeatedly remind us that the pastoral nomad and the settled farmer are not merely “twin arms” of the Neolithic Revolution, but twin brothers of the Judeo-Christian tradition in whom the moral contrast between nomad and farmer/townsman becomes explicit:

Abel, in whose death the Church Fathers saw the martyrdom of Christ prefigured, was a keeper of sheep. Cain was a settled farmer. Abel was the favourite of God, because Jahweh himself was a “God of the Way” whose restlessness precluded other gods....The names of the brothers are a matched pair of opposites. Abel comes from the Hebrew “*hebel*,” meaning “breath” or “vapour”; anything that lives and moves and is transient, including his own life. The root of “Cain” appears to be the verb “*kanah*”: to “acquire,” “get,” “own property,” and so “rule” or “subjugate.”

“Cain” also means “metal-smith.” And since, in several languages—even Chinese—the words “violence” and “subjugation” are linked to the discovery of metal, it is perhaps the destiny of Cain and his descendants to practise the black arts of technology. (*Songlines* 192-93)

Given this foundational use of the discourse of pure nomadism to articulate the moral structure of his thought, it is not surprising that Chatwin’s conclusions often seem to echo those of the ethnographic chapters of *Seven Pillars*.²² His account of Jahweh as “a God of the Way” whose “sanctuary is the Mobile Ark” and “His House a tent” in *The Songlines*, for instance, seems to reprise the themes of Lawrence’s oasis allegory and his (self-) portrait of the prophet as nomad:

And though He may *promise* His Children a well-watered land—as blue and green are a bedouin’s [sic] favourite colours—He secretly desires for them the Desert.

He leads them out of Egypt, away from the fleshpots and the overseer’s lash, a journey of three days into the harsh clean air of Sinai....

The prophets Isaiah, Jeremiah, Amos and Hosea were nomadic revivalists who howled abuse at the decadence of civilization. (194-95)

Like Lawrence, moreover, Chatwin appears to agree not only that “the world, if it has a future, has an ascetic future” (133), but that the exemplar of this future is “the frugal asceticism of nomadic life” (195).

Such similarities, however, are more apparent than real. For as we saw in the previous chapter, even though Chatwin’s conception of nomadism as a synthesis of dwelling and traveling is imaginatively premised on the notion that pastoral nomads follow fixed routes, the discourse of pure nomadism is ultimately subsumed, in Chatwin’s primitivist myth, into a universalistic discourse of general nomadism. Because it sees the true primitive as a Dionysian savage, Lawrence’s “primitivist” idealization of the Bedouin foregrounds the vertical (temporal-evolutionary) axis of pure nomadism to elevate the desert dweller to an evolutionary rung above unalloyed savagery but below the neo-savagery of decadent civilization. As an unrepentant celebrant of Golden Ages and Hyperboreans (205) who urges that “[t]he idea of returning to an ‘original simplicity’ [is] not naïve or unscientific or out of touch with reality” (133), however, Chatwin can only be troubled by the unwelcome complications the vertical axis of pure nomadism brings to what is essentially a traditional binary scheme of critical nostalgia in which “somewhat idealized versions of ‘the primitive’ [serve] as foils against which to judge modern industrial society” (Rosaldo, *Culture* 82) and evocations of an Edenic “‘good’ country” become the means by which “to break with the hegemonic, corrupt present by asserting the reality of a radical alternative” (Clifford, “Ethnographic” 113-14). Pure nomadism is thus invoked primarily in terms of its horizontal (spatial) axis in Chatwin’s oeuvre, and its untidy evolutionary liminality is reabsorbed into general nomadism’s

primitivist vocabulary of originality and authenticity. Thus, whereas Lawrence reveres “the mark of nomadism” (scars, wounds, and—less successfully—clothing) as a mark of culture, a discipline which acts upon and reshapes an unruly nature, Chatwin associates nomadic marking exclusively with a logocentric naturalness, and reserves the language of disciplinary violence for the sinister prophets of “the black arts of technology”:

The Aboriginals had an earthbound philosophy. The earth gave life to man; gave him his food, language and intelligence; and the earth took him back when he died. A man’s “own country,” even an empty stretch of spinifex, was itself a sacred ikon that must remain unscarred.

“Unscarred, you mean, by roads or mines or railways?”

“To wound the earth,” he answered earnestly, “is to wound yourself, and if others wound the earth, they are wounding you. The land should be left untouched: as it was in the Dreamtime when the Ancestors sang the world into existence.” (11)

As Chatwin’s anagrammatic juxtaposition suggests, he regards the “scarred” as a distortion of the “sacred,” and such a poetics points to a notion of “asceticism” that is very different from what Lawrence means by that word. Like Khazanov, moreover, Chatwin seeks an etymological return to origins as well, though for him the reminder that “*Nomos* is Greek for ‘pasture’” (184) serves not to reinstate a pristine category of pure nomadism to the exclusion of “savage” hunter-gatherer nomads, but, on the contrary, to submerge pure nomadism within a generalized vocabulary of origins and authenticity—to convert the pure nomad into yet another instantiation of the general nomad.

The subsumption of pure into general nomadism in Chatwin’s work clearly reflects Chatwin’s deeply personal and well-documented obsessions with the primitive as a form of transcendental home. In *The Songlines*, “the fantastic homelessness of [his] first five years” is offered as a psychic “ground” for his subsequent reinvention as a

nomad who is at home in travel (5). This reinvention centers on a kind of self-primitivizing autobiographical recovery of childhood investments that intersect directly with Chatwin's later account of Aboriginal Australian nomadism: his great-aunt Ruth's book on Australia featuring his favorite image of "an Aboriginal family on the move" with a small boy ("I identified myself with him") (5) or Aunt Ruth's etymological revelation that "our surname had once been 'Chettewynde,' which meant 'the winding path' in Anglo-Saxon" (9), for example. Michael Ignatieff presents this reading of Chatwin most economically to Chatwin himself during a somewhat mortifying interview for *Granta* when he suggests that the Chatwinian historical-evolutionary explanation of mythic quest story-structures as the internalization of primal nomadic instincts might be covertly autobiographical: "An example of this kind of eternal story would be the young man who leaves home, goes off into the wilderness to find himself. Bruce Chatwin, archetypal hero, goes out in the desert in search of..." (qtd. in Meanor 91).

The popular success of *The Songlines* as bestseller, however, suggests that whatever its autobiographical significance, Chatwin's nomadic primitivism also speaks to and soothes a more pervasive, late-twentieth-century sense of transcendental homelessness for Western readers. In *Seven Pillars*, pure nomadism created an alternative to the main line of modernist primitivism; with *The Songlines*, pure nomadism has been thoroughly primitivized, which is merely another way of saying that the primitive cure for transcendental homelessness—as a sign of authenticity, origins, wholeness—seems itself to have become nomadic. It would appear, in other words, that sometime between 1935 and 1987, the relation between the nomad and the primitive

within popular culture changed quite dramatically. Beyond the personal idiosyncrasies of particular authors, what “new ‘discovery’ within the territory of the Western self” does this change register (Clifford, *Predicament* 212)? What “different aspects of the West” do these “specific historical and cultural variations” of the primitive reflect (Torgovnick 190)? In what follows, I seek to articulate this shift in the discourse of nomadism with shifts in the Western subject’s experience of time and space between the first and second halves of the twentieth century described by Fredric Jameson and David Harvey. The new experiential priority of spatial categories accompanying the shift to postmodernity is conducive to distinctively nomadic forms of primitivist transcendental homecoming, I argue, precisely because the founding notion of “home,” through which Odyssean fantasies of return are imaginatively filtered, has undergone significant reorganization.

The historical particularity of Torgovnick’s account of the primitive as a *temporal* balm for transcendental homelessness is already evident in the source of her terminology. Lukács, writing on “transcendental homelessness” in the modern novel in 1920, addresses an experience of dislocation and fragmentation that is linked to the phenomenon of what Harvey calls “time-space compression” in capitalist modernity, and as Torgovnick’s gloss suggests, this modern experience of homelessness in Lukács’s account “depends on an immense nostalgia for an ‘integrated totality’ *in the past*, when men’s souls and desires were equivalent, through a kind of natural grace, to the essence of the world” (281; my emphasis). Defining modernism as “the experience and the result of *incomplete* modernization” (366), Jameson follows historian Arno Mayer in arguing that, until quite recently, this nostalgia was not merely imaginative or abstract, but had a

direct experiential cognate.²³ The origin of modernity's "distinctive experience of temporality," he argues, resides in "the modernization processes and dynamics of turn-of-the-century capitalism, with its glorious new machinery (celebrated by the futurists and so many others, but no less dramatically deplored and demonized by other writers we also call 'modernists'), which has nonetheless not yet completely colonized the social space in which it is emergent" (365). Most importantly, for positioning the historical particularity of modernist primitivism, he suggests that

First and foremost of the great oppositions not yet overcome by capitalism in this period is...that between town and country, and the subjects or citizens of the high-modern period are mostly people who have lived in multiple worlds and multiple times—a medieval *pays* to which they return on family vacations and an urban agglomeration whose elites are, at least in most advanced countries, trying to "live with their century" and to be as "absolutely modern" as they know how. The very value of the New and of innovation...clearly enough presupposes the exceptionality of what is felt to be "modern"; while deep memory itself, which inscribes and scars the differentiation of experience into time and evokes something like the intermittenencies of alternate worlds, would seem also to depend on "uneven development" of an existential and psychic, fully as much as on an economic kind. Nature is related to memory not for metaphysical reasons but because it throws up the concept and the image of an older mode of agricultural production that you can repress, dimly remember, or nostalgically recover in moments of danger and vulnerability. (366)

Modernist primitivism, as a return to origins in both its "savage" and its more Arcadian aspects (say, *l'Homme Acéphale* and *Tarzan*), exemplifies the latter response to the temporal trauma of becoming modern.

Insofar as it foregrounds the vertical axis of temporality, Lawrence's Nietzschean reinvention of Bedouin medievalism in relation to the savage primitivism of his contemporaries is clearly part of this same nostalgic response. In fact, it embodies the "medieval *pays*" of the rural estate or vanishing countryside to which Jameson refers

even more directly than its primitive counterparts. In other ways, however, the spatial axis of Lawrence's nomadism situates his Bedouin outside of what Torgovnick identifies as "a male-centered, canonical line of Western primitivism" (248) whose charter members include Freud, Conrad, D. H. Lawrence, Edgar Rice Burroughs, Roger Fry, William Rubin, Michel Leiris, Malinowski, and Lévi-Strauss, none of whom is particularly concerned with nomadism in either its pure or its general forms. Given the importance of anthropologists to this tradition, it is especially significant that, as Dyson-Hudson has pointed out, the study of nomads within anthropology was itself strikingly undeveloped in the early twentieth century; it was only in the 1950s that "the Malinowskian impulse...finally entered nomadic studies...some thirty years after it had happened to other areas of anthropological investigation" ("Study" 6-7). The *relative* eccentricity of nomadism to both the modern primitivist tradition and its anthropological correlate is telling, for if modernist primitivism is underwritten by the quest for a transcendental home, then its relative disinterest in nomadism as a potential signifier of homecoming suggests the persistence of the nineteenth-century prejudice of associating nomadism with homelessness and dispossession exemplified in Henry Mayhew's identification of "the street folk of London [as] a 'nomad race'" and J. F. McLennan's similar comparison of Victorian England's lower classes to "predatory bands, leading the life of the lowest nomads" (qtd. in Stocking 213, 219). Thus, even as modernist primitivism offered an overtly temporal solution to the problem of transcendental homelessness, its imaging of a primitive "home" was, at the same time, covertly

dependent upon the identification of a common sedentariness that reflected a certain contemporary, urban, Western experience of dwelling.

The disparate visions of Mead's *Coming of Age in Samoa* (1928) and Leiris's *Manhood* (1939) confirm that transcendental homecoming could take many forms; whether Arcadian or sacrificial, however, the "home" projected by modernist primitivism's quest for "immanent totality" typically bore the stamp of its troubled origin and symbolic double: the alienating Western metropolis which was both the nexus and the emblem of civilization's various discontents. In this sense, the ascendant primitive of modernist nostalgia was not fundamentally different from the primitive invented by Victorian anthropology, a figure whose animism and promiscuity reflected contemporary concerns about religion and marriage originating in the anthropologists' own society (Stocking 187-204). Heidegger's primitivist appeal to "roots" under the rubric of "the house of Being" (260) in his *Letter on Humanism* (1947) represents a late, and obviously very sinister, development of this line of thought, whose contours are graphically prefigured in modernist primitivism's poetics of the hut (Fig. 14).²⁴ Clifford, for instance, notices that the construction of "the field" as a "locality" in early twentieth-century anthropology is characteristically focused on the native village as a "synechdoche...through which one could represent the cultural whole":

Villages, inhabited by natives, are bounded sites particularly suitable for intensive visiting by anthropologists. They have long served as habitable, mappable centers for the community and, by extension, the culture. After Malinowski, fieldwork among natives tended to be construed as a practice of co-residence rather than of travel or even of visiting. And what more natural place to live with people than in their village? (The village localization was, I might add, a portable one: in the great world's fairs—St. Louis, Paris, Chicago, San Francisco—native populations were exhibited as native villages with live inhabitants.) (*Routes* 21)



FIGURE 14
Postcard. "The Primitive Family"
The Poetics of the Hut

Significantly, even ambiguously primitivist works that warned “you can never go home again”—or at least that you might not want to—also favored such a vision of the primitive that was more familiar than strange insofar as it figured recognizably fixed “village” modes of dwelling and community which brought Western city and native village into symbolic juxtaposition.

The stark symmetry of civilized and primitive domestic spaces in *Heart of Darkness*—whereby Kurtz’s Inner Station grotesquely mirrors the drawing rooms of the sepulchral city—is paradigmatic of the way in which modernism’s primitive alter ego was structured by a principle of selective “regression” rather than complete opposition. The Inner Station is not, of course, a native structure but a European one, just as Kurtz himself is not a “real” primitive; but this is precisely the point. For Kurtz’s residence—which displays his atavism metonymically in the form of a broken “fence” decorated with heads on stakes—exists on a continuum of “homes” defined at one end by European cities like London or Brussels, and at the other by “the villages round [the] lake” (51) over which Kurtz holds sway. Conrad’s ambivalence, even “horror,” of primitive and civilized alike famously produce a sense of impasse in the text, making the twin spaces of Kurtz’s tomb-like Station and the Intended’s chilling parlor thus seem equally *unheimlich*, the abjection of the former merely bringing to light the latter’s material and psychic substratum. Yet even if Kurtz’s “homecoming” in the African wilderness ironically makes an epistemological virtue of Marlow’s transcendental homelessness, the terms in which these complementary positions are presented remain fundamentally consistent with parochial Western conceptions of dwelling and dispossession. As the

narrator says of Marlow, "He was a seaman, but he was a wanderer too, while most seamen lead, if one may so express it, a sedentary life" (3). Within this context, a modernist like Lawrence who can make nomadism the basis of a symbolic primitive, homecoming is an exception that proves the rule, for Lawrence's desert fantasy of repression and release still accepts the fundamental categories of modernist primitivism (stationary huts and villages as man's "original" home), even as its author struggles to position himself against them (by attaching his fantasy to the evolutionary axis of pure nomadism).

Yet the experience of modernity to which such a poetics of dwelling responds has itself undergone a significant transformation. As Harvey argues, the rapid acceleration of time-space compression since 1970 (which he attributes to advances in transportation and information technology and to the new, "post-Fordist" regime of flexible accumulation) means that the modern subject's experience of space and time has entered a new phase to which postmodernism could be seen as a cultural response:

the history of capitalism has been characterized by speed-up in the pace of life, while so overcoming spatial barriers that the world sometimes seems to collapse inward upon us. The time taken to traverse space and the way we commonly represent that fact to ourselves are useful indicators of [time-space compression]. As space appears to shrink to a "global village" of telecommunications and a "spaceship earth" of economic and ecological interdependencies...and as time horizons shorten to the point where the present is all there is (the world of the schizophrenic), so we have to learn how to cope with an overwhelming sense of *compression* of our spatial and temporal worlds. (240)

Paul Virilio has usefully described this postmodern experience of time-space compression as an acceleration of speed to the point at which not only space, but "physical movement itself" disappears due to the colonization of older speed

technologies (planes, trains, and automobiles) by new communications media which make it “more efficient to stand still, and accelerate images and information past ourselves than to travel sluggishly through actual physical space” (Connor 255):

If automotive vehicles, that is, all air, land and sea vehicles are today also less “riding animals” than *frames* in the optician’s sense, then it is because the self-propelled vehicle is becoming less and less a vector of change in physical location than a means of representation, the channel for an increasingly rapid optical effect of the surrounding space. (Virilio, qtd. in Connor 255)

Jameson’s Debord- and Baudrillard-inflected account of postmodernism as involving “a new depthlessness” owing to “a whole new culture of the image or the simulacrum” and “a consequent weakening of historicity” whose personal existential correlate is the “schizophrenic” experience of atemporality mentioned by Harvey (6) glosses the implications of these dramatic compressions and accelerations, arguing that “empirically...our daily life, our psychic experience, our cultural languages, are today dominated by categories of space rather than by categories of time, as in the preceding period of high modernism” (16).

Transcendental homelessness does not disappear in this situation; on the contrary, it is exacerbated by the new spatial culture of “schizophrenia” and “speed.” Though Jameson occasionally emphasizes the “euphori[c]...intoxicatory or hallucinogenic” qualities of this culture, he is ultimately more concerned with its production of “anxiety and loss of reality” (27-28):

this latest mutation in space—postmodern hyperspace—has finally succeeded in transcending the capacities of the individual human body to locate itself, to organize its immediate surroundings perceptually, and cognitively to map its position in a mappable external world. It may now be suggested that this alarming disjunction between the body and its built environment—which is to the initial bewilderment of older modernism as the velocities of the spacecraft are to

those of the automobile—can itself stand as the symbol and analagon of that even sharper dilemma which is the incapacity of our minds, at least at present, to map the great global multinational and decentered communicational network in which we find ourselves caught as individual subjects. (44)

The radical new sense of “bewilderment” and “anxiety” that stems from the new velocities of postmodernism implies a different experience of transcendental homelessness. But it also implies that the terms by which nostalgic fantasies of “immanent totality” will be imagined have themselves been correspondingly altered. Just as the primitive hut was an image of home filtered through the categories of a relatively sedentary metropolitan present, so we might expect that the primitivist fantasies of postmodernism will register the full weight of Virilio’s insight that the new mobility has created a “new form of sedentariness”: “Sedentariness in the instant of absolute speed. It’s no longer a sedentariness of non-movement, it’s the opposite” (66).

The subsumption of pure nomadism within the primitivist discourse of general nomadism in Chatwin’s mythopoetic system simultaneously reflects and engages this distinctively postmodern experience of a new, paradoxically sedentary mobility implied by the acceleration of time-space compression. When seen in this light, Chatwin’s scattered references to “the new Internationalism” and to mankind’s rediscovery of “the means for total mobility,” as well as his claim that McLuhan’s “Global Village” is actually a “Mobile Encampment” (“Letter” 84), suddenly acquire unexpected importance as means of situating his seemingly very personal primitivist fantasy of general nomadism within a broader socio-historical context. One effect of this new Internationalism, Chatwin feared in 1968, was that it “has activated a new parochialism” in which “separatism is rampant” (84); his image of the nomadic Australian Aborigines

as people who are “at home in travel” and in whose cosmology Chatwin discerns archetypal patterns of human unity provides a counterfactual primitivist riposte to this situation. Even as it epitomizes a longing for transcendental home reflective of a distinctively postmodern experience of dwelling, however, Chatwin’s idealization of general nomadism registers a partial, compensatory protest against this very condition. For Chatwin eschews the hyperspeeds of mobile sedentariness represented by the airplane and television in favor of “a metaphysics of walking” (qtd. in Meanor 89) reminiscent of Leonard Woolf’s wistful lament, “I sometimes think how pleasant the tempo and movement of life was when the speed limit was eight miles an hour” (Woolf 178). Nomadic homecoming, for Chatwin, involves “actual journeys” (“Nomad” 106) in contradistinction to the technologized and ungrounded forms of sedentary mobility particular to postmodernity. He has only disdain for that “generation cushioned from the cold by central heating, from the heat by air-conditioning, carted in aseptic transports from one identical house or hotel to another” (100). “Air travel” may offer some “living up,” he concedes, only to backtrack: “but as a species we are terrestrial. Man walked and swam long before he rode or flew. Our human possibilities are best fulfilled on land or sea. Poor Icarus crashed” (103). Ultimately, such technological “flights” are always Icarian for Chatwin, deformed expressions of our primal will to travel that are epitomized, on the one hand, by the “revolutionary hijacker” of airplanes who unstops the blockage of his instinct for revolution as “cyclical passage” and “geographical movement” with a political expenditure that ends in “greater servitude” (103-04), and, on the other, by the “faked,” “illusory journey[s]” (106) produced by “pep pills,”

“tranquilizers,” “sex,” “music,” and “dance” (100). “Drugs,” Chatwin scolds, “are vehicles for people who have forgotten how to walk” (106).

That the contemporary context of postmodern time-space compression where “[p]eople are no longer citizens” but “passengers in transit” (Virilio 64) is almost completely effaced from the primitivist fantasy of nomadic home represented in *The Songlines* (even by way of contrast with “true nomadism”), and must be excavated from elliptical references in marginal writings and posthumously published letters, is precisely the appeal of the book’s seamless nomadic myth and, it is tempting to speculate, the secret of its popular success. For Chatwin’s ambivalent response to time-space compression means that *The Songlines* not only offers a primitivist balm for a specifically postmodern experience of transcendental homelessness, but that it celebrates nomadism in contrast to elaborately realized “retro” images that depict contemporary life as sedentary and which are as integral to the nostalgic fantasy of going-nomad as the celebration of a universal nomadic home itself. In other words, Chatwin offers two nostalgia trips for the price of one: personally, his proverbial “*horreur du domicile*” may be real enough, but in the broader context of postmodern culture it provides a fantasy backdrop of immobility against which general nomadism may be recognized unequivocally as a liberating break or a spiritual return, even though, in unguarded moments, he seems to indicate that he regards the era of what he might have called “true sedentariness” to be already on the wane.

Chatwin’s account of nomadic homecoming in *The Songlines* thus unfolds against a nostalgically modernist poetics of haunted houses reminiscent of the Intended’s Gothic

mausoleum/mansion from *Heart of Darkness*. From the opening scene aboard the *Nellie* where the accountant “toy[s] architecturally with the bones” (1) through Marlow’s characterization of Brussels as “a whited sepulcher” (7) to the “cold and monumental whiteness” of the Intended’s parlor where she floats “all in black, with a pale head” and in which an ivory-keyed piano gleams like a “polished sarcophagus” (68), Conrad explores fin de siècle/fin du globe themes of decadence and corruption at the core of civilized existence through images of funereal architecture in which the stable structures of European society become both sinister and uncanny. (The head-hunting décor of Kurtz’s jungle residence is an inside-out version of these structures; his corpses are defiantly displayed rather than carefully hidden.) In other words, Marlow’s transcendental homelessness—his alienation from the hypocrisy of modernity (the civilizing mission), from the consequent banality of modern life (his misanthropic description of the street in Brussels, for example [66]), and from the inner deformity of the modern self (the primitive)—is fittingly expressed through a poetics of the *unheimlich*—literally, the “unhomely.”²⁵

Chatwin’s depiction of postmodernity as strangely sedentary adopts and extends such Conradian aesthetics in ways that simultaneously register and suppress the acceleration of space-time compression since the publication of Conrad’s novella. The result is a portrait of contemporaneity that emphasizes its connection to a historical catalogue of the crypts, enclosures, and claustrophobic spaces that Chatwin blames for existential dismay at multiple levels: political, social, familial, psychic, and ultimately, metaphysical. In the fragmentary (but nonetheless meticulously organized) “From the

Notebooks" section of *The Songlines*, for instance, Chatwin selects and arranges a series of quotations and personal anecdotes developing Martin Buber's observation that "The tradition of the camp-fire faces that of the pyramid" (186). Recollections of "Jahweh's horror of hewn masonry" (187), Sir Thomas Browne's disdain for "[p]yramids, arches, obelisks" as "irregularities of vainglory" (186), and Herman Melville's "shudder at the thought of the ancient Egyptians" and their "masonry" (188) provide a moral context for what is essentially an architectural allegory of "the State as Behemoth or Leviathan, as a monster which threatened human life" (189). As both a monumental structure and a tomb, the pyramid (and the vision of "Oriental despotism" it connotes) has long provided social critics and philosophers like Buber with a convenient microcosm of totalitarian civilization as a sort of living death or premature burial. Chatwin's preeminent modern example of such a devouring Leviathan is, of course, Nazi Germany: "Before addressing the crowds at the Nuremberg Rallies, the Führer would commune with himself in a subterranean chamber modeled on the tomb of the Great Pyramid" (186). Rather than glossing them himself, Chatwin hints at the implications of this historical detail by reporting a conversation with six-year old Sedig el Fadil el Mahdi (one of Chatwin's many wise children) who has spontaneously drawn a pyramid in the vein of a Conradian sepulchre (or Kurtzian Inner Station) with the skull of a cannibalistic giant popping out of the top because, he says, "I like drawing scary things" (186-87).

A similar poetic principle subtends Chatwin's anthropological thesis. As we saw in Chapter One, Chatwin regards nomadism and sedentary life not merely as metaphors, but as determining criteria in a dialectic of health and illness afflicting the inherently

“migratory” human species (an affliction Chatwin invests with strong religious overtones of good and evil). He accordingly grounds his depiction of the sepulchral state in a theory of misdirected violence that centers on a highly speculative conflict between original man, *Homo habilis*, and *Dinofelis*—a man-eating cat that Chatwin mythologizes as “Our Beast,” “The Arch-Enemy,” “The Prince of Darkness” (255)—in which Man’s triumph is “a Pyrrhic victory” because, once the actual Beast is eliminated, all subsequent history seems to have been “a search for false monsters,” “[a] nostalgia for the Beast we have lost” (256). The entire dynamics of othering, exemplified in “war propaganda...[which] proceed[s] on the assumption that you must degrade the enemy into something bestial,” may be explained, Chatwin suggests, as an instinctual and now perverted evolution of an original “defensive reaction against the wild beasts” (223). Although this highly poetic theory of primal struggle in which weapons were invented for purposes of self-defense against a non-human predator serves primarily as a riposte to anthropologists like Raymond Dart who argue that “the Weapon had fathered Man” (237) and to ““anti-primitivists’...who believe that man, in becoming a hunter, became the hunter and killer of his kind” (205), the archaeological data upon which Chatwin draws also provides his text’s rhetorical equation between state violence and the crypt with a mythic primal scene: the Swartkrans Cave in Transvaal, one of three limestone caves in the Sterkfontein valley heaped with the bones of hominids and early humans which Chatwin theorizes are the remains of victims of the Beast (242-43, 251-56). Chatwin’s account of “the killer in the cave” thus echoes his portrait of the despot in the pyramid with a kind of anthropological gothic that binds all of the key strands of his sepulchral

poetics into a mythic condemnation of the figure who serves as the prototype for all the “bestial” appetites of the state, as well as for the state’s ability to mystify its own violence. “All big cats kill with a neck bite—in common with the executioner’s axe, the guillotine and the garrotte” (243), Chatwin observes, but “[t]he sensation of being mauled by a big cat may, as we know from Dr Livingstone’s experience with a lion, be slightly less horrific than one imagined, ‘It causes,’ he wrote, ‘a kind of dreaminess, in which there was no sense of pain nor feeling of terror. It was like what patients put under chloroform describe who see all the operation but feel not the knife’” (243-44). Livingstone understandably found this latter feature “merciful,” but in the symbolic register of Chatwin’s text, where narcosis figures premature entombment, such gratitude is hardly endorsed.

Out of this archetypal conception of the state as sepulchre, *The Songlines* develops an array of architectural images to illustrate “the malaise of settlement” (161). The Führer’s “pyramid” is generalized in Chatwin’s “very short History of the Skyscraper” as the Tower of Babel which “prick[s God] in the backside” (188-89) and in the “monuments of Western civilization” which leave Arkady feeling “flat” (3) to become a symbol for the entire history of settled civilization’s blasphemous violence and deleterious psychic effects. In keeping with the text’s general disavowal of postmodernity’s circuits of transport and mobility (and rather surprisingly, given their implication of urban migrancy) Chatwin’s architectural condemnation of settlement extends even to hotels. As Clifford points out, Conrad made the hotel “his symbol of civilization’s barbarity” because it represents “a place of transit, not of residence”;

Jameson consequently makes the hotel a “figure of the postmodern” (“Traveling” 17).²⁶ Chatwin, however, presents hotels not as relay-points along a trajectory, but as emblems of “a Europe of mindless materialism” (3). The banally named “Charm Hotel,” where Chatwin is tormented by a fly that carries “sleeping-sickness” (reminiscent of the fatal “dreaminess” of Livingstone’s lion-bite), is thus renamed “HARM HOTEL” when water washes away part of its signage on the stucco “façade” (164), and the archly named “Hotel Coq Hardi” turns out also to be a brothel at which the prostitutes enact custom-designed fantasies for their clients. Another incident, in which Chatwin is mesmerized by “a pair of goldfish...lazily floating in formaldehyde” in the “clear plastic heels” of a woman’s shoes, only to be roused by a midget who provides a scatological parody of Chatwin’s own archaeological aspirations, renders a decisive judgment on the “mindless materialism” of settled life. Of the midget, Chatwin reports:

He was a sewer-rat. His friends would lower him, with a metal detector, into the main sewer beneath the hotels of Miami Beach. There, he would prospect for jewelry flushed, accidentally, down the toilets. (165)

Chatwin glosses the moral of this anecdote later, when he buttresses Ib’n Khaldūn’s romantic veneration of the Bedouin, whose austere habits seemed to confirm “that men decline, morally and physically, as they drift towards cities” (196), with the opinion of the epidemiologist who concludes that “Man...was not meant to settle down” on the basis of his study of infectious disease—“a story of men brewing in their own filth” (197). Thus, although they register and satirize a certain commercial version of postmodernism (in the woman’s plastic shoes, for instance), Chatwin’s hotels are ultimately of a piece

with his pyramids, ziggurats, and skyscrapers: monumental shrines to settled society's consumption and waste.

Chatwin's more intimate architectural symbols are equally inhospitable—often not only gesturing at the reputed sources of spiritual malaise and psychic ill-health, but embodying that malaise metaphorically as well. Monks afflicted with wanderlust but confined to solitary cells (163), like the suffering bird “penned up at the season of its migration, which would flail its wings and bloody its breast against the bars of its cage” (168), exemplify Chatwin's correlation of physical and psychic space so that real prisons simultaneously signify the fluttering of the individual mind they enclose—a mental entrapment resulting in the paradox that “[t]he most convincing analysts of restlessness were often men who, for one reason or another, were immobilized” (163). Although Chatwin filters his own autobiography through the lens of a restlessness that extends well into his childhood, his memories of staying at his great aunts' terrace house on Stratford-on-Avon during childhood implicate Chatwin in this line of “immobilized” analysts of restlessness as well, through a similar overlapping of physical and psychic space.

The house and its inhabitants are a microcosm of the human mind under conditions of immobility. Aunt Katie, who has traveled, and Aunt Ruth, who has not but whose library contains the talismanic books in which Chatwin experiences the first thrill of nomadic self-recognition, embody the migratory instinct which has been prematurely caged and perverted. The more sedentary Aunt Ruth in particular becomes a source of repression. Resembling “her cocker-spaniel, Amber, [who] strain[s] at his leash” (8), Chatwin reports: “Aunt Ruth would hug me, as if to forestall my following in [the]

footsteps” of an earlier generation of “horizon-struck wanderers” (6). The rooms are accordingly cluttered with “cumbersome furniture” and the aunts themselves, who are “old maids” (6), hint obliquely that the repression of migratory drives results either in a kind of petrified sterility or in the sort of destructive sexuality suggested by Chatwin’s dream—a response to his Aunt’s threat that “Boney will get you”—of being devoured by a phallic caricature of Napoleon Bonaparte that suddenly splits into a vagina dentata with “rows of black fangs and a mass of wiry blue-black hair” into which Chatwin falls, screaming (7). Chatwin’s nightmare of falling back into this composite symbol of violent coitus represents the most self-consciously psychoanalytic conflation of physical and psychic space in the work. Not only does the (recurrent) dream within the Aunts’ house make the metaphoric nature of the house explicit, the content of the dream itself presents what Freud saw as the most uncanny form of “homecoming” and the most disturbing sort of enclosure: the child’s return to and reenvelopment by the mother’s body. In the context of nomadism, such a horror of the maternal is utterly dispelled, and dedifferentiation becomes a paramount goal; in the context of sedentarity, however, Chatwin finds such a homecoming can only be “unhomely.” In other words, these claustrophobic spaces of his childhood are ultimately to be read as Chatwin’s attempt to figure his own early psychological development in such a way that traditional psychoanalytic materials like narcissism (his identification with the Aboriginal boy in the picture book on Australia), repression (his aunt’s threat that he must never pee in the bath again or “Boney” will get him), and quasi-Freudian Oedipal dramas (“Mona,” the

comforting “vulva”-like conch shell to which “Boney” provides both a threat and a double) merge with Chatwin’s theory of peripatetic instinct.²⁷

Against this array of psychic prisons and haunted houses, Chatwin fashions images of nomadism that do not figure simple escapism (the prison-break model that Deleuze and Guatari will embrace in *Anti-Oedipus*) but rather reinvent the notion of home in terms of nomadic modes of dwelling—a dialectic of migration and settlement perfected, Chatwin contends, by pastoral nomadism and visible in the fixed routes of Aboriginal “Songlines.” With characteristic attention to symmetry, Chatwin develops a series of nomadic homes that provide counterparts to each level of his unhomely catalogue. Adjacent to the inhospitable Swartkrans Cave, home of *Dinofelis* in Chatwin’s archaeological narrative, for instance, lies the open plane of the African desert, the place where “man was born” (249), where “our instincts were forged”—“home” (162). Invariably, Chatwin’s accounts of contemporary “nomadic societies” are filtered through the transparency of this primeval desert home—a filtering Chatwin hardly disguises in the implied correlation between his favorite childhood picture “show[ing] an Aboriginal family on the move” (5) and a watercolor of “an artist’s impression of a family of the First Men, and their children, tramping in single file across an empty waste” (251).

Out of this grounding primitivist correlation, Chatwin explores nomadic ways of reconceptualizing home, the most important of which are the Aboriginal Songlines themselves. Song is of course an important category for Chatwin, as it is for most sentimental primitivists. Adopting a conventionally logocentric contrast between orality and writing as innocent and fallen modes of communication respectively, Chatwin

supposes that “the world’s first languages were in song” and that “Early man...had learned to speak by imitating the calls of animals and birds, and had lived in musical harmony with the rest of creation” (176).²⁸ Such a notion of a learned primal “harmony” with nature merges over the course of the book with Wilhelm von Humboldt’s contention that “the human being is a singing creature” because “[w]ords well voluntarily from the breast without need or intent, and there has probably not been in any desert waste a migratory horde that did not possess its own songs” (271-72), to become not only more logocentric but inherently peripatetic as well, resonating with Chatwin’s thesis that “man is a migratory species” (229) (a claim which also prompts extensive comparisons with birdlife), and culminating in Chatwin’s spectacular coordination of walking with speech, thought, and poetic composition.

Chatwin’s account of the Songlines constitutes the ultimate accretion of these myriad associational layerings of music, motion, creation, and home that—especially in the “From the Notebooks” section—provide Aboriginal mythology with a paradoxical kind of retroactive genealogy that simultaneously suggests universality and historical depth. As Chatwin explains them, the Songlines are elements of Aboriginal creation stories corresponding to routes walked by “totemic,” self-created Ancestors (representing different species of animals that would become identified with titular clans) as they sung the world into existence during the Dreamtime. Each route was thus a product of a particular song, and the song itself conveyed the unique geographical features of the route it “created.” Subsequently, Chatwin explains, these diverse and intersecting song “ways”

became the bases of ritual journeys or “Walkabouts” performed by members of the totemic clans who owned the musical “deed” to each line (12-14).

Out of this rich mythology, Chatwin derives a wealth of utopian possibilities, each of which provides a nomadic “answer” to his critique of sedentary homelessness. Economically and politically, for example, the Songlines sketch a combined alternative to both the “mindless materialism” of the West and to the notion of the sepulchral State as Nazi pyramid. “What the whites used to call the ‘Walkabout,’” Chatwin reports, “was, in practice, a kind of bush-telegraph-cum-stock-exchange” in which “trade was always symmetrical” and often involved the exchange of useless (but nonetheless, for Chatwin, highly symbolic) articles such as “umbilical cords” (56-57). As the Aboriginal Father Flynn tells him, “Trading in ‘things’ is [only] the secondary consequence of trading in song” (57). Moreover, the territorial function of the Songlines is directly opposed to the State form. Songs had “stops”—“boundar[ies]” or “‘handover points[s]’ where the song passed out of your ownership,” but these boundaries, unlike those of “an international frontier” do not extend beyond the line itself:

Each “stop” had been sung into position by a Dreamtime Ancestor: its place on the song-map was thus unchangeable. But since each was the work of a *different* ancestor, there was no way of linking them sideways to form a modern political frontier. (59)

The Songlines thus recall Chatwin’s other symmetrical opponent of the (Nazi) State—his reinvented wandering Jew who “could sympathize with Zionism, but could never bring himself to join” because, to him, “Israel was an idea, not a country” (190). Indeed, because “[a] Dreaming track might start in the north-west, near Broome [and then] thread its way through twenty languages or more” (58), it also furnishes an image of human

communality across linguistic, cultural, and national “difference” that symbolically heals the linguistic catastrophe of the Tower of Babel that Chatwin laments in his inventory of dangerous buildings.²⁹

At another level, the Songlines respond to developmental blockages suggested by the terrace house at Stratford-on-Avon. In place of the abject, cannibalistic vision of conception suggested by “Boney,” the Songlines seem to figure an almost non-sexual (and thus, perhaps, “immaculate”) form of “dual paternity”:

Each Ancestor, while singing his way across country, was believed to have left a trail of “life-cells” or “spirit-children” along the line of his footprints.

“A kind of musical sperm,” said Arkady....

What you had to visualize was an *already* pregnant woman strolling about on her daily foraging round. Suddenly, she steps on a couplet, the “spirit child” jumps up—through her toe-nail, up her vagina, or into an open callus on her foot—and works its way into her womb, and impregnates the foetus with a song.

(60)

In Chatwin’s expansive vision, this belief irresistibly signifies the divinity of all human life and inaugurates an idyllic version of childhood in which the dual threats of castration and repression that seem to mark at least part of his time with his Aunts recede, replaced by warmer maternal figures that fulfill the frustrated promise of a pre-Oedipal (semiotic) homecoming that Chatwin identifies with the exoticized conch-shell “Mona” that his “father had brought from the West Indies” (7). The “beautiful blonde young lady” that Chatwin expects will “spew forth from Mona” in imitation of Botticelli’s *Birth of Venus* (7), in other words, turns out to be merely an avatar of the nomadic children (Chatwin included) for whom mother is a resplendent Quashgai nomad with “breasts...festooned with necklaces, of gold coins and amulets” and whose “first impressions of this world” are of “[a] swaying nipple and a shower of gold” (182)—an image of the maternal that

lavishly conjoins the fecundity of Chatwin's Hyperborean "Golden Age" (133) with the Golden Age of childhood. Childhood thus becomes not a source of perversion and repression that warps nomadic instincts into violence or anomie, but a model and facilitator of future satisfaction and psychic health. "You never hear [the babies] cry," notes Chatwin's friend Marian, "as long as the mother keeps moving" (118).

The collapsing of the personal and the historical in such a treatment of the Golden Age is characteristic of *The Songlines* as a whole, and the unifying force behind Chatwin's new myth of home:

I felt the Songlines were not necessarily an Australian phenomenon, but universal: that they were the means by which man marked out his territory, and so organized his social life. All other successive systems were variants—or perversions—of this original model.

The main Songlines in Australia appear to enter the country from the north or the north-west—from across the Timor Sea or the Torres Strait—and from there weave their way southward across the continent. One has the impression that they represent the routes of the first Australians—and that they have come from *somewhere else*.

How long ago? Fifty thousand years? Eighty or a hundred thousand years? The dates are insignificant compared to those from African prehistory.

And here I must take a leap into faith: into regions I would not expect anyone to follow.

I have a vision of the Songlines stretching across the continents and ages; that wherever men have trodden they have left a trail of song (of which we may, now and then, catch an echo); and that these trails must reach back, in time and space, to an isolated pocket in the African savannah, where the First Man opening his mouth in defiance of the terrors that surrounded him, shouting the opening stanza of the World Song, "I AM!" (282)

This is the heart of Chatwin's vision of nomadic transcendental homecoming and its progression from universality to singularity is absolutely symptomatic of its author's search for an existential home: the "First Man" on the African savannah creating the world with his resoundingly confident "I AM!" being Chatwin's ultimate alter ego, both

as artist and as man, an alter ego Chatwin has discovered by meticulously tracing back the paths of his own "World Song" to their putative origin.

The heart of Chatwin's metaphysical vision of nomadism, in other words, is deeply metafictional, for nomadism, as he will repeatedly emphasize, is not a matter of aimless wandering but of paying scrupulous attention to one's surroundings in order not to get lost. Chatwin continues:

Let me go one step further. Let us imagine Father Adam (*homo sapiens*) strolling around the Garden. He puts a left foot forward and names a flower. He puts a right foot forward and names a stone. The verb carries him to the next stanza of the Song. All animals, insects, birds, mammals, dolphins, fish and humpback whales have a navigation system we call "triangulation." The mysteries of Chomskyan innate sentence structure become very simple if they are thought of as human triangulation. Subject—Object—Verb. (282)

Language as triangulation, the Songline as "direction-finder" (13), "route map" (26), "a song-map" (58), "a memory bank for finding one's way about the world" (108): all of these modes of orientation speak directly to Chatwin's project of transcendental homecoming. If the First Man of the African savannah is the desired end-/beginning-point in a circular journey "stretching across the continents and ages" (282) where "[t]ime and space are...dissolved around each other" as they are along nomadic migration paths (184), then Chatwin's symbolic point of departure is surely to be found in his representation of the very Aboriginal child who recalls his earliest moment of self-recognition:

Even in captivity, Pintupi mothers, like good mothers everywhere, tell stories to their children about the origin of animals.... And as Kipling illustrated the *Just So Stories* with his own line drawings, so the Aboriginal mother makes drawings in the sand to illustrate the wanderings of the Dreamtime heroes.

She tells her tale in a patter of staccato bursts and, at the same time, traces the Ancestor's "footprints" by running her first and second fingers, one after the

other, in a double dotted line along the ground. She erases each scene with the palm of her hand and, finally, makes a circle with a line passing through it—something like a capital Q.

This marks the spot where the Ancestor, exhausted by the labours of Creation, has gone “back in.”

The sand drawings done for children are but sketches or “open versions” of *real* drawings representing *real* Ancestors, which are only done at secret ceremonies and must only be seen by initiates. All the same, it is through the “sketches” that the young learn to orient themselves to their land, its mythology and resources. (21-22)

Such a map of the Songlines, is also a map of *The Songlines*; Chatwin too seeks such guidance in the art of self-orientation from an “older” source and, like the Ancestors, seeks to follow the trail of Creation “back in”—that is to say, back home.

Cyborgs, Centaurs, and Nomads: (Im)Pure Nomadism’s Uncanny Return

The cyborg appears in myth precisely where the boundary between human and animal is transgressed. Far from signaling a walling off of people from other living beings, cyborgs signal disturbingly and pleurably tight couplings.

DONNA HARAWAY, “A Cyborg Manifesto” (152)

[T]he polymorphic body social of Nomadism is constituted by the assemblage in a single society of human beings and animals who could none of them survive on the Steppe without their partners....[T]he perfect Nomad [is] a Centaur.

ARNOLD J. TOYNBEE, *A Study of History* (1.217)

Is the redemptive structure of salvage-textualization being replaced? By what new allegories? Of conflict? Of emergence? Of syncretism?

JAMES CLIFFORD, “On Ethnographic Allegory” (121)

So far, the shift from modernism to postmodernism has seemed to involve the suppression of pure nomadism’s temporal-evolutionary difference by a more conventionally primitivist discourse of general nomadism. But the fact that Chatwin

finds his theory of general nomadism and his narrative of transcendental homecoming on a deep structure of pure nomadism suggests that what I have been describing as a “shift” from pure to general nomadism across the modern/postmodern divide is only the most visible element in what is actually a more complex dialectic. If popular discourses of nomadism in postmodern culture tend explicitly to emphasize mobility rather than degrees of evolution, they nonetheless retain a subterranean link to the more subtly differentiated (vertical) features of the pure nomadism which they appropriate and recode. Because, categorically, general nomadism is incorporative rather than exclusionary (mobility being its only variable), its “suppression” of pure nomadism’s vertical axis may only be superficial. In reality, postmodern discourses of general nomadism continue to exploit the unique (and paradoxical) tropological power of pure nomadism to naturalize “impurity” and to figure a “primitive” utopian state of techno-organic and cultural syncretism.

Until now, we have been interested primarily in the common “primitivist” effect of nomadism in both its pure and general forms—that is, how it functions as a sign of authenticity or authority legitimizing a particular vision of utopia. In this regard, the functional equivalence of both types of nomadic representation is vividly suggested by the fact that both Lawrence and Chatwin present their visions of nomadic homecoming in terms of an opposition between the nomad and the train, where the construction or presence of a railroad in the desert symbolizes an unwelcome and threatening incursion of Western machinery and values into “pure” or “sacred” nomad space and provides the nomadic primitivist with a convenient metonymy of his chief antagonist against which

various symbolic battles may be waged. “Our greatest object was to destroy the locomotives,” Lawrence says (378). Train-wrecking had merely been “derring-do” in the abbreviated and jingoistic *Revolt in the Desert* (Mackenzie 162), but, as O’Donnell points out, citing Leo Marx’s *The Machine in the Garden*, it acquires a rebellious subtext in *Seven Pillars*, where Turkish railroads become more broadly symbolic of the imperialism of sedentary civilizations. “The machine in the desert is the most extreme symbol of the triumph of Western values in Arabia,” O’Donnell suggests, and since “the desert is the garden of the nihilist” (99), Lawrence’s attacks on the railway are attacks on what Marx calls the “sudden, shocking intruder upon a fantasy of idyllic satisfaction” (qtd. in O’Donnell 99). In *The Songlines*, Chatwin similarly freights his train imagery with associations of civilization in its most destructive form. Not only do train tracks—“three hundred miles of steel, slicing through innumerable songs” (14)—“scar” and “wound” the land (11), but the train itself is associated with the horrors of the Second World War. At one level, this association is personal, as Chatwin recalls “the fantastic homelessness of [his] first five years”:

My mother and I would shuttle back and forth, on the railways of wartime England, on visits to family and friends.

All the frenzied agitation of the times communicated itself to me: the hiss of steam on a fogbound station; the double clu-unk of carriage doors closing; the drone of aircraft, the searchlights, the sirens; the sound of a mouth-organ along a platform of sleeping soldiers. (5-6)

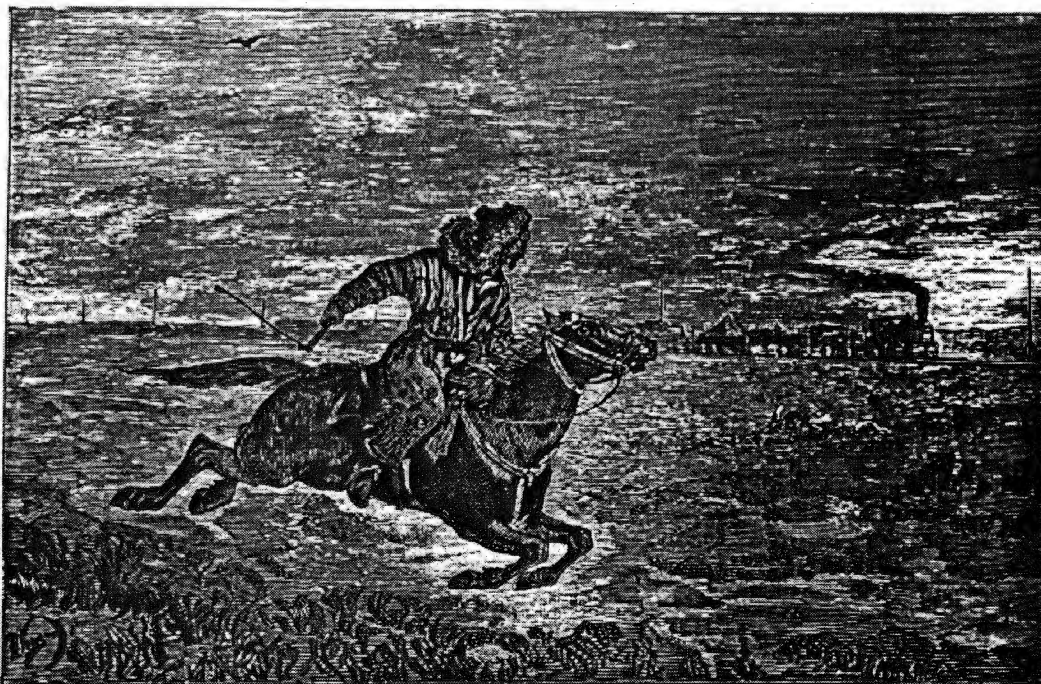
This is Chatwin’s train at its most romantic—the wailing of the soldier’s “mouth-organ” turns this image of wartime homelessness and anxiety into a kind of makeshift Western “songline”: “I knew that, once the bombs began to fall, I could curl up inside [my suitcase] and be safe” (6). But the hissing steam, the sirens, the ominously closing doors,

the droning aircraft all associate these youthful train rides with the less reassuring picture provided by the father of Chatwin's friend and guide through Australia, Arkady Volchok, "a Cossack from a village near Rostov-on-Don, who, in 1942, was arrested and sent with a trainload of other *Ostarbeiter* to work in a German factory" and who, "one night, somewhere in the Ukraine,...jumped from the cattle-car into a field of sunflowers," beating an escape "between murdering armies" into marriage, fatherhood, and apparently, allegory (1). For the escape of the (symbolically) nomadic Cossack from the Nazi "cattle-car" on the still-moving train allegorizes all of Chatwin's ultimate judgments on civilization, technology, and war.

As we have seen, however, despite this common structural similarity along the horizontal axis of space, differences on the vertical axis of time make the utopian ideals asserted by pure and general nomadism significantly different and this difference affects the sustainability of the nomad-train opposition itself. The binary temporal structure covertly reproduced by the emphasis on movement in Chatwin's general nomadism appears to reinforce the conventional primitivist distinction between nature and technology suggested by Leo Marx's notion of "the machine in the garden." However, the tripartite temporal structure in which Lawrence's pure nomadism acquires its significance as third term between savagery and civilization engages the binary contrast between nature and technology in a more challenging way. Whereas the coordination of spatial and temporal axes in general nomadism keeps the categories of primitive/modern, nature/technology in mutually reinforcing alignment, the purely formal opposition of "primitive" and modern along the moral (horizontal) axis of barbarism in pure nomadism

means that its categorical separation of a nature/technology distinction is much weaker. In Chapter One, I traced the origins of this internal instability to the pure nomad's intermediary position in evolutionary and historical narratives of the development of civilization; it now becomes evident that this intermediacy is symbolically played out in the pure nomad's highly ambiguous relationship to technology, and particularly to technologies of mobility.

The frontispiece to Charles Marvin's *Reconnoitring* [sic] *Central Asia: Pioneering Adventures in the Region Lying Between Russia and India* (1885) provides a revealing illustration of this ambiguity (Fig. 15). Subtitled "The Transcaspian Railway—The Nomad and the Locomotive," the etching is starkly allegorical in its depiction of the inevitability of progress. (Its privileged position in the book suggests both its overarching symbolic importance and its commercial drawing power.) In the foreground, a "Turkoman" (Kirghiz?) Nomad drives his horse onward in a race with a hazily represented train that appears to be emerging, dream-like, from the similarly textured clouds on the horizon. Perspectivally, the nomad and locomotive seem evenly matched; the angle of the image, however, gives the distant train a considerable lead on the nomad, leaving little doubt as to the outcome of the contest. Splayed on the steppe between the two contestants, the skeleton of a horse hints ominously at the outcome; in fact, when read sequentially, the foreground, middle-ground, and background make a sequential temporal allegory of progress predicting the death of the horse and the triumph of the train. In a classic gesture of imperial nostalgia (or perhaps simply irony), the picture aligns our point of view with that of the romantically rendered nomad, even as it uses his



THE TRANSCASPIAN RAILWAY—THE NOMAD AND THE LOCOMOTIVE.

[Frontispiece.]

FIGURE 15

Charles Marvin. *Reconnoitring Central Asia: Pioneering Adventures in the Region Lying Between Russia and India* (1885)

gaze to direct ours towards the future represented by the train. Toyndbee's own remarks on the Transcaspian railway provide a fortuitous, though less celebratory, gloss on the picture's imperialist narrative:

The Mongol raids were over in two or three generations; but the Russian colonization which has been the reprisal for them has been going on for over four hundred years—first behind the Cossack lines, which encircled and narrowed down the pasture-lands from the north, and then along the Transcaspian Railway, which stretched its tentacles round their southern border. From the Nomad's point of view, a Peasant Power like Russia resembles those rolling and crushing machines with which Western industrialism shapes hot steel according to its pleasure. In its grip the Nomad is either crushed out of existence or racked into the sedentary mould, and the process of penetration is not always peaceful. The path was cleared for the Transcaspian Railway by the slaughter of Türkmens at Göktepé. But the nomad's death-cry is seldom heard. (1.204)

Toyndbee's evocation of "the nomad's death-cry" in this condemnation of a monstrous Western industrialism makes the rhetorical contrast between nature and technology exploited in the frontispiece explicit—a contrast he goes on to elaborate in terms of the "hitherto impenetrable desert fastness [of the Sahara] invaded by aeroplanes and by the eight-wheeled automobile," ultimately embodied in what will become the Chatwinian contrast between nature and art: *Homo Nomas* (Abel) and *Homo Faber* (Cain) (1.205).

The pathos of "The Nomad and the Locomotive" derives from such contrasts. The contrasts themselves, however, depend upon an underlying homology between horse and train (the "iron horse") as technologies of movement—a relation which the Canadian painter Alex Colville has figured more directly and confrontationally, placing their fatal, headlong encounter on the same track.³⁰ Though his morose (conventionally primitivist) account of "the last hour of Nomadism" (1.205) ultimately disregards its implications, Toyndbee makes this very point in an account of "the composite society of the Steppe":³¹

this Steppe society does not consist simply of the human shepherd and his flock. In addition to the animals which he keeps in order to live on their products, the Nomad keeps other animals—the dog, the camel, the horse—whose function is to help him in his work. These auxiliary animals are the *chef-d'œuvre* of the Nomadic Civilization and the key to its success. The sheep and the cow have merely to be tamed, though that is difficult enough, in order to be of service to man. The dog and camel and horse cannot perform their more sophisticated services until they have been not only tamed but trained into the bargain. The training of his non-human auxiliaries is the Nomad's crowning achievement.

(1.208)

Such an account of the “higher Nomad art” (1.208) of training “non-human auxiliaries” to facilitate and expand human labor power defines a would-be “natural” technology that immediately complicates the primitivist distinction between nature and culture. A similar equation of horse and technology is suggested in Toynbee's account of the dangers of niche adaptation epitomized by the “arrested civilizations.” His assertion that while “[t]he Eskimo's dog and the Nomad's horse and camel are half-humanized by their partnership with man... [the] human partners in these associations are specialized into ‘monsters’” such that “[t]he perfect Nomad [is] a centaur, the perfect Eskimo a Merman,” assumes a certain exchangeability of animal and machine, for he continues: “the descriptions given by observers all agree in asserting that these specialists have carried their skill to such a point that the man-boat in one case and the man-horse in the other manoeuvre as organic units” (1.217).³² The notion of horse as technology is implicit in the visual parallels of the Marvin frontispiece as well, where the nomad's horsewhip, trailing behind him, repeats the trailing emissions from the locomotive's smokestack: parallel signs of the driving forces behind each vehicle. Just as Toynbee sometimes seeks to contain the nomad's technological ambiguity by reverting to a language of monstrosity that identifies the nomad with a bestial nature—the nomad as centaur—so the image of

nomad and train literally foregrounds the “natural” animalistic vigor of the horse’s body and reinforces its organicism with the horse-skeleton in the middle-ground, both of which contrast with the mechanical regularity of the train that is literally and figuratively “on the horizon.” Such contortions may contain, but they cannot completely cancel, the mounted nomad’s ambiguous relation to the engineer.

The trajectory of T. E. Lawrence’s obsessions—from the nomadic Bedouin in *Seven Pillars* to the futurist cult of the machine in *The Mint* (his account of his time as an “anonymous” serviceman in the RAF)—plays out the implicit connection between riding-animal and train on a grand scale. For although Lawrence’s rejection of the Bedouin at the end of *Seven Pillars* and his subsequent self-interment as “a cog” in Britain’s military machine have been interpreted as a nearly suicidal shift from the “organic ideal” of medieval individualism of the desert to the “mechanical ideal” of F. T. Marinetti’s modern Europe (O’Donnell 101-02), the opposition between pure nomad and technology—not only in Lawrence’s career, but generally—is considerably less neat than this narrative implies. As David Harvey points out, responses to the feeling of existential dislocation and instability that characterize transcendental homelessness took symmetrically opposite forms during the inter-war period of “heroic modernism” which were nonetheless rooted in the common post-Enlightenment project of “search[ing] for a myth appropriate to modernity” (30) whose purpose was either “to redeem us from ‘the formless universe of contingency’ or, more programmatically, to provide the impetus for a new project for human endeavor” (31). The worship of “the image of rationality incorporated in the machine, the factory, the power of contemporary technology, or the

city as a ‘living machine’” in the work of Ezra Pound, Mies van der Rohe, Le Corbusier, and the Italian futurists provided “heroic” modernism with one mythic path (31-33). The turn to universal myth and primitive art in T. S. Eliot and Picasso struck out in the opposite direction, like Heidegger, “reject[ing]...a universalizing machine rationality” and “propos[ing] a counter-myth of rootedness in place” (34-35). Yet, the embrace of the new and the tug of nostalgia were not mutually exclusive responses, for “[i]t proved possible to combine up-to-date scientific engineering practices, as incorporated in the most extreme forms of technical-bureaucratic and machine rationality, with a myth of Aryan superiority and the blood and soil of the Fatherland” to create a deadly form of “reactionary modernism” (33)—an encounter which has been scrupulously traced by Jeffrey Herf in his study of the same name. In what is almost a parody of the opening dedication to S. A. in *Seven Pillars*, Lawrence’s adoration of his motorbike “Boa” in a chapter of *The Mint* entitled “The Road” captures exactly the flavor of reactionary modernism’s techno-primitivism:

A skittish motor-bike with a touch of blood in it is better than all the riding animals on earth, because of its logical extension of our faculties, and the hint, the provocation, to excess conferred by its honeyed untiring smoothness. Because Boa loves me, he gives me five more miles of speed than a stranger would get from him. (228)

In fact, Lawrence’s futurist praise of speed imputes more than “a touch” of blood to the equine “Boanerges” (225), the “steel magnificence of strength and speed” (227) “which lived in a garage-hut,” delivered a “glad roar at being alive again,” possessed “a thoroughbred engine,” “swayed dizzily wagging its tail for thirty awful yards” before “check[ing] and straighten[ing] his head with a shake, as a Brough should,” ultimately to

be “stabled” again by his master (225-27). O’Donnell takes Lawrence at his word and reads this praise of the motorcycle as a confirmation that “he comes to believe that motorbike and airplane are superior to camel, English troops to Bedouin” (101), but Lawrence’s own language suggests that nomad and motorbike are essentially interchangeable, even if they are not universally available as immediate objects for psychic investment. Lawrence’s time in Arabia was, after all, limited; it is quite possible that his avowal of the motorbike’s superiority is merely a way of accommodating himself to presently available resources for fantasy.³³

The pure nomad’s use of “technologies” like the horse or camel marks him as more advanced than the savage, but it also hints at a still more important second ambiguity, which is that his technologies are not entirely his own. Toynbee, for instance, notes that

Of all the goods which passed outwards across the ineffectively insulating *limes*, weapons of war were perhaps the most significant. The barbarians could never have attacked effectively without the use of weapons forged in the arsenals of civilization....In the long history of the war-horse, the most dramatic case in which this weapon had been turned by a barbarian against the civilization from which he had acquired it was to be found in the New World, where the horse had been unknown until it had been imported by post-Columbian Western Christian intruders....The introduction of the horse on the plains of Texas, Venezuela, and Argentina made Nomad stockbreeders out of the descendants of the 150 generations of husbandmen, while at the same time it made mobile mounted war-bands out of the Indian tribes of the Great Plains beyond the frontier of the Spanish viceroyalty of New Spain and of the English colonies that eventually became the United States. The borrowed weapon did not give these transfrontier barbarians the ultimate victory, but it enabled them to postpone their final discomfiture. (2.142-43)

It is precisely such appropriations across the frontier, as I argued in Chapter One, that distinguish the nomadic barbarian (who is partially acculturated) from what Toynbee

tellingly refers to as “*unmodified primitive man*” (2.146; my emphasis). As a strictly formal structure, then, the opposition between pure nomadism and sedentary civilization is not, as in general nomadism, an opposition between nature and technology or between an “organic ideal” and a “machine ideal,” but—quite surprisingly—an opposition between cultural syncretism and cultural purity.

The interstitial position which paradoxically identifies the pure nomad with the techno-organic impurity of the cyborg or the syncretism of the cultural hybrid might seem to grant at least the vertical axis of pure nomadism a disruptive edge. Significantly, however, subversion from within is precisely what does not take place. Lawrence’s monumental binarisms—desert Arab and town Arab, honourable nomad war and civilized “murder” war, etc.—plainly show that the “primitivizing” horizontal axis inevitably has the final word, consigning the syncretic ambiguities of the temporal axis to the status of “primitive” ideal. In fact, Lawrence reveals that this is precisely why pure nomads are so extraordinary:

Common rumor makes them [the Bedouin] as unchanging as the desert in which they live; but more often they show themselves singularly receptive, very open to useful innovations. Their few vested interests make it simple for them to change their ways; but even so it is astonishing to find how whole-heartedly they adopt an invention fitted to their life. Coffee, gunpowder, Manchester cotton are all new things, and yet appear so native that without them one can hardly imagine their desert life. (Introduction, *Arabia Deserta* 25)

Such an uncanny ability to naturalize cultural borrowing is a function of the odd dissonance between the horizontal and vertical axes of pure nomadism’s double structure: syncretism followed by binary recuperation. As Lawrence’s own parasitic attachment of his prophet fantasy to the meta-primitivist dynamic of the “nomadic

alternative” already suggests, the inevitability of primitivist recuperations of syncretism is what gives pure nomadism its unique attractiveness for the Western romantic who would go nomad. For only the unique structure of pure nomadism can legitimize his own cross-cultural becoming—can make his own adoption, like that of coffee, gunpowder, and Manchester cotton, “appear so native.”

Such a naturalization of going-native solves a major problem for primitivists during the modernist period. As Michael Bell has argued, the very aspect of “primitive thought” that made the primitive an object of desire for alienated moderns—his “cosmic piety” (*Primitivism* 10) or what Ernst Cassirer called his “mythic imagination...in which there has been no ‘dissociation’ of the separate factors of objective perception and subjective feeling” (qtd. in Bell 8)—was double-edged. Although Lucien Lévy-Bruhl’s account of the mind of primitive man articulated a vision of the kind of transcendental dwelling or “psychological continuity with his world” Westerners themselves imagined they had “lost” (Bell, “Metaphysics” 21), it also created a sense of impasse between primitive and modern that located the primitive home at a permanent remove from the mind of modern man:

The influential view that the primitive psychology is radically different from the civilized not only supports the romantic belief in a comparable polarity in modes of mental life but it leads to a similarly ambivalent interpretation. From the more positive viewpoint, it is theoretically possible for anyone to enjoy the more primitive mentality if he can make the necessary inner adjustment:.... In anthropological contexts, however, the corresponding polarity has a more chronological or evolutionary implication suggesting the impossibility of reconciliation. (*Primitivism* 63)

Citing Tylor’s suggestion in *Primitive Culture* that there is an “intellectual frontier” between mythic and rational consciousness that cannot be experientially crossed and

Conrad's ambivalent depiction of atavistic regression in *Heart of Darkness*, Bell concludes that, in the early twentieth century, "there were strains in anthropological thinking which appeared to substantiate the sense we derive from primitivist literature that the primitive is a psychological potentiality the realization of which would imply the destruction of the civilized psyche" (64). In theory, the double-structure of *pure nomadism* offered an attractive way out of this dilemma, even though, in practice, the more sedentary village-model of "home" suggested by modernism worked against its widespread adoption.



Michael Asher's *The Last of the Bedu: In Search of the Myth* (1996) suggests precisely how the double-structure of pure nomadism is being reinvented in popular ethnographic representations now that this earlier barrier to regarding nomadism as an image of transcendental home has begun to crumble. At one level, Asher's text is a deconstruction of the myth of pure nomadism as it had been articulated by T. E. Lawrence, John Bagot Glubb, and Wilfred Thesiger. Whereas their visions of the Bedouin had been at least implicitly evolutionary and invariably lamented the "destruction" of authentic Bedouin nomadism brought about by Lawrence's "civilization disease," Asher brings a less mystified sensibility to his encounter with "the Bedu in modern times":

I had come to Mughshin convinced that I would find the dull monotony of a desert suburbia, a once proud people now condemned to the humdrum of modern life. I had found instead something different—a traditional culture in the actual process of change, and, though I regretted the passing of the old life, I had to admit that the transformation had its fascinating aspects. Thesiger and the Orientalists had condemned the apparent acquiescence of the Bedu in their own modernization and settlement as a "betrayal." Now I found myself wondering

who or what had been betrayed. It occurred to me that Ibn Khaldun had a lot to answer for: it was the notion of “distinction,” of “polarity”—Cain and Abel, the “pure” nomad against the “corrupt” settler—which was to blame for this sense of moral outrage. I wondered if the terms Bedouin and cultivator had ever really been as mutually exclusive as some liked to believe. The celebrated Israeli scholar Emanuel Marx recorded in 1967, for example, that 16,000 Bedu still living in the Negev were “primarily farmers” who also reared camel, sheep, and goats and worked for wages, yet considered themselves and were considered by the settled population “true” Bedu. There was, in fact, an almost infinite variety of definitions of Bedu and “true” Bedu, even among the Arabs.

Viewed in a different light—a light in which nomads and settlers were not polarities but merely alternating stages of organization that the same groups used in response to changing conditions—the settlement of the Bedu at Mughshin looked less like “betrayal” than flexibility. (21)

Such revisionism clearly marks an intellectual-political gain in favor of coevalness. As Asher’s friend Musallim dryly replies in answer to Asher’s query about the loss of “traditional qualities”:

When I was born, the Bedu were unbelievably poor and anyone who wants to go back to being poor must be absolutely crazy! Old Bedu today will tell you that some things about the old days were better—and they were. But you can’t find one of them who really wants to go back to those old days. Where do you think we would be today if we were still riding about on camels carrying our mother-of-ten-shots rifles, when our neighbours were flying aeroplanes? They would take our country from us as easily as raiders with rifles used to take camels from an unarmed herdsboy. The world belongs to the survivors. Those who do not change with it will simply be destroyed. (22)

Yet, even as Asher debunks the primitivist fantasy of Bedouin purity, his narrative establishes new terms by which the Bedouin’s utopian function may be subtly recuperated. For in place of an original purity, the Bedouin is now implicated in an original (now desirable) impurity: “I wondered if the terms Bedouin and cultivator *had ever* really been as mutually exclusive as some liked to believe” (my emphasis).

To be sure, Asher characterizes Bedouin “flexibility” and “adaptability” as universal human traits in his effort to come to terms with his own imperial nostalgia:

It was tragic to witness the end of an era, I thought. But the wheel of change turned ineluctably, crushing all who would stand in its path. Man is an adaptive animal—he had adapted to this most extreme of environments. With his technical ingenuity even the elderly Westerners we had met at Selima, who knew virtually nothing about the desert, could survive here. The true threat to existence lies not in change, but in becoming entrenched in a rigid response to a universe which is itself always changing. No matter how successful such a response may be, time and change will ultimately render it worthless. The Bedu are perhaps history's most brilliant example of man's ability to adapt. They have endured precisely because their ways were not immutable—because they have always been able to ride and roll with the waves of change. In shifting to cultivation and motor-cars they were merely doing what they had always done, using the same penchant for adaptation they had employed for 4,000 years. (283)

In principle, such an incorporation of Bedouinism into a universal vision of human adaptability is a welcome development. But why must the Bedouin constitute “perhaps the most brilliant example” of this adaptability? How can Asher be certain that “they have *always* been able to ride and roll with the waves of change,” or that, in doing so, “they were merely doing what they had always done”? The paradoxical return to the primitivist rhetoric of origins, of timelessness and changelessness (and even, oddly, of a certain lack of agency, as the Bedouin merely “roll and ride” the waves of change) at the very moment their adaptability is asserted reveals a degree of ambivalence in Asher's repudiation of imperial nostalgia. Indeed, one might legitimately wonder, if there is “an almost infinite variety of definitions of Bedu and ‘true’ Bedu, even among the Arabs,” as Asher claims, then who exactly are the Bedu who constitute Asher's “brilliant example”? Asher's deconstruction of pure nomadism, in other words, is reminiscent of Khazanov's. The “nomads” exist in perpetual fluctuating relation to an “outside world,” sometimes even merging with it and becoming “primarily farmers,” and yet retain a curious integrity—an integrity which, in Asher's book, ultimately sets them on the well-worn

path to “primitive” exemplarity. In this regard, Asher’s treatment of the Bedouin might be seen as a variant of contemporary discourses of “anti-primitivist primitivism” identified by Li.

This paradoxical form of what I would call “syncretic primitivism” is particularly evident in Asher’s preoccupation with establishing that the Bedouin have never deviated from their original habit of adaptability. For instance, Asher is all too eager to engage in Chatwinesque historical speculation in order to contextualize current adaptations within a strangely “immutable” discourse of syncretic authenticity:

If the Bedu really did lay the foundations of [the ancient desert town of] Palmyra—and traces of them have been found here dating back as far as 2000 BC—then it is an illuminating example of the way in which nomadic and settled life were continuously fluid and interchangeable, and by no means fixed in eternal opposition as traditional authors maintained. In this early case, clearly, the nomads had not remained poor out of preference for the freedom of the desert, neither had their ways been immutable. Here was an unmistakable parallel with what was happening in Arabia at the end of the twentieth century: a situation in which the Bedu had taken advantage of new opportunities, and adapted to a different mode of existence in order to survive. (35)

The rapid journey from “[i]f” to “clearly” to “unmistakably” in this passage reveals an overpowering of historiography by desire that is symptomatic of Asher’s purpose, for, of course, the point of this vignette is to establish an immemorial tradition of Bedouin flexibility. His subsequent account of a Bedouin village in which houses and tents intermingle in “a fascinating illustration of the successful integration of desert and sown” (48) and whose inhabitants have dispensed with camels but “carry the sheep in trucks” during the wet season (49) provides an appropriately archetypal setting for one of Asher’s most emblematic expressions of this strategy which proceeds by containing syncretism within a classically primitivist discourse of authenticity. Responding to Asher’s query as

to whether they still consider themselves Bedu now that they live in houses, an old woman replies, "Houses don't make any difference. We are still Bedu, just the same"

(50). By way of illustration, Asher allegorizes the scene:

The woman with the sewing-machine worked away silently during our conversation, hunching uncomfortably over the device, turning the handle with terrible concentration. I watched her with interest for a moment, and realized suddenly that this Singer was a genuine antique. "That's an old machine," I commented.

The old lady paused and glanced up at me, her face a pattern of tattoos on tanned leather. "It certainly is!" she said. "It belonged to my mother. It's a *Sanja*, by God! A foreigner like yourself once came here—an Italian he said he was—and offered me four thousand lire for it. "I won't sell, by God!" I said. "This *Sanja* belonged to my mother! I wouldn't exchange it even for a hundred goats! And besides, if you are ready to give me four thousand lire, it must be something very special indeed!" (50)

Mirroring Asher's rhetorical strategy throughout *The Last of the Bedu* of asserting and then (putatively) undercutting his own primitivist assumptions, this anecdote invokes the stock figure of the tribal elder who embodies a fragile—but, for the moment, unyielding—link to an authentic past in order to reconfigure its allegorical message. The woman's refusal to sell her mother's legacy, a Western Singer sewing-machine, to the (decadent?) Italian at any price gives a neat syncretic twist to the conventional noble savage who understands the priceless value of authentic cultural traditions and holds the vulgarity of acquisitive foreigners in highest contempt. But that is only one level of the allegory, for it is not only the Singer but the old woman who is "a genuine antique" in Asher's eyes. The discourse of authenticity, in other words, has not been dispelled, only reconfigured. Despite her apparent subversion of primitivist tropes, the old woman slides immediately back into the conventional role of embodying essential truths about her culture. Predictably, the anecdote sets up Asher's perpetual refrain:

As we drove back along the wall which, 1,000 years ago, had marked the boundary of gardens which the Bedu had created out of the desert, I wondered if indeed very much had changed. Nomads who reared camels exclusively had always been a tiny minority even among the pastoral population of the Arab world. In the Baadiya, with its oscillation between fertility and barrenness, it had always been those who combined agriculture with livestock-rearing who had been most in evidence. If there was a norm in the Arab way of life, it was surely this, for in a changing environment it was those who were the least specialized who had the greatest chance of success. (50)

As this continual circling of origins and norms suggests, we are to take Asher at his word when he announces that he has gone "*In Search of the Myth.*" The epigraph from Marina Warner, which alerts the reader to "myth's own secret cunning"—its "pretend[ing] to present the matter as it is and always must be," all the while being a form that "convey[s] values and expectations that are always evolving, in the process of being formed...but never set so hard they cannot be changed again"—conveys precisely the ambiguities of this search in which demystification promptly gives way to the reinvention.

The ambivalence of Asher's critique and repudiation of primitivism inheres in the equivocal structure of his enterprise as a whole, which, despite its disavowals and theoretical canniness, seeks constantly to insert itself into the Orientalist tradition it noisily claims to reject. Of course, all critiques necessarily remain linked to the object of their gaze, my own included. But as even its title indicates, *The Last of the Bedu* is a profoundly nostalgic desert book—nostalgic not only for its lost object (the pure nomad) but for authentic desert travel itself (the "true" desert traveler—a figure whom Lawrence himself was already eulogizing in his Introduction to Bertram Thomas's *Arabia Felix* in 1932!). Considering that Asher has written biographies of both T. E. Lawrence and Wilfred Thesiger, it is not surprising that these towering figures cast very long shadows

over his own quest, nor is it surprising, in light of this romantic pedigree, that his enthusiasm for nomadic adaptability often appears strained or tepid. In fact, despite its tireless articulation of this theme, the predominant tone of Asher's book is one of mourning, and the sheer volume of incidents in which the author records his disappointment at failing to uncover classical Bedouin authenticity suggests that there is more at stake in these laments than simply an ironic rhetorical strategy. At one of his most revealing moments, Asher opines:

I had searched southern Arabia for the spirit of the Bedu that had once lit the landscape like a flame, and everywhere I had encountered change. In places that spirit still hung on tenaciously, despite everything, but not here in the Jiddat al Harasis. Here the landscape was vacant, naked, meaningless, bereft of the people who had survived upon its scant resources for generations. True, there is no nobility in ignorance, poverty or disease. And yet those people—irrational and superstitious perhaps—had had a sense of belonging in this unfathomed universe which we rational people will never know. (173-74)

This sudden reappearance of the discourse of transcendental homelessness locates Asher's text squarely within the Lawrence-Thesiger tradition of desert primitivism and provides the missing context for its reinvention of Bedouin authenticity under the sign of syncretism. To the extent that he deconstructs the Bedouin myth, Asher deprives himself of a conventionally primitivist transcendental home—a circumstance that, on the one hand, tempts him into a compensatory celebration of the desert as a sublime landscape and a spiritual consolation. Invoking G. W. Murray's dictum that "The Arab looks at the desert much as the mathematician looks at his space-time continuum" (181), for instance, Asher seeks a traditional metaphysical detour from the "our automated landscape" and "overcrowded planet" in a desert setting that not only reminds him of "a primeval planet" but seems to provide access to a mythic form of time in which contact with the "irrational

and superstitious people” who had “a sense of belonging in this unfathomed universe” no longer seems impossible (176):

Often I felt we were not really alone here, but part of a continuing migration of souls across millennia. There were others walking beside us, divided from us only by the flimsy membranes of created time—an invention of civilization. Sometimes, walking silently in the desert like this, I actually sensed the presence of someone else. I imagined footfalls behind me, mournful voices aching across the emptiness. Jinns, perhaps, but I was reminded of Eliot’s famous lines from *The Waste Land*—the ones about the hooded figure in brown who is always walking alongside. (181)

The way in which Asher’s celebration of the desert as a zone of release from “artificial” temporal constraints attributed to “civilization” slides into reverence for a numinous space of communion with ancestral spirits is telling. For the Jinns—“spirits which linger on in the deserts of the Middle East and North Africa” and which “may enter a man’s head and possess him permanently” (177)—allow Asher to sustain an image of the Bedouin as “figures out of myth and folklore for Westerners” (181) that his own critique has explicitly debunked. Asher’s enthusiasm for “the timeless continuum of the desert” (203) in which “[t]here is no real difference between 1,000 years and 10,000 years, between a million years and a second” (235) may displace an explicitly primitivist discourse of transcendental homecoming, but this discourse nonetheless persists as a sort of nervous symptom in the periodic eruptions of the idealized primitive Asher represses onto romanticized plain of the desert in the form of nomadic spirits like the Jinn, a Tuareg mummy (202), and a Bedouin corpse (283-84). Ultimately, such manifestations suggest that the very persistence with which Asher disavows the myth of pure nomadism produces a sort of inverted utopianism in which the acknowledgement that the pure

nomad is merely a myth and thus literally exists “nowhere” paradoxically enhances its function as a signifier of utopia.

On the other hand, even as Asher retraces the romantic terrain of desert travel, his discovery of new terms by which to mythologize the Bedu allows him to address the problem of transcendental homelessness more directly, illustrating the use to which pure nomadism’s double-structure is increasingly put in postmodernism. For if the Bedu are simultaneously construed as “the supreme example of man’s ability to adapt to a hostile environment without destroying himself” and “merely ourselves in another guise,” a mirror in which “we urban men can see ourselves more clearly—what we have gained, what we have lost, what we have yet to gain” (236), then celebrations or idealizations of the Bedu’s reputed adaptability are actually figurations of transcendental homecoming that reflect (and even in some ways seek accommodation with) the new (though no doubt partial) reality indicated by Donna Haraway’s assertion that “the cyborg is our ontology” (150). In short, there is a strange turnabout in this type of “primitivism” whereby the originally syncretic pure nomad becomes an apologist for “progress” and all the cultural ambiguities that word implies. Needless to say, the (pseudo) erosion of “polarities” like nomad and settler in this case solves the problem of the primitivist’s own authenticity in advance, since cultural fluidity is now recognized as a universal human trait (though one which is of course “perfected” or “epitomized” by the primitive, whose temporal distantiatioⁿ lives on in the form of exceptionality). The “savage slot” has not been done away with, in other words; it has been ingeniously recuperated under the sign of irony—that typically postmodern strategy for having one’s cake and eating it too.

Though less overtly, and more conventionally, Chatwin's work reflects these dynamics as well. As we have seen, the structure of Chatwin's nomadic primitivism is such that the focus on mobility (general nomadism) overshadows the ambiguities signaled by residual evolutionism (pure nomadism)—but not entirely. For Chatwin's claims for the universality of the Songlines asserts a continuity between primitive and modern realms that reproduces the incorporative effect of pure nomadism's double-structure. Just as Lawrence asserts that the Bedouins' appropriations could make products of Western civilization "appear native," Chatwin claims that

Aboriginals believed that all the "living things" had been made in secret beneath the earth's crust, as well as all the white man's gear—his aeroplanes, his guns, his Toyota Land Cruisers—and every invention that will ever be invented; slumbering below the surface, waiting their turn to be called. (14-15)

Moreover, Chatwin's occasional admiration for nomads as a "very pragmatic" (14) people, not bound by nativist notions of cultural purity, anticipates Asher's own praise of the Bedu as "pragmatists rather than romantics" (22). Overall, the thrust of Chatwin's work is decisively away from syncretic moments such as these—he acknowledges that the Aborigines drive Toyotas down their Songlines now, but is ultimately more comfortable with a less compromised primitivist register when appreciating the "timeless and irreverent vitality" of his nomads (18). Images of cultural or techno-organic syncretism are accordingly overshadowed in Chatwin's nomadic writings by an emphasis on the complementary, more "naturalistic," and more obviously "primitive" poetics of "monstrosity" and becoming-animal that provide his own going-nomad with implicit allegorical sanction.

Chatwin's speculation on the meaning of "the Animal Style art of northern Europe and Asia," for instance, downplays southern influences, postulating indigenous northern traditions to account for the prevalence of animal-human hybrids among this body of artworks instead ("Nomadic Alternative" 92). In his estimation, classical reports of "Dog-Men," "Web-Feet," a "Land of Feathers," and the "Abominable Snowman" reflect more than simply the tendency of "[c]ivilized men [to attribute] animal properties to the nomads" (94). "The monstrosities of Asia are difficult to explain away" (93), Chatwin contends, because they are not foreign projections but evidence of shamanism, "a religious ideology peculiar to hunters and herdsmen" (95) that involves a becoming-animal of the shaman or religious leader, a man who is "set aside from the 'normal' life of the tribe" yet "remains the hub of its creative activity, its culture hero" (96):

A fable of Aesop tells of the Golden Age when "the other animals had articulate speech, and knew the use of words; and they held meetings in the forests; and the stones spoke and needles of the pine tree..." In his trance, the shaman forsakes his human condition and regains this Paradisal Time. He identifies himself with a "helping spirit," usually an animal or bird, and learns to imitate its language. A costume completes the transformation.... By putting on the costume, he becomes that animal or bird. (96-97)

Significantly, Chatwin links this account of shamanism as a merging of separate realms with the "hallucinatory" elements of a nomadic art that "tends to be portable, asymmetric, discordant, restless, incorporeal and intuitive" (98) and links the shaman himself, "as a creative personality," to "the craftsman, especially the metal-smith" (99)—associations that resonate in suggestive ways with his own "nomadic art." The creative becoming-animal of the shaman, in other words, provides Chatwin with a hopeful allegory for the becoming-nomad of the Western theorist of restlessness who not only goes nomad, but

attempts to transcend “the absurdity of trying to write a *book* on Nomads” (*Songlines* 178; my emphasis) by identifying his mode of literary composition with nomadic ones, a strategy figured in Chatwin’s attempt to compose an “Aboriginal” song under the “hallucinatory” influence of alcohol (71-73).

The pure nomadic allegories of primitive syncretism that subtend and enrich postmodern discourses of general nomadism can seem attractive because they appear to embody the type of conceptual reorientation proposed by Clifford in his important essay “On Ethnographic Allegory” in which, seeking an end to allochronic representations situating the Other “in a present-becoming-past,” he asks:

What would it require...consistently to associate the inventive, resilient, enormously varied societies of Melanesia with the cultural *future* of the planet? How might ethnographies be differently conceived if this standpoint could be seriously adopted? Pastoral allegories of cultural loss and textual rescue would, in any event, have to be transformed. (115)

As the examples of Chatwin and Asher suggest, however, it is as important to be cautious about schematically associating the “nomadic” practices of non-Western cultures with the future of the planet as with its past, for although the decisive rejection of allochronic tropes must remain a priority, there is a danger in simply reversing the temporal polarities of primitivism and reinventing the nomad as a symbol of self-authenticating “hybridity” (Chatwin) or techno-primitive futurism (Asher). As far as the Western consumption of primitive imagery goes, there is a fine line between recognizing the inevitable flux and intermingling (gradual or violent) of cultural traditions and celebrating a neo-imperialist “McWorld” discourse of postmodern globalization. There is obviously an important difference between the self-identified Bedouin who carries his camel in a Toyota flatbed



FIGURE 16
The Camel Route



Stereo components for nomads.

Close up and packed about your camel
for station service. They may look
like an ordinary portable photograph.
But at the end of your journey,
when you open them up and plug them in,
you have the real thing. Stereo components.
Only they're portable. Powerful. Solid.
Made from stainless steel.
True High-Fidelity speakers in each enclosure.
Component audio V.M. "Stereo-Music"™
sound. Purer. And all the sound
you expect from stereo components.
All portable. Just ask your Voice of Music
dealer for the V.M. Portable Component
System. At \$1000.00 per stereo.

Model 6220-00, \$1000.00



The Voice of Music

FIGURE 17
Stereo Components for Nomads

(Fig. 16) and the Bedouin who has been invented by marketing executives to sell portable electronics (Fig. 17). Clifford's own work on what he calls "traveling cultures" remains scrupulously alert to this difference, but in the work of postmodern nomads like Chatwin and Asher it becomes increasingly blurred.

Even more directly than the universalized discourse of mobility in general nomadism, the uncanny return of pure nomadism in postmodernism may signal the displacement of our "transcendental home" from a primitive "elsewhere" (a utopia under siege) to the postmodern "present" itself. The nomads of postmodernism, in other words, are not simply "Others," but alter egos in the truest sense. Once the definition of "home" has itself gone nomad, once "the Global Village" is acknowledged as a "Mobile Encampment" and the present is acknowledged as a return of the archaic, the traditional primitivist distinction between primitive and modern becomes very difficult to maintain. Whether this new closeness is simply complacent and accommodationist, or whether it figures, however problematically, a valuable diagnostic cartography of postmodernism is a question to which I will return in Chapter Four.

Chapter 3

From Schizonomadism to Nomadology: Figures of Revolt in *Capitalism and Schizophrenia*

The anarchists, as always, are the "gentlemen of the road."

BRUCE CHATWIN, *The Songlines* (273)

The representation of nomadism attains an unprecedented level of theoretical complexity and abstraction in the collaborative philosophical works of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari. Difficult to summarize because they overflow with neologisms and disorienting conjunctions, the two volumes of *Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, *Anti-Oedipus* (1972) and *A Thousand Plateaus* (1980), are assemblages of philosophy, psychoanalysis, anthropology, sociology, science, economics, and history that orchestrate an encounter between the decentered subject of French post-structuralism and a multifaceted critique of power and repression that Michel Foucault has described succinctly as "an introduction to the non-fascist life" (*AO* xiii). In these texts, nomadism becomes one of several key metaphors designating the anarchic liberation of a primordial flux of libidinal pulsations ("desire") from what Deleuze and Guattari regard as repressive psychic and social structures that promote "molarity" or "paranoia" (forms of organization characterized by transcendent unities such as "the individual," "the nation," "the race") and opposed to "molecularity" or "schizophrenia" (forms which emphasize more flexible, polyvocal connections between "desiring-machines" or "partial objects" and thus encourage creativity, invention, and difference). Nomadism, in other words, becomes a privileged figure of anti-humanist critique in *Capitalism and Schizophrenia*

that anticipates the destruction of all forms of fixed molar identity organized by categories of gender, race, and nationality. As an emblem of dissent, it is associated above all with the notion of “micro-politics”—decentralized forms of revolutionary struggle that aim to subvert not only dominant forms of social and psychic organization (the State, the Ego, social norms), but even those ostensibly “revolutionary” forms of subversion and resistance that retain molar types of organization and may thus “go bad,” becoming just as inhibitory of experimentation and creativity.

To Deleuze and Guattari’s critics, such a rhetoric of nomadism is self-subverting because it merely reproduces the representational practices of racist/molar discourses like colonial anthropology, which transform non-Western cultures into a silent archive of Otherness to be conjured at will by Western writers in search of redemptive or scandalizing myths—despite the nomadologists’ claims to be using primitivist terminology polemically and non-referentially. This chapter elaborates this critique, but it also attempts to read the representation of nomadism in *Capitalism and Schizophrenia* more carefully than it has been read in the past. Christopher Miller and Caren Kaplan—whose critiques of Deleuzo-Guattarian nomadology I have already cited—focus almost exclusively on *A Thousand Plateaus*, treating nomadology as a singular and continuous formation in Deleuze and Guattari’s thought. Such a strategy has obvious advantages for polemic, but paints an unfortunately reductive image of what is in fact a highly nuanced and original—though obviously still very problematic—engagement with earlier discourses of nomadism. Rather than viewing nomadology as a stable theoretical concept, I will approach it developmentally to show how its more complex theorization in

A Thousand Plateaus revises and implicitly critiques the proto-nomadology of *Anti-Oedipus*.¹

As I will argue, the differences between the representations of nomadism in these two volumes are read most productively in light of Deleuze and Guattari's intriguing distinction between "hunter nomads" and "fearsome, warlike, and animal-raising nomads" in *A Thousand Plateaus* (118)—a distinction which locates nomadology at the intersection of two very different discourses of nomadism. As we have seen, these discourses are associated in evolutionary anthropology with the distinction between "savage" or "primitive" hunter-gatherers and "barbarian" pastoral nomads, what Kroeber called "primitive nomads" and "pastoral nomads." The nomadic imagery of *Anti-Oedipus* draws primarily from the first category while that of *A Thousand Plateaus* draws particularly on the second to figure utopian or revolutionary forms of self-invention and political subversion. These distinctions and emphases, I argue, are sensitive to the unique rhetorical problems confronting each book and ultimately reflect a subtle qualification of Deleuze and Guattari's critique of identity politics from Volume One to Volume Two, even though the manifestations of the nomadic metaphor in Volume Two seem actually more militant and uncompromising in their opposition to the State.

Schizonomadism: The Theoretical Background

A schizophrenic out for a walk is a better model than a neurotic lying on the analyst's couch.

GILLES DELEUZE AND FÉLIX GUATTARI, *Anti-Oedipus* (2)

If desire in capitalist society is merely a shadow of its former self, as Deleuze and Guattari maintain, the critique and historicization of Freud that pervades *Anti-Oedipus* is an attempt to restore desire to its original revolutionary glory. Yet *Anti-Oedipus* is not as strictly polemical where Freud is concerned as its name implies. According to Deleuze and Guattari, Freud came close to understanding desire early in his career when he discovered its productive nature and envisioned an unconscious that makes multiple libidinal connections to an extensive social field.² “But once Oedipus entered the picture,” they argue, “this discovery was soon buried beneath a new brand of idealism: a classical theatre was substituted for the unconscious as a factory; representation was substituted for the units of production of the unconscious; and an unconscious that was capable of nothing but expressing itself—in myth, tragedy, dreams—was substituted for the productive unconscious” (24). For Deleuze and Guattari, the appearance of the theatrical model of desire marks “a conservative or reactionary turning point in Freud” (117)—not only because it superimposes a rigid, unnatural structure on libidinal investment, but also because it “makes psychic repression move into the foreground” and thus “no longer considers the problem of social repression as anything more than secondary from the point of view of the unconscious” (117). By claiming that the incest-taboo emerges spontaneously from the Oedipus complex, in other words, Freud grants psychic repression primacy and autonomy with respect to larger aggregates like culture and society, making the latter appear to be effects or “sublimations” rather than causes of psychic repression. The Freudian theatre of the unconscious thus not only makes psychic repression seem natural, it provides a justification for social repression as well, making it

seem like an inevitable extension of the former: “the more the problem of Oedipus and incest comes to occupy center stage, the more psychic repression and its correlates, suppression and sublimation, will be founded on supposedly transcendent requirements of civilization, at the same time that the psychoanalyst plunges deeper into a familialist and ideological vision” (117).

Deleuze and Guattari’s riposte to the “ideological” vision of Oedipus follows Wilhelm Reich’s critique and historicization of Freud in arguing that “psychic repression depend[s] on social repression” (118).³ But they go even further than Reich when they claim that “social repression needs psychic repression precisely in order to form docile subjects and to ensure the reproduction of the social formation, including its repressive structures” (118). This elaboration of Reich’s initial insight demonstrates Deleuze and Guattari’s debt to Freud and his original account of the libido as a form of social investment. For if society requires the psychic repression of desire, it is not because desire is incestuous, as Freud later claimed, but because desire’s connection to the social field makes it inherently revolutionary:

If desire is repressed, it is because every position of desire, no matter how small, is capable of calling into question the established order of a society.... [D]esire is revolutionary in essence...and no society can tolerate a position of real desire without its structures of exploitation, servitude, and hierarchy being compromised. (116)

Since forms of society vary, moreover, the ways in which desire is repressed vary as well. Within this context Deleuze and Guattari view the Oedipus complex not as an innate human tendency but as a historically specific form of psychic repression particular to capitalist society.

Social repression under capitalism, they argue, is primarily a function of the market, which organizes social relations according to economic criteria and institutes a regime of “asceticism”⁴ that requires its subjects to relinquish the direct appropriation of the product of their labor, and to devote themselves instead to repaying an infinite debt to capital—a “debt” imposed by the forces of “recoding” and “reterritorialization” (private property) inherent in capitalism itself. The psychic outcome of such a system of social repression is the Oedipus complex, which exactly reproduces the ascetic dynamics of capitalism in the microcosm of the nuclear family.⁵ “The familial determinations become the application of the social axiomatic” (264), they claim, because capitalism excludes the family from any substantial role in social production and reproduction. Now that “alliances and filiations no longer pass through people but through money...the family becomes a microcosm, suited to expressing what it no longer dominates”: “Father, mother, and child thus become the simulacrum of the images of capital (‘Mister Capital, Madame Earth,’ and their child the Worker)” (264).

In effect, schizoanalysis reverses the causal order of Freud’s account of the relation between psychic and social repression and sees Oedipus as a determined rather than a determining factor of capitalism; but that does not mean that Oedipus does not have a role in sustaining social repression. On the contrary, Deleuze and Guattari insist that

Psychic repression is such that social repression becomes desired; it induces a consequent desire, a faked image of its object, on which it bestows the appearance of independence. Strictly speaking, psychic repression is a means in the service of social repression. What it bears on is also the object of social repression: desiring-production. (119)

The “faked image” of desire’s object produced by the segregation of the nuclear family from the social field in capitalist society is incest, and this image displaces both the social source of psychic repression (because it is bestowed with “the image of independence”) and the true nature of desire itself:⁶

It is in one and the same movement that the repressive social production is replaced by the repressing family, and that the latter offers a displaced image of desiring-production that represents the repressed as incestuous family drives. In this way, the family/drives relationship is substituted for the relationship between the two orders of production.... And the interest of such an operation, for the point of view of social production, becomes evident, for the latter could not otherwise ward off desire’s potential for revolt and revolution. (119-20)

In this regard, capitalist psychic repression constitutes an ongoing defense against threatening eruptions of desire. But it also has a “positive” function from the point of view of the capitalist system: the Oedipal family’s reproduction of the structures of social repression makes it a training ground for capitalist subjects in the arts of asceticism and acquiescence to figures of authority.⁷

Deleuze and Guattari’s primary goal in *Anti-Oedipus* is to expose Oedipal desire as a mechanism for the management of rebellious social impulses, and thereby to restore desiring-production’s “potential for revolution and revolt” in both social and psychic terms. But exposure alone is not enough, they argue. For the social nature of libidinal connections that makes desire potentially revolutionary is also what traps desire into desiring its own repression by investing in the capitalist social machine. Deleuze and Guattari are deeply concerned with the problem of why people actively seek out and support forms of social oppression that seem utterly opposed to their own interests, and like Reich, they attribute this phenomenon to unconscious desire rather than to ideology.

Yet, they also find Reich's account of the relation between psychic and social repression inadequate because it ultimately reverts to the very ideological explanations it was intended to correct.⁸ Ironically, Freud's original theory of libido as a socially invested drive helps Deleuze and Guattari overcome this limitation in Reich. For its integration of psychic processes and social forms into a single system makes it possible to explain why people frequently act against their own social interests, without resorting to oversimplified arguments about ideology and false-consciousness.⁹ "A form of social production and reproduction, along with its economic and financial mechanisms, its political formations, and so on, can be desired as such," they claim, "in whole or in part, independently of the interests of the desiring-subject" (104). Such a split occurs because, as Freud's original theorization of desire suggests, "[t]here is an unconscious libidinal investment of the social field that coexists, but does not necessarily coincide, with the preconscious investments, or with what the preconscious investments 'ought to be'" (104). Unconscious libidinal investments of the social field can "constrain the most disadvantaged, the most exploited to seek their ends in an oppressive machine" (345) because unconscious investments are not made according to the kinds of rational or meaningful criteria (aims and interests) that inform "preconscious" investments such as the decision to strike or to cross a picket line. Unconscious desire is not concerned with meanings; it simply follows flows and makes connections or "syntheses" on the basis of "the degree of development of the forces or the energies on which these syntheses depend" (345). Consequently, Deleuze and Guattari claim, "there exists a disinterested love of the social machine, of the form of power, and of the degree of development in and

for themselves” (346). Currently, capitalism is the social formation that offers the greatest degree of development of force and is consequently the object of the greatest unconscious investment—even among those who have the most objective reasons to oppose it.

Such unconscious investments in the capitalist system and thus in the Oedipal form of psychic repression it fosters may be present even among revolutionary groups and may therefore continue to inhibit the efficacy of collective revolutionary politics. Viewing desire as an eminently social process—rather than a narrowly sexual one—leads Deleuze and Guattari to conclude that any program of social transformation that does not include a program for the revolutionizing of desire is woefully inadequate and doomed to reproduce the very structures of social oppression it seeks to dismantle. Revolutionary politics must therefore be pursued in conjunction with the de-oedipalization of desire and “the constant destructive task of disintegrating the normal ego” (362)—a task that schizoanalysis seeks both to elucidate and encourage.

“Schizoanalysis,” as its name suggests, claims a metaphoric connection with mental illness to signal its theoretical opposition to a Freudian psychoanalytic tradition that “doesn’t like schizophrenics” (23). Yet this connection is “metaphoric” only in the sense that schizoanalysis does not celebrate schizophrenia as such—that is, the schizophrenic as clinical entity; for Deleuze and Guattari insist that although a real connection exists between the schizophrenic patient and the processes of desiring-production they wish to liberate, the two are not identical.¹⁰ Such distinctions are already apparent in the writings of R. D. Laing, whose sympathetic and groundbreaking work

with schizophrenic patients provides a substantial buttress to Deleuze and Guattari's adoption of schizophrenia as a master-concept to represent free-form desiring-production.

"If the human race survives," Laing writes in *The Politics of Experience*,

future men will, I suspect, look back on our enlightened epoch as a veritable age of Darkness. They will see that what we call schizophrenia was one of the forms in which, often through quite ordinary people, the light began to break through the cracks in our all-too-closed minds.... Madness need not be all breakdown. It may also be breakthrough. (qtd. in Deleuze and Guattari 131; their ellipses)

Following Laing, Deleuze and Guattari view schizophrenia as a process that enables a potentially liberating "breakthrough" of desiring-production from the Oedipal straightjacket. Such an escape is embodied in *Anti-Oedipus* by the allegorical figure of "the schizo," rather than by the actual schizophrenic patient. "[F]ar from having lost who knows what contact with life," the schizo "is closest to the beating heart of reality" (87)—a proximity attested to by his departure on "a voyage of initiation, a transcendental experience of the loss of the Ego" that results in "intense becomings, passages, and migrations" as he "hallucinates and raves universal history" (84-85).

Although Deleuze and Guattari claim that it provides a window on the true nature of desiring-production, they warn that the schizo's resistance to oedipalization is not in itself revolutionary. Like Laing, who cautions against romanticizing the "madness" of schizophrenic patients,¹¹ Deleuze and Guattari are constantly alert to the possibility that the schizo's "breakthrough" may easily disintegrate into the catatonic breakdown of the real schizophrenic. Consequently, they distinguish between schizophrenic processes (which are anoedipal and thus exemplify the polyvocal molecular forms of psychic investment Deleuze and Guattari privilege as having revolutionary potential) and

schizophrenia as a clinical condition in which revolutionary desiring-production has been effectively neutralized by counter-processes of oedipalization. According to Deleuze and Guattari, clinical (sick) schizophrenia is an effect of the contradictory nature of capitalism, which liberates flows of money and meaning, fostering (healthy) schizophrenic processes of deterritorialization and decoding to an unprecedented degree, but then arrests these flows with equal force, reterritorializing them on molar aggregates like nations, states, corporations, and families (Holland 2). The real schizophrenic patient, they maintain, is the casualty of this unbearable situation, and his sickness is only exacerbated by the perverse ministrations of psychoanalysis:

he is ill because of the oedipalization to which he is made to submit—the most somber organization—and which he can no longer tolerate: he who has gone on a distant journey. As though one were constantly bringing back home the person capable of setting whole continents and cultures adrift. He is not suffering from a divided self or a shattered Oedipus, but on the contrary, from having been brought back to everything he had left. (123-24)

Whether such a qualification is enough to overturn the charge that Deleuze and Guattari's presentation of the schizo romanticizes mental illness is open to debate; but the rhetorical import of the distinction between healthy schizophrenia (as a process) and sick schizophrenia (as a condition) is that it preserves the conceptual purity of the schizo in opposition to Oedipus.

Despite its centrality to the conceptual vocabulary of schizoanalysis, however, schizophrenia is only one term in a much larger constellation. For *Anti-Oedipus* is much more than a critique of psychoanalysis: it is an attack on the molar aggregates and paranoid investments that infuse every level of contemporary society, of which Oedipus is only one example.¹² Schizophrenia thus furnishes Deleuze and Guattari with a

metaphoric opposition to Oedipus, but since Oedipus himself depends on social forces of reterritorialization and paranoia which precede him, the schizo-Oedipus opposition is subsumed and structured by a larger, more pervasive conceptual opposition that cuts equally across social and psychic realms of production. As terms such as “deterritorialization” and “reterritorialization” suggest, this larger conceptual opposition draws upon geographic metaphors of space as much as it draws upon the Lacanian notion of “territorialization”¹³ and manifests itself in metaphors of movement and rest, nomadism and sedentarity.¹⁴

In *Anti-Oedipus*, the schizo’s nomadic character is foregrounded from the outset: “A schizophrenic out for a walk is a better model than a neurotic lying on the analyst’s couch” (2). An entire poetics of space and movement follows from this sentence. Whereas the neurotic’s stationary confinement identifies a mode of desiring-production immobilized by the Oedipal forces of interiority and psychoanalysis, the schizo’s walk signals a privileged mode of desiring-production which takes “[a] breath of fresh air,” and has “a relationship with the outside world” (2). As the quintessential “vagabond” or “nomad subject” (26), the schizo is decentered, “continually wandering about, migrating here, there, and everywhere as best he can, . . . plung[ing] further and further into the realm of deterritorialization” (35). In fact, he exists only as an effect of his “wandering about over the body without organs” (16)—“the desert . . . where he installs his desiring-machines” (131). Schizophrenic unconscious investments are characterized by the “*nomadic and polyvocal use of the conjunctive syntheses,*” in contrast to “*the segregative and biunivocal use*” of such syntheses typical of reactionary investments like Oedipus

(105), which bring about the “stasis of libidinal energy” (118). Corresponding to these two uses of conjunctive syntheses, Deleuze and Guattari identify “two major types of social investment, segregative and nomadic” (277). The first, segregative type “invests the formation of central sovereignty” which leads to fixed, “sedentary” (304) identifications: “yes, I am your kind, and I belong to the superior race and class” (277). The second, nomadic type is “schizorevolutionary” because it “follows the lines of escape and desire” and “causes flows to move,” leading not to fixed identities, but to polymorphous identifications and alliances. Desiring-production, in short, is not merely “schizophrenic”; it is “schizonomadic” (105).

Of the many neologisms in *Anti-Oedipus*, “schizonomadism” displays the clearest and certainly the most economical link between the critique of psychoanalysis and a generalized poetics of movement. As I have already suggested, such a link grants priority to the nomadic metaphor and views the schizo as an instantiation, in a particular rhetorical context (the critique of psychoanalysis), of the nomadic movement of desire that subtends the whole of desiring-production. But what is the source of the nomadic metaphor? What has nomadism to do with desire, and what is the nomad’s particular function within this discourse? Deleuze and Guattari’s subtle development of schizophrenic ego-loss into a conceptual attack on Oedipal subjectivity indicates that there is nothing arbitrary or random about the rhetorical strategies or the development of concepts in *Anti-Oedipus*. On the contrary, if *Anti-Oedipus* is an “experiment in delirium,” it is nonetheless “carefully constructed and executed” (xviii): the metaphoric register of Deleuze and Guattari’s philosophic writing is very deliberately crafted and

enters into a dynamic relationship with the objective content of their critique.¹⁵ In light of such a densely compacted and allusive writing style, and given its discursive privilege in *Anti-Oedipus*, “nomadism” would seem to do more than simply designate movement or restlessness. As we shall see, the nomadism of *Anti-Oedipus* enters into a polemical relation with Freud’s primitivism and evolutionism, providing a valuable index of the degree to which Deleuze and Guattari remain indebted to Freudian psychoanalysis.

Revenge of the Brother Clan: Reinventing the Freudian Primitive

The critique of Oedipus and the repudiation of evolutionism and primitivism are intertwined in *Anti-Oedipus*, primarily because of Freud’s own reliance on primitivizing strategies. Remarking on Freud’s betrayal of his original insight into the productive nature of the unconscious, Deleuze and Guattari draw a distinctly Nietzschean contrast between his Apollonian and Dionysian impulses: “It is as if Freud had drawn back from this world of wild production and explosive desire, wanting at all costs to restore a little order there, an order made classical owing the ancient Greek theater” (54). As Freud demonstrates in *Totem and Taboo* (1918) and *Civilization and its Discontents* (1930), however, his conception of Oedipal tragedy is not only “classical” but “wild” as well. For in these texts, Freud provides an origin myth for the ego by projecting the theoretical contours of the family romance onto the Darwinian notion of a “primal horde” dominated by “a violent, jealous father who keeps all the females for himself and drives away the growing sons” (*TT* 182).

According to Freud's narrative, this primal father is both envied and feared by the subordinate brothers—"cannibalistic savages" who, in the wake of their exile from the horde, band together and slay him, confirming their identification with paternal power "by devouring him" and thus "acquir[ing] part of his strength" (*TT* 183). Rather than simply assuming the father's prerogative, however, the brothers establish a new society based on totemism, which Freud identifies as the primitive origin of religion and civilized social order. Such a transformation of society, from the "father horde" to the "brother clan," stems, in Freud's opinion, from the reawakening of tender feelings of admiration for the father that accompanies cannibalistic identification and which produces feelings of guilt and remorse. Guilt and remorse, in turn, lead the society of brothers to repent their murder of the father, if only symbolically, by adhering to certain taboos:

They undid their deed by declaring that the killing of the father substitute, the totem, was not allowed, and renounced the fruits of their deed by denying themselves the liberated women. Thus they created two fundamental taboos of totemism out of the *sense of guilt of the son*, and for this very reason these had to correspond with the two repressed wishes of the Oedipus complex. Whoever disobeyed became guilty of the only two crimes which had troubled primitive society. (*TT* 185)

As this fantastic history suggests, Freud's evolutionary scheme, although putatively anthropological, travels far and wide of its Darwinian starting point. Like much of the evolutionary theory from the preceding century upon which it draws, Freud's narrative of the primal horde operates allochronically, converting cultures which are spatially distant from his own into living examples of temporally distant societies. At the time in which Freud was writing, such a practice was already regarded with suspicion, and as even Freud himself is aware, the anthropological sources he cites to support his

theory of totemism are factually as well as methodologically outdated. Yet if Freud remains unconcerned by discoveries which undermine the factual accuracy of his anthropological narrative, that is because he has little intrinsic interest in anthropology and because his narrative is only superficially dependent upon the anthropological sources it cites. Rather than providing a firm historical basis for Oedipal psychology, the myth of the primal horde derives from the mental models it seeks to confirm. The correspondence Freud notices between “the two fundamental taboos of totemism” and the “two repressed wishes of the Oedipus complex” hardly implies a causal sequence since the former are little more than a projection of the individual psychological process Freud theorizes onto entire social systems.

Because of this analogy between individual and social development, Freudian psychology requires a violent and highly sexualized version of the primitive to embody humankind at its most instinctual, before its impulses are checked and regulated by the civilizing mechanism of repression. As Freud maintains in *Civilization and its Discontents*,

men are not gentle creatures who want to be loved, and who at the most can defend themselves if they are attacked; they are, on the contrary, creatures among whose instinctual endowments is to be reckoned a powerful share of aggressiveness. As a result, their neighbor is for them not only a potential helper or sexual object, but also someone who tempts them to satisfy their aggressiveness on him, to exploit his capacity for work, without compensation, to use him sexually without his consent, to seize his possessions, to humiliate him, to cause him pain, to torture and to kill him (58)

Freud's supposition that beneath the veneer of civilization lurks “man as savage beast” (59) yields a historical narrative that explicitly repudiates the soft primitivism that was beginning to replace darker visions of savagery in the early decades of the twentieth

century as evolutionism gave way, at least superficially, to Boasian relativism and an appreciation for cultural difference that had been muted in Victorian anthropology. Such, in effect, is the dilemma Freud faces in *Civilization and its Discontents*: how to refute the “astonishing contention” that “what we call our civilization is largely responsible for our misery, and that we should be much happier if we gave it up and returned to primitive conditions” (33).

Historically, Freud attributes the emergence of romantic primitivism to the convergence of the European voyages of discovery with an attitude of “deep and long-standing dissatisfaction” with civilization reflective of “the low estimation put on earthly life by the Christian doctrine”—a convergence which predisposed early observers of “primitive people and races” to poor scientific judgment:

In consequence of insufficient observation and a mistaken view of their manners and customs, they appeared to Europeans to be leading a simple happy life with few wants, a life such as was unattainable by their visitors with their superior civilization. Later experience has corrected some of those judgments. In many cases the observers had wrongly attributed to the absence of complicated cultural demands what was in fact due to the bounty of nature and the ease with which the majority of human needs were satisfied. (CD 34)

Yet such a lack of scientific rigor on the part of early travelers only provides a partial explanation; for Freud’s real opponents are not the Enlightenment philosophes (like Rousseau, whose view of “natural man” drew heavily on these early reports), but their influential Marxist heirs who hold a similarly benign view of human nature and attribute social corruption to the invention of private property. Freud insists that he has “no concern with any economic criticisms of the communist system” and “cannot enquire into whether the abolition of private property is expedient or advantageous” (CD 60).

Nevertheless, the theoretical requirements of his own system bring him into direct conflict with both “the psychological premises on which the [Marxist] system is based” (60) and the notion of primitive communism it promulgates. Freud’s response to Marxist primitivism, as his chronicle of the primal horde vividly demonstrates, was to defend darker nineteenth-century images of savagery in order to summon a startling portrait of psychic and social inhibition. Cannibalism, sexual promiscuity, and violence thus feature prominently in his account of the primitive for whom “the deed is... a substitute for the thought” (*TT* 207).

As shocking as Freud’s account of the savage within must have been for its earliest readers, for Deleuze and Guattari the myth of the primal horde and its libidinal correlative represent a profoundly conservative view of desire and instinct. Its conservatism stems from the fact that the libidinal impulses of the members of the father horde and the brother clan that succeeds it are already organized in Oedipal configurations before the murder of the father even transpires. Rather than depicting a truly primal scene, the myth of the primal horde only leads psychoanalysis to further falsify desire by projecting, not a primal libido, but a Paleolithic Oedipus. Freud’s “entire historico-mythical series,” in other words, exemplifies what Deleuze and Guattari refer to as “the double impasse” of Oedipal desire where “normality is no less blocked than neurosis and where the solution offers no more of a way out than does the problem”:

at one end the Oedipal bond is established by the murderous identification, at the other end it is reinforced by the restoration and internalization of paternal authority.... Between the two there is latency—celebrated latency—which is without a doubt the greatest psychoanalytic mystification: this society of “brothers” who forbid themselves the fruits of the crime, and spend all the time necessary for internalizing. But we are warned: the society of brothers is very

dejected, unstable, and dangerous, it must prepare the way for the rediscovery of an equivalent parental authority, it must cause us to pass over to the other pole.... It is therefore understood that we leave one pole of Oedipus only to pass on to the other. No way of getting out, neurosis or normality. The society of brothers rediscovers nothing of production and desiring-machines; on the contrary, it spreads the veil of latency. (80-81)

Deleuze and Guattari's critique of Freudian primitivism appears decisive, but it contains hints of a compromise with the "historico-mythical" narrative of the primal horde. In particular, their disparagement of "latency" betrays a sympathetic and wistful identification with the "dejected, unstable, and dangerous" society of brothers whose primal murder of the Oedipal father might provide the basis for a new parable about the destructive task of schizoanalysis—even though Freud's narrative disavows the possibility that the society of brothers could rediscover "production and desiring-machines."

Deleuze and Guattari's implicit temptation to rewrite the significance of the brothers' exile from the primal horde offers a crucial clue to the rhetorical strategy of *Anti-Oedipus* with regard to primitivism. For in spite of the derision Deleuze and Guattari heap on the "ideological" production of subjectivity whose false structure "moves from Oedipus all the way to the father of the primal horde, to God and the Paleolithic age" (108), they do not reject primitivist strategies out of hand, any more than they support a wholesale rejection of Freud. As we have seen, Deleuze and Guattari's critique of psychoanalysis and capitalism may be anti-Oedipal, but it is not anti-Freudian in any simply polemical sense. Despite their attack on "the reactionary compromises of Freudianism," Deleuze and Guattari's own theory of desiring-production is deeply

indebted to Freud's initial insights into the productive unconscious, and for that reason they refuse to play "take it or leave it" with psychoanalysis:

We see no special problem with the possibility of a coexistence of revolutionary, reformist, and reactionary elements at the heart of the same theoretical and practical doctrine.... As if every great doctrine were not a *combined formation*, constructed from bits and pieces, various intermingled codes and flux, partial elements and derivatives, that constitutes its very life or its becoming. (117)

In this regard, schizoanalysis represents a selective transformation of revolutionary elements within the "combined formation" of Freudian psychoanalysis rather than a break with it. Deleuze and Guattari position themselves intellectually as a sort of "brother clan" in relation to the Freudian primal father, but rather than perpetuating Freud as either totem or taboo, they seek to break through his "double impasse" of "neurosis or normality."

Such ambivalence to Freudian doctrine is reflected in the discourse of nomadism in *Anti-Oedipus* which effects a terminological compromise with the dark primitivism of the narrative of the primal horde. Like Freud, Deleuze and Guattari wish to describe desire in its primal state—but not as it appears in *Totem and Taboo* or *Civilization and its Discontents*. Rather, they wish, like Marcuse before them, to resuscitate Freud's original representation of desire as "polymorphous perversity." The metaphor of nomadism permits Deleuze and Guattari to revise these contradictory representations of desire in Freud in an ingenious way: by replacing the primal horde, the nomadic metaphor restores a sense of movement and freedom to natural desiring-production, without requiring a complete break with Freud's primitive imagery. Nomadic primitivism thus enables Deleuze and Guattari to signal desiring-production's Freudian debt, even as it performs a

critique of the static, sedentary model of desire represented by the primal horde. With nomadism, the revolutionary potential symbolized by the exiled society of brothers is finally actualized.

Anti-Oedipus contains several explicit repudiations of primitivism and evolutionism that contradict the notion that “nomadism” is anything more than a conceptual term when applied to desire and the unconscious. Deleuze and Guattari claim, for instance, that

We no longer believe in a primordial totality that once existed, or in a final totality that awaits us at some future date. We no longer believe in the dull gray outlines of a dreary, colorless dialectic of evolution, aimed at forming a harmonious whole out of heterogeneous bits by rounding off their rough edges.

(42)

Such statements appear to dispense with primitivism (“a primordial totality”) and evolutionism (“a final totality”) quite decisively. Yet it is hard to accept their declaration uncritically in light of Deleuze and Guattari’s persistent recourse to anthropological sources on nomads and primitives throughout the text, as well as the central role they accord evolutionary terminology in their taxonomy of social systems. However much Deleuze and Guattari deny it, nomadism in *Anti-Oedipus* is not purely conceptual; like schizophrenia, it has a real sociocultural referent.

**Savages, Barbarians, Civilized Men:
Marxist Permutations of Nomadism in Morgan and Engels**

[A]lmost all our monetary expressions—capital, stock, pecuniary, chattel, sterling—perhaps even the idea of “growth” itself—have their origins in the pastoral world.

BRUCE CHATWIN, *The Songlines* (185)

The anthropological sources of the nomadic metaphor are not nearly as apparent in *Anti-Oedipus* as they become in *A Thousand Plateaus*. Yet they are nonetheless discernible in Deleuze and Guattari's evocation of sociocultural evolutionism in the third chapter of *Anti-Oedipus*, "Savages, Barbarians, Civilized Men." As the title suggests, Deleuze and Guattari's comparison of modes of social organization in this chapter draws on stadial theories of human development, particularly those of Frederick Engels and American anthropologist Lewis Henry Morgan. Given Deleuze and Guattari's stated aversion to evolutionism, such an allusion to evolutionary theory appears to be merely playful or provocatively dismissive. But Morgan and Engels are not traditional social evolutionists and the resonance of their methods and conclusions with those of Deleuze and Guattari significantly complicates the anti-evolutionist claims of *Anti-Oedipus*.

Morgan's *Ancient Society* (1877), an influential history of sociocultural development reminiscent of eighteenth-century four stages theory, accentuated technology and sources of subsistence as the motors of social evolution and cultural change. Its materialist explanation of human history fascinated Karl Marx, who had already speculated about pre-capitalist social formations in *The German Ideology*, *Capital*, and *Grundrisse* to imagine alternatives to capitalism and to refute the capitalist claim that private property was the universal cornerstone of ordered society. As Maurice Bloch argues, the conclusions of *Ancient Society* were a perfect buttress to Marx's critique of capitalism because Morgan also "viewed the institution of private property with some misgivings"; rather than exalting it as the basis of the social contract as Locke

had done, he found that “primitive society was totally without private property, yet organized” (15). In a justly famous passage, Morgan asserts:

Since the advent of civilization, the outgrowth of property has been so immense, its forms so diversified, its uses so expanding and its management so intelligent in the interests of its owners, that it has become, on the part of the people, an unmanageable power. The human mind stands bewildered in the presence of its own creation. The time will come, nevertheless, when human intelligence will rise to the mastery over property, and define the relations of the state to the property it protects, as well as the obligations and limits of the rights of its owners. The interests of society are paramount to individual interests, and the two must be brought into just and harmonious relations. A mere property career is not the final destiny of mankind, if progress is to be the law of the future as it has been of the past. The time which has passed away since civilization began is but a fragment of the past duration of man’s existence; and but a fragment of the ages yet to come. The dissolution of society bids fair to become the termination of a career of which property is the end and aim; because such a career contains elements of self-destruction. Democracy in government, brotherhood in society, equality in rights and privileges, and universal education, foreshadow the next higher plane of society to which experience, intelligence and knowledge are steadily tending. It will be a revival, in a higher form, of the liberty, equality and fraternity of the ancient gentes. (467)

Such reservations about the achievements of modern civilization combined with a romantic veneration of the “barbaric” Iroquois gentes subtly qualified Morgan’s adherence to mainstream of nineteenth-century sociocultural evolutionism, which tended to view social development as a linear narrative of progress through the dark periods of savagery and barbarism to the light of dawning civilization. Morgan thus confirmed Marx’s own historical narratives in a way that traditional evolutionary theory could not. Due to its compatibility with Marxism, *Ancient Society* became the subject of an extended commentary by Engels in *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* (1884), a text written after Marx’s death, but based primarily on his notes, which is Deleuze and Guattari’s main source of Morganian categories.

Owing to the fact that Morgan's "comparison of barbarism and civilization...had led him, in the main points, to the same conclusions as Marx" (Engels 71), his use of evolutionist terminology already signals an ironic or polemical intent. "Barbarian," as Jameson observes, "has no negative connotations in Morgan: it is a proud affront to the dehumanization and alienation of 'civilized' industrial capitalism, a badge worn in honor and defiance" ("Marxism" 396). In Engels's reprise of Morgan, the ironies of evolutionary nomenclature are even more starkly evoked. Deleuze and Guattari's adoption of Engels and Morgan's categories thus engages a revisionist tradition of social evolutionism whose critique of modernity is in profound sympathy with their own, rather than simply mocking the more common nineteenth-century tradition of unilinear evolutionism. Such a distinction is important, for it means that rather than effecting a break with evolutionist forms of representation, the presence of "savages," "barbarians," and "civilized men" in *Anti-Oedipus* signals Deleuze and Guattari's implication in a tradition of critical primitivism. Even though Deleuze and Guattari transform the content and value of savagery, barbarism and civilization, Morgan's conceptual apparatus and his primitivism retain a significant hold on the anthropological categories of *Anti-Oedipus*—particularly on nomadism itself.

In *The Origins of the Family, Private Property and the State*, Engels describes not one but two forms of nomadism germane to Deleuze and Guattari's use of the concept in *Anti-Oedipus*. The first refers to the mass "migrations" of hunter-gatherer groups during the middle stage of savagery which became possible, Morgan claimed, only with the discovery of fire and the use of fish for subsistence. "With this new source of

nourishment," writes Engels in his summary, "men now became independent of climate and locality; even as savages, they could, by following rivers and coasts, spread over most of the earth" (88). For Engels, as for Morgan, the nomadic wanderings of these "vagrant savages" represent a stage of development vastly inferior to the relatively permanent settlements of communistic communities" (110) of upper savagery and lower and middle barbarism known as "gens." In Engels's description, these "gentile" settlements epitomize the simple pleasures of a society unspoiled by greed, bureaucracy, or oppression:

No soldiers, no gendarmes or police, no nobles, kings, regents, prefects, or judges, no prisons or lawsuits—and everything takes its orderly course.... [D]ecisions are taken by those concerned, and in most cases everything has already been settled by the custom of centuries. There cannot be any poor or needy—the communal household and the gens know their responsibilities toward the old, the sick, and those disabled in war. All are equal and free—the women included. There is no place yet for slaves, nor, as a rule, for the subjugation of other tribes.... And what men and women such a society breeds is proved by the admiration inspired in all white people who have come into contact with unspoiled Indians, by the personal dignity, uprightness, strength of character, and courage of these barbarians. (159)

Engels's dialectical vision of history requires him to supplement this primitivist idealization of New World barbarism with an acknowledgement that "the power of this primitive community had to be broken, and it was broken" (161). He preserves the force of the initial idealization, however, by maintaining that

it was broken by influences which from the very start appear as a degradation, a fall from the simple moral greatness of the old gentile society. The lowest interests—base greed, brutal appetites, sordid avarice, selfish robbery of the common wealth—inaugurate the new, civilized, class society. (161)

The second form of nomadism in the *Origin* is closely linked to this ironic representation of "civilization" as nothing more than "the development of a small

minority at the expense of the great exploited and oppressed majority” (161) and faces Engels’s idyllic portrait of the middle stage of barbarism like a dark double. For the Native American gens that Engels enshrines only represents the development of barbarism in the Western hemisphere, where it is said to follow the invention of agriculture. In the Old World, barbarism reputedly developed along a different route as “[t]he domestication of animals gradually introduced a new mode of life, the pastoral, upon the planes of the Euphrates and of India, and upon the steppes of Asia” (Morgan 29). Morgan himself clearly prefers these barbarian pastoral nomads to their savage ancestors and regards Old and New World barbarism in a similarly favorable light.¹⁶ As Jameson argues, Morgan’s incorporation of the barbarous stage into a primitivist critique of modernity produces “a second, supplementary Other in the form of the Savage—something like the remainder or waste product, the convenient result of an operation of ‘splitting’ whereby everything unpleasantly uncivilized about the Iroquis can be separated off and attributed to ‘truly’ primitive or tribal peoples” (“Marxism” 396). This may be true of Morgan, but it does not do justice to the complexity of Engels’s reiteration—indeed, his reformulation—of Morgan’s strategies in the *Origin*—the book from which Deleuze and Guattari’s strategies are more likely derived.

In addition to Morgan’s general developmental split between savagery and barbarism, Engels introduces a second division within barbarism itself by amplifying the geographical distinction between New World agriculture and Old World pastoralism. Engels’s account of the latter presents its anticipation of “civilized, class society” in a new and sinister light. After praising the primitive communism of the American Indians,

among whom “there still exists in actual fact that ‘property created by the owner’s labor’”

(218), Engels reluctantly casts his gaze Eastward:

But humanity did not everywhere remain at this stage. In Asia they found animals which could be tamed and, when once tamed, bred.... Pastoral tribes separated themselves from the mass of the rest of the barbarians—*the first great social division of labor*. (218)

Because pastoral tribes produced different forms of sustenance than sedentary agriculturalists, older, irregular forms of exchange within a single tribe rapidly gave way to regular exchanges between tribes and eventually, between individuals. For it was during this stage, Engels claims, that “herds passed out of the common possession of the tribe or the gens into the ownership of individual heads of families” (220). With the institution of regular exchange and the development of private property in herds, “cattle became the commodity by which all other commodities were valued and which was everywhere willingly taken in exchange for them—in short, cattle acquired a money function” (219). The consequences that follow from a pastoral economy in Engels’s account are devastating to the well-being of the communal gens. One consequence of this social transformation, according to Engels, was the development of slavery, which was needed to supplement tribal labor to meet the new demand of trade. Thus, according to Engels, pastoral nomadism’s great social division of labor brought about “the first great cleavage of society into two classes: masters and slaves, exploiters and exploited” (220). To emphasize the pastoral origins of social oppression, Engels represents slavery as a logical corollary of barbarian herding cultures in which “we already find the herds everywhere separately owned by heads of families, as are...the human cattle—the slaves,” enemies of war who could “be bred just as easily as the cattle themselves” (118).

Engels complements this fearsome image of the nomad as a herder of “human cattle” with an equally tyrannical image in the domestic realm where the cleavage between master and slave is reproduced in turn as a cleavage of the sexes because

the taming of animals in the first instance and their later tending were the man’s work. To him, therefore, belonged the cattle and to him the commodities and the slaves received in exchange for cattle. All the surplus which the acquisition of the necessities of life now yielded fell to the man.... The “savage” warrior and hunter had been content to take second place in the house, after the woman; the “gentler” shepherd, in the arrogance of his wealth, pushed himself forward into the first place and the woman down into the second. (220-21)

As Engels’s contempt for the bucolic stereotypes of the “gentler” shepherd” indicates, the second, pastoral form of nomadism in the *Origin* represents the corruption of the “simple moral greatness of the old gentile society” that Morgan and Engels so esteem. Considering that for Morgan the historical correlative of Iroquois communalism was the ancient German gens, Engels’s anecdote about how, “in the course of their migrations the Germans had morally much deteriorated, particularly during their southeasterly wanderings among the nomads of the Black Sea steppes from whom they acquired not only equestrian skill but also gross, unnatural vices” (133), acquires the force of a parable.

There is no question that Deleuze and Guattari put the terms savage, barbarian, and civilized to radically different use than their precursors. What Engels had seen as stages in a dialectical evolutionary process, Deleuze and Guattari regard as ideal types of social production which coexist—abstractly, if not historically—and which constitute differing systems for the repression of desiring-production. They theorize that each mode of social production implies a specific form of “anti-production” that appropriates

productive forces and materials on behalf of a particular organizing principle or “socius”—the earth in savagery, the despot in barbarism, capital in civilized society—and prevents their immediate appropriation and consumption by the producers themselves. In other words, debt becomes the means by which a given society ensures a sense of obligation from its members. In savage societies anti-production operates through kinship relations and is governed by codes, customs, and beliefs, which are inscribed on the savage body and on the body of the earth. In barbarian societies, anti-production continues to operate symbolically by over-coding the primitive territoriality of the savage socius. But rather than diffusing debt equitably throughout society as the kinship system does, it concentrates power in the figure of the despot to whom everything is owed infinitely. Capitalism is unique, Deleuze and Guattari argue, because anti-production almost entirely dispenses with belief and code, operating instead through axioms which conjoin flows of matter and energy solely on the basis of whether or not they produce surplus value.

The sheer extent to which Morgan’s original chronology is transformed in the third chapter of *Anti-Oedipus* has led two of the text’s most eminent explicators to minimize Deleuze and Guattari’s engagement with *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*. In a footnote, Ronald Bogue credits Engels as Deleuze and Guattari’s source for the terms savage, barbarian, and civilized, but ultimately finds “Engels’s taxonomy...less significant than Marx’s modes of production as a parallel to the Deleuzoguattarian schema” (172). Eugene W. Holland is equally skeptical that Morgan and Engels play any significant role in Deleuze and Guattari’s articulation of

savage, barbarian, and civilized machines. “Although their typology loosely resembles that developed by the American anthropologist Charles Morgan [sic]—and borrowed by Engels in *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*,” he grants, “it is in fact based primarily on the interplay of two categories derived from Nietzsche and Marx, respectively: power and economics” (59). Without disputing either Bogue or Holland’s interpretations of social-production, I wonder if their dismissal of Morgan and Engels is not too hasty. For Deleuze and Guattari’s chapter on “Savages, Barbarians, [and] Civilized Men” relies on these earlier theorists of savagery and barbarism for more than its terminology. Attention to its ambivalent rhetorical engagement with Engels and Morgan not only illuminates the strategic importance of primitivism for their critique of Freud, it also provides an anthropological basis for the nomadic metaphor itself.

Jameson, one of the only critics to recognize Morgan’s relevance to a discussion of *Anti-Oedipus*, hints at this rhetorical engagement when he points out that Deleuze and Guattari reverse Morgan’s preference for barbarism over savagery such that “savagery becomes as close as we can get to the idyllic liberation of schizophrenia, while the already implicit hierarchies of the gens are, on their account of barbarism, deployed and developed into the Ur-state, primal despotism, the sway of the Emperor and of the signifier itself” (“Marxism” 396). As Jameson’s earlier remarks indicate, Morgan is a moderate, even conservative primitivist in the sense that he seeks a humanistic alternative to industrial capitalism in barbarism, but recoils at the “generalized system of flux” that characterizes his vision of savagery: “no writing, no fixed domicile, no organized individuality, no collective memory or history, no customs to be passed down” (396).

Jameson thus presents Deleuze and Guattari's more radical primitivism as a reversal of terms whose meanings were already inherent in Morgan's work. Yet such an assessment does not take full account of Engels's influence on the primitivist categories of schizoanalysis, which is to elaborate Morgan's description of evolutionary stages in terms of a distinction between (savage) nomadic hunter-gatherers and (barbarian) pastoral nomads. Although their valences change, these two forms of nomadism figure prominently in Deleuze and Guattari's further elaboration of savagery and barbarism in *Anti-Oedipus*, and become even more important to the nomadology of *A Thousand Plateaus*.

**Savage Poetry:
Pierre Clastres's Nomad Hunter**

Deleuze and Guattari base their comparatively sympathetic vision of savage society on ethnographies of nomadic hunter-gatherers, preserving the basic unit of Engels and Morgan's categorization while reversing its value. Since Deleuze and Guattari maintain that every society comprises a form of social production that represses desiring-production, they are far more cautious than either Morgan or Engels about idealizing any form of social organization absolutely. Nonetheless, their account of the primitive territorial machine frequently approaches such an idealization, attesting to a mode of social production in which "desire is not yet trapped, not yet introduced into a set of impasses, [where] the flows have lost none of their polyvocality" (184-85). Drawing on

the structuralist anthropology of Pierre Clastres, Deleuze and Guattari embody these features of “savage” deterritorialization in

[t]he great nomad hunter [who] follows the flows, exhausts them in place, and moves on with them to another place. He reproduces in an accelerated fashion his entire filiation, and contracts it into a point that keeps him in a direct relationship with the ancestor or the god. Pierre Clastres describes the solitary hunter who becomes identical with his force and his destiny, and delivers his song in a language that becomes increasingly rapid and distorted: Me, me, me, “I am a powerful nature, a nature incensed and aggressive!” Such are the two characteristics of the hunter, the great paranoiac of the bush or the forest: real displacement with the flows and direct filiation with the god. (148)

For Deleuze and Guattari, the nomad hunter’s solitude, his powerful song, his intense connection with ancestors, and his immediate contact with flows of blood and energy during the hunt all attest to his freedom from the repressive forces of anti-production in savage society. These forces operate through marriage alliances, which create fixed, mobile blocks of debt, and a system of inscription of “cruelty,” which forges a collective memory and enforces social codes by repressing “the great, intense, mute filiative memory, the germinal influx as the representative of the noncoded flows of desire capable of submerging everything” (185). The “germinal influx,” according to Deleuze and Guattari, constitutes the object of authentic desiring-production in savage society; in the first instance it represents the direct appropriation of the means of life—“the substance of the intense earth” (162)—unmediated by social regulations that require the producer to defer his own gratification for the good of society. The nomad hunter exemplifies this fundamental desire, not only because of his “real displacement with the flows” of the hunt, which puts him in direct and visceral contact with the fruits of the earth, but also because of his “direct filiation with the god.” This latter force of filiation

(“the great, intense, mute filiative memory”) is the corollary, at the level of reproduction, of the desire to partake directly of the means of life rather than relinquishing them to be parsed and distributed by the tribe. In other words, the incest taboo and the taboo against consuming one’s own kill are two instances of the same law of distribution and circulation applied to the realms of reproduction and production respectively. When the nomad hunter revels in the power of his lineage, he momentarily transgresses the fundamental law of savage society. If the germinal influx were not repressed, savage society would have no means of producing debt through alliance because

[n]o chain could be detached, nothing could be selected; nothing would pass from filiation to descent, but descent would be perpetually reduced to filiation in the act of re-engendering oneself; the signifying chain would not form any code, it would only emit ambiguous signs and be perpetually eroded by its own energetic support; what would flow on the body of the earth would be as unfettered as the noncoded flows that shift and slide on the desert of the body without organs.

(163)

In short, savagery would fatally approach its limit—“the deterritorialized socius, the wilderness where decoded flows run free” (176), the “desert” of the body without organs where desire becomes nomadic, like the solitary hunter himself.

Primitivist language abounds in this account of “the wilderness where the decoded flows run free.” Yet Deleuze and Guattari are not simply romantic primitivizers. Throughout their account of the nomad hunter they are careful to qualify the real extent of his freedom, insisting that

a pure nomad does not exist; there is always and already an encampment where it is a matter of inscribing and allocating, of marrying and feeding oneself. (Clastres shows well how, among the Guayaki, the *connection* between the hunters and the living animals is succeeded in the encampment by a *disjunction* between the dead animals and the hunters—a disjunction similar to an incest prohibition, since the hunter cannot consume his own kill.) (148)

As Miller has argued regarding the primitivism of *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari are prone to such disavowals, which complicate their most provocative assertions and seem calculated to ward off critique. Because of this ambivalence, Deleuze and Guattari's use of primitivist language and imagery requires careful scrutiny—a process which involves paying attention not only to the rhetorical functions of certain figures, but to their selection of anthropological sources as well. Miller astutely likens these sources to “footprints in the sand of their nomadic intellectual wanderings” (9) and foregrounds the problematic tendency of these sources to support the very colonial ethnography Deleuze and Guattari ostensibly repudiate. In this regard, Deleuze and Guattari's uncritical invocation of Clastres to authorize their disavowal of traditional primitivism is revealing. For rather than providing a decisive rejection of primitivism, Clastres's ethnography actually reproduces it. His ambivalent repudiation of evolutionism, ethnocentrism, and exoticism provides an illuminating model for Deleuze and Guattari's own discourse.

In “Copernicus and the Savages,” Clastres identifies ethnocentrism as “the obstacle constantly blocking anthropological research...that mediates all forms of attention directed to differences in order to reduce them to *identity* and finally suppress them,” and calls for a “Copernican revolution” in ethnology, which “until now has let primitive cultures revolve around Western civilization in a centripetal motion (9, 17). Like Deleuze and Guattari, Clastres wishes to honor difference and identifies evolutionism—“[e]thnocentrism's old accomplice” (10)—as the main impediment to this project. Even though anthropology “has rejected the tenets of Morgan and Engels as

simplistic,” he argues, evolutionism is imbedded in anthropological language itself and persists in biological metaphors that refer to non-Western cultures as “embryonic, nascent, poorly developed, etc.” (10). Since evolutionism stems from ethnocentrism and ultimately “cannot permit differences to remain, each one for itself in its neutrality, but insists on comprehending them as differences measured in terms of what is most familiar” (10), Clastres’s solution is “to abandon—ascetically, as it were—the *exotic* conception of the archaic world, a conception which, in the last analysis, overwhelmingly characterizes allegedly scientific discourse regarding that world” (12). Despite these laudable intentions, however, Clastres’s rejection of evolutionism produces an uncanny reemergence of the very exoticism he claims to resist, for it counters the danger of evolutionism by embracing relativist theories of cultural difference that enshrine exoticism in the name of difference.

The primitivist implications of this residual exoticism are clearly spelled out in “The Bow and the Basket,” an essay by Clastres that is the main ethnographic source for Deleuze and Guattari’s image of the great nomadic hunter. Focusing on the Guayaki Indians, nomadic hunter-gatherers from South America, the essay describes Guayaki society in terms of a principle of mediation forbidding hunters to consume their own kill. “By compelling the individual to part with his own game,” Clastres claims, the alimentary taboo

obliges him to place trust in others, thus allowing the social tie to be joined in a definitive way. The interdependence of the hunters guarantees the solidarity and permanence of that tie, and the society gains in strength what the individuals lose in autonomy. The disjunction of the hunter and his game establishes the conjunction of the hunters among themselves, that is, the contract that governs Guayaki society. (95-96)

Clastres identifies the moment of disjunction as a source of intense—though he claims, unconscious—frustration for the Guayaki hunters, which is repeated in the marital sphere of life by the need for polyandry. These mediations are regrettable but necessary, he insists, for “the gift of game and the sharing of wives refer respectively to two of the three main supports on which the cultural edifice rests: the exchange of goods and the exchange of women” (101). Yet Clastres claims that there is a balm for these discontents of Guayaki civilization in language, the third support of the cultural edifice, represented by the nomad hunter’s nocturnal song:

the hunter...with head held high and body straight, glorifies himself in his song. His self-assurance asserts itself in the extreme virility the hunter brings to his singing, a harmony with oneself that nothing can deny. The language of the masculine song, moreover, is highly distorted. As its improvisation becomes progressively more fluent and rich, as the words flow out effortlessly, the singer subjects them to such a radical transformation that after a while one would think he were hearing another language: for a non-Aché [i.e. non-Guayaki], these songs are strictly incomprehensible. With regard to their thematic composition, it basically consists of an emphatic praise which the singer directs at himself. In point of fact, the content of his discourse is strictly personal and everything in it is said in the first person. The men speak almost exclusively of their exploits as hunters, of the animals they have encountered, the injuries they have received, their skill at shooting arrows. This is a leitmotif that is repeated indefinitely, and one hears it proclaimed in a manner that is almost obsessional: *cho rö bretete, cho rö jyvondy, cho rö yma wachu, yma chija* (“I am a great hunter, I am in the habit of killing with my arrows, I am a powerful nature, a nature incensed and aggressive!” And often, as if to indicate how indisputable his glory is, he punctuates his phrase by extending it with a vigorous *Cho, cho, cho* (“Me, me, me”). (93-94)

According to Clastres, the song’s distorted language and highly personal performance—“each singer is actually a soloist” (94)—effects a “conjunction that is sufficiently radical to negate precisely language’s communicative function and, thereby, exchange itself” (101). For although it is ostensibly a paean to the hunter’s prowess, it is in fact a

consolation for the loss of agency the hunters all experience as “prisoners of an exchange that makes them merely components of a system,” allowing them to “reject in the domain of language the exchange they are unable to abolish in the domain of goods and women” (102). Ultimately, this subversion of exchange has enormous consequences, in Clastres’s view, constituting not merely a compensatory gesture, but the foundation of (exclusively male) Guayaki subjectivity:

The same movement by which the singer detaches himself from the *social* man he is induces him to know and declare himself as a concrete *individuality* utterly closed upon itself. The same man exists, then, as a pure *relation* in the sphere of language. It is through the song that he comes to consciousness of himself as an *I* and thereby gains the legitimate use of that personal pronoun. The man exists for himself in and through his particular song: I sing, therefore I am. (103-04)

Clastres’s attribution to the Guayaki of a primitive cogito that replaces thinking with singing is a clear indication that Clastres is less successful at expunging exoticism and ethnocentrism from his work than he claims. Indeed, the invocation of Descartes performs precisely the ethnocentric reduction of difference to identity that Clastres claims to abhor by implicitly contrasting Guayaki subjectivity with a Western norm. Moreover, Clastres’s implication that authentic Guayaki subjectivity bypasses rational thought resurrects one of the most hackneyed forms of Western primitivism, and as his substantial elaboration of this theme suggests, resuscitates evolutionism as well:

By their nature and their function, these songs illustrate in exemplary form the general relationship of man to language. These distant voices call on us to ponder that relationship; they invite us to follow a path that is now all but obliterated, and the thought of savages, the product of a still primal language, only motions in the direction of thought. We have seen, as a matter of fact, that beyond the contentment it obtains for them, their singing furnishes the hunters—and without their knowing it—the means of escape from social life by refusing the exchange that underlies it. (103)

In this passage, any pretense to holding ethnocentrism at bay disappears in favor of a transparently allochronic evolutionism that interprets geographical distance from the West as temporal remoteness from the present. The spatially “distant voices” of the Guayaki singers speak “a still primordial language.” Moreover, these voices have a distinctive functional relationship to the West. Despite their native function of allowing the hunter a “private talk” with himself (102), the songs nonetheless “*call on us...invite us to follow a path that it all but obliterated.*” In fact, far from representing an instance of unrecuperable difference, they “illustrate in exemplary form the general relationship of man to language.” In keeping with the ethnocentrism of the analysis, the hunters themselves are strangely excluded from the remarkable role that is attributed to them as intermediaries between an “all but obliterated” past and an implicitly corrupt anthropological present. Their language and consciousness “only motions in the direction of thought,” and all of this happens “without their knowing it.”

In light of Clastres’s primitivism, his veneration of the song of the “naked and savage poets” (102) contains an unintentional irony. The singers’ “obsessional” leitmotif, “*cho, cho, cho*” echoes, and even seems to mock, the ethnocentrism of Clastres’s conclusion:

All things considered, the song of the Aché hunters calls our attention to a certain kinship between man and his language: to be more exact, a kinship of a kind that seems to survive only in primitive man. This implies that, putting aside all notions of exoticism, the naïve discourse of savages obliges us to reflect on the thing that poets and thinkers alone remember: that language is not simply an instrument, that man can be on a level with it, and that the modern West loses the sense of its value through the excessive wear it subjects it to. The language of civilized man has become completely *external* to him, for it is no longer anything for him but a pure means of communication and information. The quality of meaning and the quality of signs vary in inverse ratio. Primitive cultures on the

contrary, more concerned to celebrate language than to put it to use, have been able to maintain that *internal* relationship with it that is already in itself an alliance with the sacred. (106)

It is extremely difficult to see how this celebration of “the naïve discourse of savages” puts “aside all notions of exoticism.” Indeed, its claim to do so is disingenuous, for the contrast of Guayaki “internal” naturalism and sacredness with the cold “external” instrumentalism of “the modern West” that has implicitly structured Clastres’s entire account of the nomadic hunters’ song is finally explicitly named.

Deleuze and Guattari’s caution that “there does not exist a pure nomad who can be afforded the satisfaction of drifting with the flows and singing their direct filiation, but always a socius waiting to bear down, already deducting and detaching” (149) might thus be read as an implicit critique of Clastres’s overly idealized presentation of “primitive cultures.” But their vision of a nomadic form of savagery is so deeply indebted to Clastres’s evocative portrait of the nomad hunter and reproduces so many of its primitivist habits of representation that such a critique—if, indeed, it is implied—remains mired in ambivalence. Ultimately, Clastres is more of a model than even a friendly antagonist for Deleuze and Guattari, as their similarly unconvincing disavowals of exoticism, evolutionism, and ethnocentrism will attest. Like Clastres, Deleuze and Guattari claim to reject evolutionary anthropology and primitivism alike, when in fact they oppose one to the other and end up abandoning neither. Clastres’s striking contrast of Guayaki authenticity and Western artificiality suggests that what is really at stake in these disavowals is not evolutionism per se, but the particularly negative form of primitivism it engenders that demonizes savages rather than venerating them.

Deleuze and Guattari's treatment of dark (denigrating) and light (idealizing) forms of primitivism is more complex, but it is ultimately concerned with the same desire to memorialize a space of non-Western authenticity. Unlike Clastres, they do not simply romanticize "savage poets"; rather, they set dark and light versions of the primitive side by side, attributing the nomad hunter's fleeting immunity from social repression to "the nature of nomadic space" itself, upon which

the full body of the socius is as if adjacent to production; it has not yet brought production under its sway. The space of the encampment remains adjacent to that of the forest; it is constantly reproduced in the process of production, but has not yet appropriated this process. The apparent objective movement of inscription has not suppressed the real movement of nomadism. (148)

This description of "nomad space" derives from Clastres's account of how the opposition of men and women among the Guayaki organizes every feature of social life. According to Clastres, this dualism enters Guayaki thought as the symbolic opposition of male bow and female basket, each item constituting "the medium, the sign, and the summary of one or two 'styles' of existence" (87). To each "style" the Guayaki assign a specific geography, "a masculine space and a feminine space, defined respectively by the forest where the men do their hunting, and the encampment where the women reign" (86).

Clastres does not wish to suggest that the women are not nomadic, merely that male and female "styles" of Guayaki nomadism differ such that

the true masters of the forest are the men: they invest it in a real way, compelled as they are to explore its every detail in order to systematically exploit all its resources. For the men, the forest is a dangerous space, a space of risks, of ever renewed adventure, but for women it is, on the contrary, a space passed through between two stops, a monotonous and tiresome crossing, a simple neutral expanse. (86)

Although it does not explicitly emphasize gender difference, Deleuze and Guattari's version of the nomad hunter clearly displays the adventurous masculine "style" of nomadism, eschewing the "monotonous and tiresome" nomadism of the women, whose "authentic" existence is confined to the relatively sedentary space of the encampment (87).

Clastres clearly favors the exciting masculine world of the bow over the domestic realm of the basket. But his account ultimately suppresses such distinctions, collapsing the two "styles" of existence into a general rebuke to the West in its final image of nocturnal melancholy, a synecdoche for the death of primitive authenticity:

Such is the life of the Guayaki Indians. By day they walk together through the forest, women and men, the bow in front, the basket behind. The coming of night separates them, each one surrendering to his dream. The women sleep and the hunters sometimes sing, alone. Pagans and barbarians, only death saves them from the rest. (106-07)

By contrast, Deleuze and Guattari more successfully resist collapsing forest and encampment into a generalized primitive idyll. Synthesizing Clastres and Nietzsche, they view the encampment critically: it is preeminently a theatre of cruelty where bodies are marked and society is organized by violent rites of inscription. Such uncompromisingly dark primitivism has been praised by Holland for providing a more nuanced, less romantic view of "pre-capitalist" societies. According to this argument, Deleuze and Guattari's bifurcated portrait of the primitive achieves greater objectivity by balancing two opposed stereotypes of primitive society. Yet their use of a spatial distinction between forest and encampment to explain the nomad hunter's temporary freedom remains problematic. For it resembles what Raymond Williams in *The Country and the*

City identifies as a conventional form of metropolitan nostalgia for rural spaces in which authentic social interaction still ostensibly prevails. As Williams suggests, the underlying theme of this fantasy structure is the loss of Eden¹⁷ and Deleuze and Guattari's constitution of the forest and the encampment as savage versions of the country and the city reflects this very traditional pastoral motif. Whereas Clastres had simply reversed Morgan and Engels's unsympathetic representation of savagery, Deleuze and Guattari attempt a brilliant, if problematic compromise. By performing only a partial reversal they are able to preserve a modest, but still utopian space for primitivism, without appearing to support either romantic or evolutionist paradigms of savagery.

In addition to furnishing Deleuze and Guattari with a general image of "savage" nomadism and an account of "nomadic space," Clastres provides them with a condensed image of schizonomadism itself by linking the nomad hunter's physical displacement to his distorted song. The hunter's song becomes a linguistic extension of nomadism in Clastres's account, not only because its content celebrates the hunter's exploits in nomadic space, but also because its improvisational form symbolizes his role as "producer" in Guayaki society. Since Guayaki men assume both hunting and gathering responsibilities, Clastres regards gender distinctions in economic terms as "the opposition of a group of producers and a group of consumers" (86). The supposedly unproductive nature of women's work (even though they manufacture the bows and baskets which sustain the economy) is reflected in their monotonous song—the *chengaruvara*—which consists of "mechanically repeated formulas adapted to the various ritual circumstances" (94). Conversely,

the *prerä* of the hunters depends only on their mood and is organized solely in terms of their individuality. It is a purely personal improvisation that permits a search for artistic effects in the play of the voice. Thus the collective quality of the women's singing and individual quality of the men's refers us back to the opposition we started from: as the only truly "productive" element of Guayaki society, the hunters experience a creative freedom in the domain of language that their position as "consumer group" denies the women. (94)

The symbolic relation Clastres discerns between masculine "productivity" and "creative freedom" in the realm of language, on the one hand, and the adventure and productivity of the hunt, on the other, implies a correlation of singing and wandering by mapping the "artistic effects" of the hunters' voices onto the nomadic terrain of the forest. Finally, Clastres cements this relationship with a concluding image of song as a mode of dwelling in travel:

For primitive man, there is no poetic language, for his language is already in itself a natural poem where *dwells* the value of words. And while I have spoken of the cong of the Guayaki as an aggression against language, it should henceforth be understood as *the shelter that protects him*. But is it still possible to hear, from the wretched wandering savages, the all too strong lesson concerning the proper use of language? (106; my emphasis)

Far from invoking an image of immobility or stasis, Clastres's habitational metaphors recall his opening description of "the flimsy and transitory abode of nomads" (83).

Clastres thus presents the *prerä* of the hunters as a sort of wandering metaphysical shelter—an image which celebrates displacement in the name of productive power.

Deleuze and Guattari's presentation of the nomad hunter as primitive schizo and his distorted song as stationary voyage of intensity retains precisely such a coordination of nomadism and song. For Deleuze and Guattari, moreover, creative song is not only a male attribute, but a general characteristic of savage society. "Savage formations are oral, are vocal," Deleuze and Guattari insist, "but not only because they lack a graphic

system: a dance on the earth, a drawing on a wall, a mark on the body are a graphic system, a geo-graphism, a geography” (188). Like their earlier disavowals of primitivism, such a rejection of the ethnocentric notion of “societies without writing” conserves more than it appears to in granting Derrida’s critique of Lévi-Strauss. For even though Deleuze and Guattari allow for the possibility of non-alphabetic forms of writing in their account of territorial representation, they nonetheless maintain that savage formations “are oral” on the grounds that “they possess a graphic system that is independent of the voice, a system that is not aligned with the voice and not subordinate to it” (188). Because of the independence of its graphic and oral systems, savage representation is “multidimensional,” “linear writing’s contrary” (188) and as such comprises an implicit rebuke to the imperial system of inscription that will succeed it—a rebuke that vividly recalls Clastres’s attempt to derive a “strong lesson concerning the proper use of language” for “the modern West” by listening attentively to the song of “wretched savages.” The echo of Clastres’s primitivist nostalgia for a savage voice “more concerned to celebrate language than to put it to use” is clearly audible, moreover, in Deleuze and Guattari’s melancholy account of imperial representation in which formerly independent oral and graphic systems are coordinated so that “the voice no longer sings but dictates, decrees; the graphy no longer dances, it ceases to animate bodies, but is set into writing on tablets, stones, and books; the eye sets itself to reading” (205).

In all of these ways, Deleuze and Guattari’s use of Clastres’s account of Guayaki hunter-gatherer nomadism to fill out Morgan and Engels’s categorization of savagery as a

period of general flux not only provides an anthropological basis for the nomadic metaphor of *Anti-Oedipus*, it provides an index to the residual primitivism of their metaphoric critique of the Freudian myth of the primal horde as well. Clastres's emphasis on music, artistic improvisation, creativity, risk, adventure, and perpetual displacement define a soft, idyllic myth of nomadism ideally suited to countering Freud's dark vision of primitive humanity and the Oedipal interpretation of desire it supports. Moreover, the reputedly aimless "wandering" of hunter-gatherers who do not follow predetermined routes or regular trails—at least, not as far as Morgan, Engels, and Clastres are concerned—exemplifies the type of nomadism needed to suggest the freely associating movement of desire in the unconscious. Building on Clastres's example, therefore, Deleuze and Guattari transform physical displacement into a sign of more abstract forms of deterritorialization in the realms of consciousness, art, language, and desire. In short, they transform nomadism into an organic conceptual unity, perfectly calculated to represent the deterritorialized movement of desire in the unconscious.

Barbarian States: Nomadic Despotism in Nietzsche and Kafka

Like Clastres's ethnographic allegory of the Guayaki, Deleuze and Guattari's account of the savage territorial machine is tinged with melancholy. For even though savage society effectively wards off internal threats to its segmentary non-hierarchical structure, the external threat of foreign conquest culminating in the rise of the State looms large on the horizon. Quoting Nietzsche from *On the Genealogy of Morals*—a text they

regard as “the great book of modern ethnology” (190)—Deleuze and Guattari depict the end of savage nomadism as a cataclysm that erupts suddenly from without and founds a new sedentary regime:

They come like fate, without reason, consideration, or pretext; they appear as lightning appears, too terrible, too convincing, too sudden, too *different* even to be hated. Their work is an instinctive creation and imposition of forms; they are the most involuntary, unconscious artists there are—wherever they appear something new arises, a ruling structure that *lives*, in which parts and functions are delimited and coordinated, in which nothing whatever finds a place that has not been assigned a “meaning” in relation to the whole. They do not know what guilt, responsibility, or consideration are, these born organizers; they exemplify that terrible artist’s egoism that has the look of bronze and knows itself justified to all eternity in its “work,” like a mother in her child. It is not in *them* that the “bad conscious” developed, that goes without saying—but it would not have developed if a tremendous quantity of freedom had not been expelled from the world, or at least from the visible world, and made it as it were *latent* under their hammer blows and artist’s violence (AO 191-92; GM 86-87)

In its original context, Nietzsche’s evaluation of the formation of the State by “hammer blows and artist’s violence” is ambiguous. Disgusted by the preponderance of Christian values reeking of *ressentiment* and reducing “the beast of prey ‘man’ to a tame and civilized animal, a *domestic animal*” (GM 42), Nietzsche admires this “pack of blond beasts of prey” whose laying of “its terrible claws upon a populace perhaps tremendously superior in numbers but still formless and nomad” (GM 86) embodies an unrestrained expression of the will to power.¹⁸ Yet as Walter Kaufmann argues, such admiration is ambivalent, for Nietzsche’s references to the “blond beast” are merely “ideograms for the conception of unsublimated animal passion,” which is a key component, but not the end, of his critique of Christian morality (225). It is important to recall that *On the Genealogy of Morals* is subtitled “A Polemic” and in this context Nietzsche’s praise of the rapacious “blond beasts of prey” is more of a corrective than a prescription. “One may be quite

justified in continuing to fear the blond beast at the core of all noble races and in being one's guard against it," Nietzsche grants, "but who would not a hundred times sooner fear where one can also admire than not fear but be permanently condemned to the repellent sight of the ill-constituted, dwarfed, atrophied, and poisoned?" (43). In their raid on the Nietzschean corpus—the spoils of which are considerable—Deleuze and Guattari are unpersuaded by this qualification. They find little to admire in the artists "with the look of bronze" who sweep across savage social formations and "overcode" them, establishing a new barbarian State in which formerly fixed and mobile debt becomes infinite and unidirectional, owed exclusively to the despot. Nonetheless, Nietzsche provides them with an appropriately fearsome image of the rise of the State as the conquest and settlement of "primeval" society, "still formless and nomad," which they elaborate in a plethora of sedentary metaphors.

Characteristically, the sedentary metaphors describing barbarism in *Anti-Oedipus* are Orientalist, due to the centrality of Marx's controversial "Asiatic" mode of production to Deleuze and Guattari's explanation of despotic overcoding:

in order to understand the barbarian formation, it is necessary to relate it...to the savage primitive formation that it supplants by imposing its own rule of law, but that continues to haunt it. It is exactly in this way that Marx defines Asiatic production: a higher unity of the State establishes itself on the foundations of the primitive rural communities, which keep their ownership of the soil, while the State becomes the true owner in conformity with the apparent objective movement that attributes the surplus product to the State, assigns the productive forces to it in the great projects undertaken, and makes it appear as the cause of the collective conditions of appropriation. The full body as socius has ceased to be the earth, it has become the body of the despot himself or his God. (194)

Said has observed about Marx's justification of English colonial policy in India that Marx's conceptions of the Orient are "Romantic and even messianic" insofar as they

sustain “the idea of regenerating a fundamentally lifeless Asia” (*Orientalism* 154). Indeed, Marx’s entire discourse on “Asiatic” production—which Deleuze and Guattari generalize as the fundamental principle of every state formation—elevates the Orientalist’s fantasy on an unchanging East into a theoretical model of economic and political stagnation. In an effort to harden his readers to what he regards as the historical necessity of the British rule in India, Marx warns them not to romanticize the apparently “idyllic village communities,” for these are really “the solid foundation” of Oriental despotism (*PSF* 75). Marx’s architectural metaphor is significant, for it is only the first of an impressive array of static and sedentary metaphors that follow to explain how these villages “restrained the human mind within the smallest possible compass, making it the unresisting tool of superstition, enslaving it beneath traditional values, depriving it of all grandeur and historical energies,” producing an “undignified, stagnatory, and vegetative life” (75). Thus, in Marx’s account of “Asiatic” production mental stagnation is symptomatic of the supposedly stunted socioevolutionary growth of the whole social structure, which he attributes to

[t]he simplicity of the productive organism in these self-sufficient [village] communities—which continually reproduce their kind, and, if destroyed by chance, reconstruct themselves in the same locality and under the same name...[T]his simplicity unlocks for us the mystery of the unchangeableness of Asiatic society, which contrasts so strongly with the perpetual dissolutions and reconstructions of Asiatic states. (378-79; qtd. in Bloch 40)

Deleuze and Guattari employ precisely this type of Orientalist rhetoric to express their reinterpretation of the “Asiatic” mode of production as the structure of the State in general which they liken to “a functional pyramid that has the despot at its apex, an immobile motor, with the bureaucratic apparatus as its lateral surface and its transmission

gear, and the villagers at its base, serving its working parts” (194). As a tomb, a monumental structure constructed by slave labor, and more abstractly, as a symbol of hierarchical organization, the pyramid is an ingenious architectural metaphor for Deleuze and Guattari’s “Asiatic” understanding of the State as an entity composed of primitive territorial machines which are “the concrete itself, the concrete base and beginning” whose parts assume the “form of bricks that ensures their integration into the higher unity” (199). This process of “imbrication is particularly evident in the archetypal image of Oriental despotism Deleuze and Guattari find in Franz Kafka’s “The Great Wall of China”—a story which depicts the State as

the transcendent higher unity that integrates isolated subaggregates, functioning separately, to which it assigns a development in bricks and labor of construction by fragments. Scattered partial objects hanging on the body without organs. No one has equaled Kafka in demonstrating that the law had nothing to do with a natural, harmonious, and immanent totality, but that it acted as an eminent formal unity, and *reigned accordingly over pieces and fragments* (the wall and the tower). (198)

Walls, foundations, towers, fortifications, pyramids—Deleuze and Guattari’s vision of the State is characteristically articulated via a poetics of settlement, exemplified by images of imperial architecture, much like Chatwin’s had been. With the arrival of the emperor, the versatile primitive encampment loses its nomadic potential, becoming a brick in the imperial edifice.

The unequivocally negative image of barbarism as settlement through conquest significantly complicates the rhetoric of nomadism in *Anti-Oedipus*. For the conquerors of nomad space and the primitive territorial machine whom Deleuze and Guattari regard as “the founders of the State” (192) are not sedentaries but nomads. Just as Morgan’s

privileging of the barbarian gens produced, in Jameson's words, "a second, supplementary Other in the form of the Savage," Deleuze and Guattari's privileging of savage nomadism produces a *doppelgänger* in the form of the imperial nomad of the barbarian despotic machine—a figure resembling the nomadic pastoralist in whose despotic characteristics Engels too had glimpsed a foreshadowing of the State. In fact, Deleuze and Guattari's portrait of barbarism not only selectively appropriates and then generalizes Engel's prejudice against nomadic pastoralists, it also gives nomadism a more active role in the rise of the state than does Engels's account, making nomadic barbarians literally the bearers of the state in a Nietzschean variation on conquest theory.

The nomadic underpinnings of barbarism are already implicit in Nietzsche's dramatic rendering of the founders of the State at whose hidden core lurks "the splendid blond beast prowling about avidly in search of spoil and victory" (40-41):

It is the noble races that have left behind them the concept of "barbarian" wherever they have gone; even their highest culture betrays a consciousness of it and even a pride in it.... This "boldness" of noble races, mad, absurd, and sudden in its expression, the incalculability, even incredulity of their undertakings...their indifference to and contempt for security, body, life, comfort, their hair-raising cheerfulness and profound joy in all destruction, in all the voluptuousness of victory and cruelty—all this came together in the minds of those who suffered from it, in the image of the "barbarian," the "evil enemy," perhaps as the "Goths," the "Vandals." The deep and icy mistrust the German still arouses today whenever he gets into a position of power is an echo of that extinguishable horror with which Europe observed for centuries that raging of the blond Germanic beast (although between the old Germanic tribes and us Germans there exists hardly a conceptual relationship, let alone one of blood). (*GM* 41-42)

Nietzsche includes "the Roman, Arabian, Germanic, Japanese nobility, the Homeric heroes, [and] and the Scandinavian Vikings" (41) among the "noble races" as well, but his specific reference in this passage to the Goths and Vandals suggests that the image of

the “blond beast” draws on a venerable discourse of pastoral nomadism. For as J. G. A. Pocock has observed, Enlightenment philosophies of history tended to argue that “the peoples of the *Volkerwanderung* owed their frightening mobility to the fact that their wealth was in flocks and herds” (“Gibbon” 197)—a symbolic extension of pastoral society comparable to Engels’s discovery of the origins of slavery and class conflict in the relationship between the herdsman and his cattle. But depending upon one’s point of view, “frightening mobility” might just as easily be seen as “natural freedom” or “vitality” as it was throughout the nineteenth century in Germany and among European countries who claimed a Gothic heritage for their constitution. Nietzsche’s remark that noble races may even take pride in their “barbaric” heritage confirms that his “blond beast” is articulated at least partly within such an affirmative tradition of Gothic nomadism, as does his proposal of an etymological link between the German *gut* [good] and “the popular (originally noble) name of the Goths” to demonstrate the origins of master morality (*GM* 31).

The nomadic connotations of the blonde beast are most apparent in Nietzsche’s terminology, which employs pastoral discourse to describe the contrast between master and slave morality:

Inasmuch as ever since there have been human beings there have also been human herds (family groups, communities, tribes, nations, states, churches), and always very many who obey compared with the very small number of those who command.... The strange narrowness of human evolution, its hesitations, its delays, its frequent retrogressions and rotations, are due to the fact that the herd instinct of obedience has been inherited best and at the expense of the art of commanding.... [T]he herd-man in Europe today makes himself out to be the only permissible kind of man and glorifies the qualities through which he is tame, peaceable and useful to the herd as the real human virtues... (*BGE* 120-21)

Nietzsche's use of pastoral metaphors in his frequent references to "herd mentality" contain a delicious irony. Not only does it compare the obedient and the subjected to the commanding pastoralist's domesticated animals, it also travesties the Christian discourse of the benevolent shepherd and his "flock":

That lambs dislike great birds of prey does not seem strange: only it gives no ground for reproaching these birds of prey for bearing off little lambs. And if the lambs say among themselves: "these birds of prey are evil; and whoever is least like a bird of prey, but rather its opposite, a lamb—would he not be good?" there is no reason to find fault with this institution of an ideal, except perhaps that the birds of prey might view it a little ironically and say: "we don't dislike them at all, these good little lambs; we even love them: nothing is more tasty than a tender lamb." (44-45)

Thus, whether as birds of prey or as blond beasts, Nietzsche's barbarians effectively synthesize the darkest elements of eighteenth and nineteenth-century discourses of pastoral nomadism, frightening mobility and rapacious despotism.

Deleuze and Guattari's depiction of barbarism makes this nomadic subtext explicit. In their usual kaleidoscope fashion, Deleuze and Guattari conclude a lengthy paragraph elaborating Marx's "Asiatic" model of the State with an invocation of Nietzsche's blond beast: "They come like fate, . . . they appear as lightning appears, too terrible, too sudden" (*GM* 86/*AO* 195; Deleuze and Guattari's ellipses). The following paragraph in turn links these founders of the State to steppe nomads with an allusion to a story by Kafka entitled "An Old Manuscript":

The death of the primitive system always comes from without; history is the history of contingencies and encounters. Like a cloud blown in from the desert, the conquerors are there: "In some way that is incomprehensible to me they have pushed right into the capital, although it is a long way from the frontier. At any rate, here they are; it seems that every morning there are more of them. . . . Speech with the nomads is impossible. They do not know our language." (*AO* 195)

The assemblage of Nietzsche's blond beast, Kafka's nomads, and Marx's "Asiatic" mode of production is a dazzling example of Deleuze and Guattari's schizophrenic *bricolage*. The scrap of Kafka's narrative effectively joins the other two elements: the blond beasts who "come like fate" become the nomads who "have pushed right to the capital" while the capital itself seems to anticipate the formation of the "Asiatic" state. Moreover, this evocative, if impressionistic narrative of the rise of the imperial despotic machine recalls Deleuze and Guattari's use of Kafka's "The Great Wall of China" to illustrate the structure of State as a "transcendent higher unity that integrates isolated subaggregates, functioning separately" (198). For the nomad conquerors of "An Old Manuscript" who "do not know our own language" are the mirror image of the conquered peasants who do not know the name of the emperor in the section of "The Great Wall of China" quoted by Deleuze and Guattari:

We think only about the Emperor. But not about the present one; or rather we would think about the present one if we knew who he was or knew anything definite about him.... [The people] do not know what emperor is reigning, and there exists doubts regarding even the name of the dynasty.... Long-dead emperors are set on the throne in our villages, and one that only lives in song recently had a proclamation of his read out by the priest before the altar. (Kafka 416, *AO* 198-99; Deleuze and Guattari's ellipses)

Thus, as the echoes of their quotations of Kafka suggest, Deleuze and Guattari envision an intrinsic relation between the formation of the State and its internal structure.

Rewriting the connection Engels saw between pastoral nomads and the State in non-evolutionary terms, Deleuze and Guattari present nomadic conquest as both a real and symbolic precursor to the "Asiatic" State model.

Yet, like “Asiatic” production itself, the analogy of the State with pastoral nomadism achieves a “formal unity” only. For Kafka’s representations of nomadism in “The Great Wall of China” and “An Old Manuscript” only superficially support the uses to which they are put in *Anti-Oedipus*. This is particularly evident in Deleuze and Guattari’s misattribution of the passage about the nomads who have pushed their way into the capital. According to Deleuze and Guattari’s footnote, this passage from “An Old Manuscript” appears in “The Great Wall of China”—the story which seems most congenial to Deleuze and Guattari’s “Asiatic” vision of the State. This might seem a trivial mistake, but the resulting conflation of the two stories reveals precisely the forms of “barbarian” nomadism Deleuze and Guattari wish to obscure in *Anti-Oedipus*.

In “The Great Wall of China”, for instance, the disjunction between the Chinese emperor in Peking and the peasants in the outlying countryside who do not know his name, or even if he is alive, provides an evocative image of the “Asiatic” State, which is concretized in the piecemeal construction of the wall itself:

gangs of some twenty workers were formed who had to accomplish a length, say, of five hundred yards of wall, while a similar gang built another stretch of the same length to meet the first. But after the junction had been made the construction of the wall was not carried on from the point, let us say, where the thousand yards ended.... Naturally, in this way many great gaps were left, which were only filled in gradually and bit by bit, some, indeed, not till after the official announcement that the wall was finished. In fact it is said that there are gaps which have never been filled in at all, an assertion, however that is probably merely one of the many legends to which the building of the wall gave rise, and which cannot be verified, at least by any single man with his own eyes and judgment, on account of the extent of the structure. (235)

Deleuze and Guattari allude to precisely this image of a wall constructed in pieces and riddled with “gaps” that are filled in by name only by an “official announcement that the

wall was finished” when they speak of the State in terms of “bricks and a labor of construction by fragments” and “scattered partial objects hanging on the body without organs” (AO 198). But Kafka’s story does not go nearly as far as Deleuze and Guattari in attributing this structure to nomadic conquerors. On the contrary, the nomads of “The Great Wall of China” are completely excluded from the “Asiatic” State signified by the wall. Each time they are conjured by the narrator, it is to signify an external, alien perspective: first as an objective foreign threat that ostensibly leads to the wall’s construction, then as a propagandistic image that exposes the official representation as a justification for the empire itself, and ultimately as an ironic witness to the absurd construction.

Initially the narrator informs us that “the wall was intended, as was universally proclaimed and known, to be a protection against the peoples of the north”—a purpose for which its piecemeal construction poses a tactical problem:

Not only can such a wall not protect, but what there is of it is in perpetual danger. These blocks of wall left standing in deserted regions could easily be pulled down again and again by the nomads... (235-6)

Deleuze and Guattari’s invocation of the nomads from “An Old Manuscript” who have overrun the capital presents the diametrically opposite situation and, wedded to Nietzsche’s account of the men “who come like fate,” misleadingly implies that nomadic invaders are in fact the architects of the Great Wall rather than the instigators of its demolition. The second appearance of the nomads in “The Great Wall of China” provides an even more compelling portrait of their exteriority to the State. For rather than constituting a material threat, the nomads are exposed as little more than a discursive

construct serving the obscure designs of “the high command” that, like the decision to build the wall “has existed from all eternity” (242):

Against whom was the Great Wall to serve as a protection against the people of the north. Now, I come from the south-east of China. No northern people can menace us there. We read of them in the books of the ancients; the cruelties they commit in accordance with their nature makes us sigh in our peaceful arbors. The faithful representations of the artist show us these faces of the damned, their gaping mouths, their jaws furnished with great pointed teeth, their half-shut eyes that already seem to be seeking out the victim which their jaws will rend and devour. When our children are unruly we show them these pictures, and at once they fly weeping into our arms. But nothing more than that do we know about these northerners. We have not seen them, and if we remain in our villages we shall never see them, even if on their wild horses they should ride as hard as they can straight towards us—the land is too vast and would not let them reach us, they would end their course in the empty air.... Unwitting peoples of the north, who imagined that they were the cause of it! Honest, unwitting Emperor, who imagined he decreed it! We builders of the wall know that it was not so and hold our tongues. (241-42)

In a sense, Kafka does imply a relationship between the nomads and the structure of the State in this passage since neither the nomads nor the Emperor are ever seen by the peasant builders or their families. Moreover, as terrifying images from “the books of the ancients,” the nomads seem literally to be created by the State as a sustaining source of otherness. Yet, the relationship between the nomads and the State suggested by these images is still very different from the causal and structural identity they possess in Deleuze and Guattari’s account. For Kafka’s narrator, the nomads themselves, if they exist, remain “unwitting peoples of the north” rather than the “born organizers” they become in *Anti-Oedipus*. In fact, because of their exteriority to the State, these nomads ultimately represent a privileged position relative to that of the laborers. As the narrator speculates, “these tribes, rendered apprehensive by the building operations, kept changing their encampments with incredible rapidity, like locusts, and so perhaps had a better view

of the progress of the wall than we, the builders" (335-36). Far from creating the State, or even serving as the demonic antagonists described in picture books, the nomads seem to share the narrator's privileged critical vantage point and are thus the bearers of an ironic gaze that complements the narrator's meditations on the absurdity of "the most obscure of our institutions...that of the empire itself" (242).

A similar suppression of potentially oppositional representations of nomadism is apparent in Deleuze and Guattari's treatment of the story they confuse with "The Great Wall of China." The passage from "An Old Manuscript," as it is cited in *Anti-Oedipus*, implies that the nomads who have entered the capital are conquerors who impose a new sociopolitical order. Some elements of Kafka's story certainly support such an interpretation, particularly its variation on the standard trope of pastoral nomadism which parlays animal husbandry into an image of domination:

As is their nature, [the nomads] camp under the open sky, for they abominate dwelling houses. They busy themselves sharpening swords, whittling arrows, and practicing horsemanship. This peaceful square, which was always kept so scrupulously clean, they have made literally into a stable. We do try every now and then to run out of our shops and clear away the worst of the filth, but this happens less and less often, for the labor is in vain and brings us besides into danger of falling under the hoofs of wild horses or of being crippled with lashes from the whips. (416)

The image of despotism suggested by this narrative equation of horses and townsmen—both of whom are subject to the nomads' whips—is borne out by the narrator's conviction that the fortified city has become a prison:

How long can we endure this burden and torment? The Emperor's palace has drawn the nomads here but does not know how to drive them away again. The gate stays shut; the guards, who used to be always marching out and in with ceremony, kept close behind barred windows. (417)

Despite the nomads' role as unwitting jailors, however, their arrival does not institute the barbarian despotic machine as Deleuze and Guattari suggest. Rather than presenting a hierarchical social order as the outgrowth of conquest, the story emphasizes their opposition in the contrast between the nomads' "filth" and the city's "peaceful square, which was always kept so scrupulously clean" (416). Consequently, Kafka depicts the invasion as an extended raid rather than a "conquest" in the Nietzschean sense that Deleuze and Guattari imply. These "nomads from the North" are pre-eminently pillagers and are so radically different from the sedentaries they plunder that the narrator can only note the incommensurability of their two cultures.

The reasons for Deleuze and Guattari's suppression of the story's opposition between pastoral nomadism and the State are embedded in the narrator's account of this cultural divide. For it suggests that the nomadic invaders bear as strong a resemblance to the privileged hunter-gatherer nomads of savagery as they do to the despised pastoral nomads of despotism. The narrator's elaboration of how "speech with the nomads is impossible" (416), for instance, only appears to support Deleuze and Guattari's association of pastoral nomads and the State:

They do not know our language, indeed they hardly have a language of their own. They communicate each other much as jackadaws do. A screeching as of jackadaws is always in our ears. Our way of living and our institutions they neither understand nor care to understand. And so they are unwilling to make sense even out of our sign language. You can gesture at them till you dislocate your jaws and your wrists and still they will not have understood you and will never understand. (416)

Deleuze and Guattari interpret the linguistic alterity of the nomadic invasion as another sign of the State's exteriority to the savage territorial machine. They view the

noncommunication between the nomads and the sedentaries as an analogy for the purely formal unity of “Asiatic” production. But the bird-like “screeching” of the nomads sounds more like an animalistic version of the savage nomad-hunter’s distorted song or a schizophrenic shattering of language than an example of the bureaucratic writing machine Deleuze and Guattari associate with barbarism.

Deleuze and Guattari’s reluctance to associate pastoral nomadism with the comparatively subversive imagery of savagery is similarly suggested by their avoidance of the story’s ultimate depiction of the nomads’ alterity in the narrator’s allusion to cannibalism:

Even their horses devour flesh; often enough a horseman and his horse are lying side by side, both of them gnawing on the same joint, one at either end. The butcher is nervous and does not dare to stop the deliveries of meat.... If the nomads got no meat, who knows what they might think of doing; who knows anyhow what they may think of, even though they get meat every day... (417)

Although such intimations of cannibalism are clearly at odds with Deleuze and Guattari’s vision of nomadic bureaucrats, the bestial similarity of horse and horseman darkly recalls the proximity of hunter and animal in the nomad space of the forest. As the ensuing description of the nomads leaping upon an ox, “tearing morsels out of its living flesh with their teeth” (417) suggests, moreover, the pastoral nomads of “An Old Manuscript” come even closer than Clastres’s Guayaki hunters to directly appropriating the forces of production and reproduction. Like the “jackdaw” screeching of the nomads, this becoming-animal of the horsemen is filtered through the eyes of a narrator under siege and thus appears entirely negative. But this truly “barbaric” image of nomadism is merely

the flip side of Clastres's romantic primitivism: both versions dwell on the nomads' distortion of language and their direct access to flows.

Deleuze and Guattari's conservative and highly selective distortion of Kafka's fictions constitutes a strange exception to the revolutionary rhetoric of nomadism in *Anti-Oedipus*—strange especially because the images of nomads pulling down the empire's flimsy defenses in “The Great Wall of China” and transforming the capital “literally into a stable” or becoming-animal in “An Old Manuscript” seem so well-suited to describing the destructive project of schizoanalysis. But such a repression of revolutionary nomadism at the level of barbarism is absolutely necessary to the rhetorical logic of *Anti-Oedipus* because Deleuze and Guattari's critique of Freud requires both that “nomadism”—in the positive sense that Deleuze and Guattari intend—exist most powerfully at the “primal” hunter-gatherer stage of society (savagery), and that it be subsequently captured or “overcoded” by an utterly despotic regime that represses the nomadic flow of desiring-production. A revolutionary eruption of nomadism at the second “stage” of social organization would undermine Deleuze and Guattari's entire historico-evolutionary schema.

It would be less contradictory and more elegant if Deleuze and Guattari simply avoided any references to nomads of any sort in their account of the barbarian despotic machine. Because Deleuze and Guattari embrace Nietzschean conquest theory in an effort to reject any appearance of evolutionism in their account of the State, however, pastoral nomads are in a sense forced upon them. The schizoanalyst's solution to this potentially confusing rhetorical problem is to disavow, or at least, to minimize the

association of barbarian nomadism with massive migrations and what they elsewhere regard favorably as deterritorialized movement. As the obfuscation of oppositional nomadism in their treatment of Kafka so vividly demonstrates, they replace these potentially disruptive identifications with a negative, hierarchical, bureaucratic image of pastoral nomadism that they discover in Engels's *Origin* and Nietzsche's *Genealogy*. The paradoxical result of this substitution is a strangely static, even sedentary portrait of pastoral nomadism that resists assimilation into the revolutionary metaphors of schizonomadism.

The Poetics of Escape

Despite its powerful narrative thrust, Deleuze and Guattari insist that their account of the emergence of the State from the conquest of savage societies is neither evolutionary nor sequential. "The State was not formed in progressive stages," they argue, "it appears fully armed, a master stroke executed all at once; the primordial *Urstaat*, the eternal model of everything the State wants to be and desires" (217). Sometimes they imply that this *Urstaat* has a historical basis, noting, for instance, "the discovery of imperial machines that preceded the traditional historical forms" (217). Ultimately, however, such allusions to the ancient empires of the Egyptians, the Mycenaeans, and the Etruscans are superfluous because Deleuze and Guattari's alternative to evolutionary theories of the State is metaphysical rather than historical:

The primordial despotic state is not a historical break like any other. Of all the institutions, it is perhaps the only one to appear fully armed in the brain of those who institute it, "the artists with the look of bronze." That is why Marxism didn't quite know what to make of it: it has no place in the famous five stages: primitive

communism, ancient city-states, feudalism, capitalism, and socialism. *It is not one formation among others, nor is it the transition from one formation to another.* It appears to be set back at a remove from what transects it and from what it resects, as though it were giving evidence of another dimension, a cerebral ideality that is added to, superimposed on the material evolution of societies, a regulating idea or principle of reflection (terror) that organizes the parts and flows into a whole. (219)

In part, this characterization of the primordial state as a “cerebral ideality” describes the workings of despotism itself, the way it overcodes “the territorial machine, which it reduces to the state of bricks, of working parts henceforth subjected to the cerebral idea” (219). In other ways, however, “cerebral ideality” refers to the more radical counter-evolutionary implication that the State pre-exists its actual historical manifestation as a sort of ideational limit of savage society, “[s]o that in the end one no longer really knows what comes first, and whether the territorial machine does not in fact presuppose a despotic machine from which it extracts the bricks or that it segments in its turn” (219). Kenneth Surin has aptly described this process as a form of “reverse causality” that metaphysically trumps all historical counter-arguments. Thus, according to Deleuze and Guattari, “[i]t is useless to compose a list of differences after the manner of conscientious historians: village communes here, industrial societies there, and so on” because the despotic State is “the common horizon for what comes before and what comes after” (220).

Rhetorically at least, this ingenious riposte to Marxism’s “famous five stages” undercuts evolutionary narratives of the past by recoding developmental “stages” as contemporaneous, competing, social structures. Nonetheless, it ultimately reproduces familiar forms of nostalgia for non-Western societies endemic to primitivist evolutionary

theories like Engels's, even as it reconstitutes a subtle form of the very developmental models it ostensibly replaces. Ronald Bogue has noticed, for instance, that despite its touted anti-historicism, "Deleuze and Guattari's presentation of the social machine does suggest the existence of an irreversible historical process of accretion whereby the primitive machine is appropriated by the despotic (and possibly residual aspects of the primitive) by the capitalist" (103). Bogue views this process of historical accretion in the social machines of *Anti-Oedipus* as a warning against nostalgia, as evidence that for Deleuze and Guattari "any return to the past is a return to domination" (103). It is certainly the case that for Deleuze and Guattari "any effort to seize state control is an effort to perpetuate despotism," just as "any political programme for revolution is a blueprint for the molar, paranoiac investment of social desire" (Bogue 103). But such a profound distrust of "earlier" social machines does not extend unequivocally to savagery. As I have argued, Deleuze and Guattari view savagery equivocally, as a social machine that is violently repressive, but which nonetheless reserves a utopian space where nomadic desire retains a relatively high level of deterritorialization. Deleuze and Guattari's notion of "permanent revolution"—the "new earth" they envision succeeding the breakdown of capitalism, where desiring-production will assume a truly nomadic molecularity—is thus articulated in terms of a very traditional form of critical nostalgia. Holland comes considerably closer than Bogue to identifying the suppressed dynamics of primitivism and nostalgia in Deleuze and Guattari's universal history when he writes that "permanent revolution suggests not only a new combination of economics and non-power but a return to alliance based social relations...which occur sporadically both in

savagery and on the body-without-organs,” but which are monopolized and then repressed by despotism and capitalism, respectively (96; emphasis added).

The most prominent manifestation of such residual historicism is Deleuze and Guattari’s disarming but only semi-ironic use of terms like “savage,” “barbarian,” and “civilized.” Part homage to the radical stream of sociocultural evolutionism represented by Morgan and Engels, part avant-garde provocation, this typology of social machines is ambiguously calculated to shock the “civilized” Oedipal subject by exposing his lingering “barbarism,” and possibly, to remind him of the ambiguous, though at least polymorphous, pleasures of “savagery.” Though they clearly savor the rhetorical impact of a savage renaissance, Deleuze and Guattari insist that there is nothing inherently temporal or sequential about these competing categories. Yet as Johannes Fabian argues in *Time and the Other*, temporal categories are remarkably tenacious and avoiding evolutionism and primitivism is more difficult than it appears because even “constructs which appear (and often are proclaimed by their authors and users) to be purely ‘systematic’ do in fact generate discourse on Time and temporal relations” (23). Deleuze and Guattari’s overt—but very ambiguous—use of temporal terms conjoined with an explicit disavowal of their temporality constitutes a rather special case of such a scenario. For savagery, barbarism, and civilization, as they are used in *Anti-Oedipus*, invoke Fabian’s notion of “typological time,” “[a] use of Time which is measured, not as time elapsed, nor by reference points on a (linear) scale, but in terms of socioculturally meaningful events” (23). To be sure, Deleuze and Guattari wish to exempt their typology

from precisely this sort of characterization, but their still more sophisticated tripartite distinction between savagery, barbarism, and civility belongs here as well.

The categorical persistence of evolutionary temporality in Deleuze and Guattari's universal history accounts for only part of its tendency to reproduce primitivism and nostalgia at every turn. For even if one were to accept the substitution of relationships of spatial contiguity for relationships of temporal succession in their typology of social machines as a valid solution to evolutionist historicism, such a substitution hardly prevents the construction of primitivist utopias. That is because sociocultural evolutionism has characteristically drawn on ethnographic accounts of real societies in the present to supplement, or even substitute for, archaeological evidence of earlier "stages," transforming distance in space into remoteness from the present—in Fabian's terms, "the temporal discourse of anthropology as it was formed decisively under the paradigm of evolutionism rested on a conception of time that was...thoroughly spatialized" (16). As Morgan's close interaction with and idealization of the nineteenth-century Iroquois eloquently attests, romantic primitivism had as much to do with fieldwork among living societies as with armchair speculation about the past. Deleuze and Guattari's putative dehistoricization of temporal categories like "savagery" and "barbarism" attempts to address the latter half of the problem, but leaves the possibility of romanticizing cultural differences inherent in the former half substantially intact. In effect, Deleuze and Guattari merely exchange the temporal discourses of primitivism and evolutionism for the spatial discourse of exoticism.

Deleuze and Guattari are well aware of potential objections to this strategy of identifying greater access to the authentic flows of desiring-production with the actual people or cultures described in their ethnographic sources and offer the following defense of their apparent acquiescence to exoticism:

All delirium is racial, which does not necessarily mean racist. It is not a matter of the regions of the body without organs “representing” races and cultures. The full body does not represent anything at all. On the contrary, the races and cultures designate regions on this body—that is, zones of intensities, fields of potentials. (85)

What Deleuze and Guattari seem to mean by this is that delirium—or schizophrenic desiring-production—is never totally full of representation but must work within the symbolic order to achieve its connections and disjunctions on the body without organs—the unconscious which is built up through the process of recording. These representations are inevitably racial, but Deleuze and Guattari insist that the racialisms of the unconscious must not be confused with “identifying oneself with personages” corresponding to a particular “zone of intensity” or “field of potential” because

there is no ego that identifies with races, peoples and persons in a theater of representation, but proper names that identify races, peoples and persons with regions, thresholds or effects in a production of intensive quantities. The theory of proper names should not be conceived in terms of representation; it instead refers to a class of “effects”: effects that are not a mere dependence on causes, but the occupation of a domain, and the operation of a system of signs. This can be clearly seen in physics, where proper names designate such effects within fields of potentials: the Joule effect, the Seebeck effect, the Kelvin effect. History is like physics: a Joan of Arc effect, a Heliogabalus effect—all the *names* of history, and not the name of the father. (86)

The sleight of hand in this paragraph exposes the precariousness of this attempt to ward off a critique of their representational strategies. It should go without saying that “the names of history”—which in Deleuze and Guattari’s account also include “races” and

“peoples”—differ in a very significant way from the names of physics. “Joule,” “Seebeck,” and “Kelvin” are all proper names bearing a wholly arbitrary relation to the effects they identify. The names of history they list—“Joan of Arc” and “Heliogabalus” might arguably share this arbitrary relation to their effects, but the “names” pervading the text that they do not mention here—“the Scandinavian,” “the Great Mongol,” “the Chinaman,” “the redskin,” “the Negro,” “the Guayaki”—have a far more problematic relation to the effects they “identify.” Even if it is arbitrary, the systems of signs identifying races and cultures with particular “effects” is not neutral. Indeed, the process of “identifying races, peoples and persons” with an arbitrary “class of effects” describes precisely the operation of racisms, Orientalisms, and primitivisms.

Ultimately, Deleuze and Guattari’s need to defend the exoticist current in their account of schizophrenic desiring-production is a symptom of the synchronic turn in their reconceptualization of Marxist universal history. For their strategy of replacing diachronic evolutionism with synchronic cultural relativism is identical to social anthropology’s response to Victorian evolutionism and yields the same predicament. Their “typological” approach to social machines not only reproduces despotic representations like the Guayaki nomad-hunter who “follows the flows and exhausts them in place” by identifying particular cultures with particular “intensities” and “effects”; it ironically reproduces the temporal component of the evolutionist discourses it attempts to replace. As Fabian argues,

Just because one condemns the time-distancing discourse of evolutionism he does not abandon the allochronic understanding of such terms as *primitive*. On the contrary, the time-machine, freed of the wheels and gears of the historical method, now works with “redoubled vigor.” The denial of coevalness becomes

intensified as time-distancing turns from an explicit concern to an implicit theoretical assumption. (39)

Fabian especially associates this allochronic theoretical assumption with the structuralist anthropology of Lévi-Strauss—a figure who is as important to Deleuze and Guattari’s writings on anthropology as he is to those of Clastres. For Levi-Strauss’s structuralism literally “functioned to freeze and thereby preserve earlier historical and temporalizing ethnology” because, in Fabian’s felicitous phrase, “Levi-Strauss mines the building blocks for his monumental edifices” in precisely such ethnology: “Behind the structural ramparts of his mythologies he peruses and digests enormous amounts of ethnography without showing signs of being disturbed by the possibility that most of it might be corrupted to the core by the temporalizing ideological interests for which he has so much contempt” (59). Here, Deleuze and Guattari’s method is in complete alignment with that of Lévi-Strauss and the echo of Deleuze and Guattari’s architectural metaphors for despotism in Fabian’s characterization of Levi-Strauss speaks volumes about the persistence of despotic or paranoid forms of temporal distancing in their own discourse.

The numerous ways in which Deleuze and Guattari’s seemingly spatial typology of social machine recycles temporal and evolutionary narratives have a significant impact on the nostalgic representation of “savage” nomadism in *Anti-Oedipus*. The transition from savagery to barbarism in particular suggests a process of historical accretion in which the polymorphous flows of the savage territorial machine are captured and constrained by the univocity of the despotic State. Because this capture is “Asiatic,” however, the original polyvocality of the savage nomadic flows is not entirely lost; rather, it remains functional but imbedded, like a brick in the Great Wall. Consequently,

the form of desiring-production represented by savage nomadism is potentially recuperable—the Great Wall can come down, the bricks can become projectiles and regain their originary trajectory.

The image of nomadism yielded by this narrative of capture both extends and complicates the romantic image of nomadic wandering and originary freedom suggested by Deleuze and Guattari's use of the nomadic metaphor to revise the Freudian notion of a primal horde. For positive nomadism in *Anti-Oedipus*—the Guayaki nomad-hunter, desiring-production, the nomadic subject—is always associated not only with freedom, but with escape. In every sense the converse of the conquering, prison building barbarian nomads of despotism, the idealized nomads of savagery epitomize the ethical and political project of schizoanalysis: not simply as nostalgic reminders of authentic desiring-production, but as harbingers of a renewing destructive force capable of bursting through walls from the inside, out. What at first appears to be a metaphor for random movement, for the free-association of desiring-machines on the body without organs, turns out to have a direction as well: nomadism describes the trajectory of an exit from the archaic despoticisms of identity, the nuclear family, and the State, which linger in the capitalist social machine, reterritorializing with a vengeance.

Deleuze and Guattari's tendency to code nomadism not only as movement but as escape is implicit in the very first contrast of movement and rest in their critique of psychoanalysis, the assertion that "A schizophrenic out for a walk is a better model than a neurotic lying on the analyst's couch" (2). Although presented as alternatives (one is "a better model" than the other: the schizo or the neurotic, walking or reclining, the world or

the couch) the paired formulations also contain an implicit narrative structure suggesting a parable of imprisonment and escape. In the exhortative context of Deleuze and Guattari's argument, the schizo is not simply an alternative to the neurotic; he *is* the neurotic in some utopian future moment—after he has sprung himself from the prison of the analyst's office and the sedentary social and psychic investments it represents.¹⁹

This narrative thrust which transforms nomadism into a metaphor of social and psychic liberation is evident everywhere in *Anti-Oedipus* in the extraordinary proliferation of images associating nomadic movement with freedom and escape, on the one hand, and sedentarism with oppression and entrapment, on the other. Complementing Deleuze and Guattari's representation of the carceral State at the level of psychic investments, the Oedipus complex is "like the labyrinth" in which escape is circular and futile because "you only get out by re-entering it," or like "the two ends of a ligature that cuts off all desiring-production. The screws are tightened, nothing related to production can make its way through any longer, except for a far-distant murmur" (79); the psychoanalyst makes a police-like appeal at the thought that someone might claim to escape the Oedipal dragnet" (81), revealing his true role, "psychoanalyst-as-cop," in collusion with social and police repression" (108); Oedipalization institutes a psychic double impasse in the unconscious that is "like a full nelson hold in wrestling," forcing desire "to cry Oedipus" like a pinned wrestler (110); Freud "closets sexuality in the Oedipal nursery" (115); "Oedipal desires are the bait, the disfigured image by means of which repression catches desire in the trap" (116). Conversely, schizonomadic flows "traverse the [Oedipal] triangle, breaking apart its vertices.... Against the walls of the

triangle, toward the outside, flows exerts the irresistible pressure of lava or the invincible oozing of water" (67); Proust, like other great artists, "scales the schizophrenic wall and reaches the land of the unknown" (69); "sexuality and love do not live in the bedroom of Oedipus, they dream instead of wide-open spaces" (116); "[t]he schizo knows how to leave, he has made his departure into something as simple as being born or dying" (131).

Ever alert to the possibility of being misunderstood, Deleuze and Guattari foreground the difference between their conception of schizonomadic escape and mere escapism. The former, they argue, "does not merely consist in withdrawing from the social, in living on the fringe: it causes the social to take flight through the multiplicity of holes that eat away at it and penetrate it, always coupled directly to it, everywhere setting the molecular charges that will explode what must explode, make fall what must fall, make escape what must escape, at each point ensuring the conversion of schizophrenia as a process into an effective revolutionary force" (341). Escape, as they envision it, is explosive and revolutionary—indeed, they suggest that the term itself has been corrupted by molar political discourses that fear its true revolutionary force:

Good people say that we must not flee, that escape is not good, that it isn't effective, that one must work for reforms. But the revolutionary knows that escape is revolutionary—withdrawal, freaks—provided one sweeps over the social cover on leaving, or causes a piece of the system to get lost in the scuffle. What matters is to break through the wall... (277)

The subversive implications of the revolutionary "line of escape" are perfectly captured by this recurrent metaphor of breaking through the wall—a literalization of schizophrenic "breakthrough" that unites liberation from the structures of despotism and their revolutionary destruction in a single image.

At times, Deleuze and Guattari associate the schizonomadic line of escape with pure stylistic flight and the sublime destruction of codes, as in their discussion of Turner's paintings, which show "what it means to scale the wall, and yet to remain behind" (132). Deleuze and Guattari isolate three periods in Turner's oeuvre: in the first, apocalyptic period, "canvases are end-of-the-world catastrophes, avalanches and storms"; in the second, paintings suggest a "delirious reconstruction, where delirium hides" (132). But Deleuze and Guattari are most interested in the paintings of the third period in which

[t]he canvas turns in on itself, it is pierced by a hole, a lake, a flame, a tornado, an explosion.... The canvas is truly broken, sundered by what penetrates it. All that remains is a background of gold and fog, intense, intensive, traversed in depth by what has just sundered its breadth: the schiz. Everything becomes mixed and confused, and it is here that the breakthrough—not the breakdown—occurs.

(132)

Turner's sublime aesthetic clearly exemplifies the type of liberating semiotic violence Deleuze and Guattari privilege in their assault on the "despotic signifier" (133). But their account of schizonomadic escape is not limited to such claims for the revolutionary potential of style, or rather what they call "the absence of style—asyntactic, agrammatical: the moment when language is no longer defined by what it says, even less by what makes it a signifying thing, but by that which causes it to move, to flow, and to explode—desire" (133). For Deleuze and Guattari, "a violence against syntax, a disconcerted destruction of the signifier, non-sense erected as flow, polyvocality that returns to haunt all relations" is inextricably linked to a modernist poetics of travel:

Strange Anglo-American literature: from Thomas Hardy, from D. H. Lawrence to Malcolm Lowry, from Henry Miller to Allen Ginsberg and Jack Kerouac, men who knew who to leave, to scramble the codes, to cause flows to circulate, to traverse the desert of the body without organs. They overcome a limit, they shatter a wall, the capitalist barrier. (132-33)

Whether it means going “on the road” with the Beats, or involves still more exotic deterritorializations such as “Artaud’s great migration towards Mexico” (85), the revolutionary line of escape in *Anti-Oedipus* is not easily separated from the literal act of traveling from a corrupt metropolitan center to a reinvigorating “primitive” margin.

Even more than the urban schizo-*flâneurs* that stroll through its pages, modernist travelers like Lawrence, Miller and Artaud are the quintessential nomads of *Anti-Oedipus*. For all of Deleuze and Guattari’s favorable representations of nomadism seem ultimately to refer to the real as well as the hallucinatory journeys of literary modernism which combined stylistic experimentation with a primitivist reproach to Western industrial society.²⁰ In *Anti-Oedipus*, modernist travel becomes a kind of performative nomadism in which Lawrence, Miller and Artaud’s wanderings enact the surreal flights and deterritorializations their narratives describe. It is precisely such a convergence of a modernist poetics of escape and a colonial discourse of travel that leads Caren Kaplan to argue that Deleuze and Guattari’s discourse of nomadism amounts to “a kind of theoretical tourism” (88). For like the primitivism of their modernist heroes, schizonomadic flight involves “a utopian process of letting go of privileged identities and practices... [that] requires emulating the ways and modes of modernity’s ‘others’” (88).

Despite their celebration of modernist temporal travelers and their texts as exemplars of schizonomadic escape, Deleuze and Guattari insist that the departures they envision are more metaphoric than real—or at least that “there is no reason to oppose an interior voyage to exterior ones” (84):

[the schizo's] journey is strangely stationary, in place. He does not speak of another world, he is not from another world: *even when he is displacing himself in space*, his is a journey of intensity, around a desiring-machine that is erected here and remains here. (131; my emphasis)

Nomadism, Deleuze and Guattari suggest, is a state of mind. Yet there is something very unusual about this reterritorialization of the concept of nomadism at the very moment it seems poised for takeoff. Clearly the notion of the “stationary voyage” is meant to distinguish schizonomadism from a more parochial discourse of travel which substitutes banal exoticism for the “incredible sufferings, vertigos, and sicknesses” that herald schizophrenic breakthrough (131). But it also functions as a tacit disavowal of the extraordinary degree to which Deleuze and Guattari’s nomadism idealizes modernist travel and reproduces the colonial structures of center and margin upon which it relies.

That this is a matter of significant concern for Deleuze and Guattari is evident from their periodic—and well-founded—*anxiety* that they have opened themselves up to precisely this accusation:

What complicates everything, is that there is indeed a necessity for desiring-production to be induced from representation, to be discovered through its lines of escape.... Even those who are best at ‘leaving,’ those who make leaving into something as natural as being born or dying...stake out a far-off territoriality that still forms an anthropomorphic and phallic representation: the Orient, Mexico, or Peru. (314-15)

Kaplan highlights this problem in her damning assessment that Deleuze and Guattari can be read as ‘high modernists’ not only because they privilege linguistic experimentation but also because “their celebration of deterritorialization links the Euro-American modernist valuation of exile, expatriation, defamiliarization and displacement and the colonial discourses of cultural differences to a philosophy that appears to critique the

foundations of that very tradition” (89). Deleuze and Guattari’s anticipatory response to such a critique is to suggest that the critic’s dream of escaping “modernist” or “colonial” discourse is itself utopian because “We are all little dogs, we need circuits, and we need to be taken for walks” (315). They also allude somewhat cryptically to the possibility of accelerating deterritorialization in such a way that it “pushes the simulacra [of capitalism] to a point where they cease being artificial images to become indices of the new world...not a promised and a pre-existing land, but a world created in the process of its own tendency, its coming undone, its deterritorialization” (322). Unfortunately, their own discourse provides no clear example of what such an acceleration might look like, or how it would avoid simply reproducing exoticisms and primitivisms.

Ultimately, Deleuze and Guattari seem more anxious simply to disavow their participation in colonialist discourses than to work through this problematic and deeply entrenched aspect of their thought. In its most insidious form, this disavowal produces a deformed rhetoric of imperialism in which the roles of imperial center and colonized margin undergo a strange reversal. Ostensibly, Deleuze and Guattari’s account of social and psychic repression is anti-colonial, identifying both colonial political and Oedipal subjectivity with the overcoding processes of despotism. In their demonstration of how “primitive cures are schizoanalysis in action” (167) Deleuze and Guattari suggest a very direct link between colonialism and Oedipus, arguing that “primitive” psychology only becomes Oedipalized “under the effect of colonization”:

The colonizer, for example, abolishes the chieftainship, or uses it to further his own ends (and he uses many other things besides: the chieftainship is only a beginning). The colonizer says: your father is your father and nothing else, or your maternal grandfather—don’t mistake them for the chiefs; you can go have

yourself triangulated in your corner, and place your house between those of your paternal and maternal kin; your family is your family and nothing else.... Yes, then, an Oedipal framework is outlined for the dispossessed primitives: a shantytown Oedipus. (168-69)

But they move very quickly from an analysis of the epistemic violence of colonialism to a generalization that reframes and undercuts its political significance: “There or here, it’s the same thing: Oedipus is always colonization pursued by other means, it is the interior colony, and we shall see that even here at home, where we Europeans are concerned it is our intimate colonial education” (170). In this particular instance, Deleuze and Guattari may seem to exaggerate the similarity between the Ndembu experience of colonialism and the “intimate colonial education” of Europeans simply to score a point at the expense of Oedipal psychoanalysis specializing in Africa who “don’t know what they’re doing” (170). But their repeated inversion of the colonial metaphor to insist that “[w]e are all little colonies and it is Oedipus that colonizes us” (265) suggests that a more profound form of disavowal is at work.

The nature of this disavowal becomes especially clear in the way that Deleuze and Guattari characterize the perennial opposition between “the neurotic on the couch—as an ultimate and sterile land, the last exhausted colony—and the schizo out for a walk in a deterritorialized circuit” (316). For the deterritorialized circuit is characteristically described using the very images with which the imperial powers traditionally sought to justify colonial expansion. The schizo’s line of escape propels him towards “virgin lands” (135), “new lands” (318), “the unknown country” (318), and far-off places” (321). There are even moments when schizonomadic “escape” seems to include actual imperialism, as when Deleuze and Guattari associate “the schizophrenic voyage” with

“the American meaning of frontiers: something to go beyond, limits to cross over, flows to set in motion, noncoded spaces to enter” (224) or with the development of capitalism in Europe: “Perhaps then the merit of the West, confined as it was on its narrow ‘Cape of Asia,’ was to have needed the world, to have needed to venture outside its own front door” (Braudel qtd. in *AO* 224). As such examples suggest, Deleuze and Guattari’s capacity to idealize the nomadic movement of deterritorialization depends on a consequent erasure or bracketing of colonial political power—a method which revealingly recalls the very strategies of colonial powers who justified aggression and appropriation by invoking images of foreign landscapes that simply erased the presence of native inhabitants on the one hand, and a frontier rhetoric of adventurous expansionism on the other. In light of these repetitions of colonial discourse, Deleuze and Guattari’s invocation of colonialism as a metaphor to describe the trials of Euro-American subjectivity smacks of ideological mystification.

The theme of escape in *Anti-Oedipus* is meant to give nomadism a revolutionary political edge. It seems intended to function as a counterweight to the nostalgic primitivism that obtains in the third chapter on universal history and which subtends the nomadic metaphor in the rhetorical critique of Freud. For the notion of nomadic escape—revolutionary or otherwise—is organized by the same narrative that defines the initial nomadic capture. To exaggerate only slightly, “free” savage nomadism and schizonomadic escape represent two sides of the same coin: society before and after the State, golden age and utopian future. Ironically, there could be no clearer confirmation of the operation of nostalgia and ethnocentrism in Deleuze and Guattari’s representation of

nomadism than its emphasis on the theme of escape which gives nomadism both a direction and a clear point of origin.

Barbarians at the Gate

In a particularly prescient moment, Deleuze and Guattari note that their readers “will perhaps find many reasons for reproaching us: for believing too much in the pure potentialities of art and even of science, for denying or minimizing the role of classes and class struggle, for militating in favor of an irrationalism of desire, for identifying the revolutionary with the schizo, for falling into familiar, all-too-familiar traps” (378-79). Deleuze and Guattari dismiss such allegations of political conservatism as nothing more than “a bad reading” (379), suggesting that they stem from a basic misunderstanding because “schizoanalysis *as such* has no political program to propose” (380). This is a peculiar defense. For the lack of a “political program” does not mean that schizoanalysis is apolitical or that “it does not claim to be speaking for anyone” (380); it only means that schizoanalytic politics are fundamentally unprogrammatically in the usual political sense of defining ends and interests. Even if schizoanalysis “does not raise the problem of the nature of the *socius* to come out of the revolution,” its tendency to privilege deterritorialization over reterritorialization as the motor of permanent revolution raises pressing political questions. Holland provides an especially illuminating critique of the political entailments of Deleuze and Guattari’s exhortation to deterritorialization in his survey of intersections between schizoanalysis and Marxism, such as the Italian *autonomia* movement or Hakim Bey’s notion of “Temporary Autonomous Zones”:

The conundrum shared by all these thinkers seems to be this: utopian vision for now seems to outstrip real possibilities; the exceptional political forms that correspond best to the nature of desiring-production seem to have little chance of transforming social conditions permanently so that they could become the rule rather than the exception. No wonder Deleuze and Guattari insist that schizoanalysis has no political program! (108)²¹

However, if Deleuze and Guattari's vision of a fourth "stage" beyond capitalism, at the end of universal history, ultimately retains a utopian fantasy of "permanent revolution," their account of how paranoid forms of libidinal investment can cause revolutionary politics to "go bad," resulting in micro-fascisms rather than a truly revolutionary liberation from dominant molarities, is a valuable tool for political analysis. Indeed, the analytic value of schizoanalytic investigations into "what forms of conciliation between the régime of desiring-production and the régime of social production" (380) are possible in a given socius are considerable, and the implications for colonial discourse theory of Deleuze and Guattari's analysis of the interrelationship between capitalism and colonialism have only begun to be explored.²² Not long ago, Robert Young noted the "virtual absence [of *Anti-Oedipus*] from discussions of postcolonial theory" (167), and although Kaplan and Miller's critiques suggest that this situation is changing, it nonetheless provides a useful index to the degree of resistance Deleuze and Guattari's work has generated. If many critics have been reluctant to debate, or even to consider, the political insights of schizoanalysis, it may be because these insights are so difficult to disentangle from Deleuze and Guattari's politically regressive modernist aesthetic which reproduces at the level of their discourse the very forms of cultural imperialism and despotic representation it claims to critique.

Like the texts of Freud which they both disparage and admire, *Anti-Oedipus* is a “combined formation, constructed from bits and pieces in which “revolutionary, reformist, and reactionary elements” coexist (117). As I have argued, the discourse of nomadism constitutes one such reactionary element which, because of its thematic and conceptual importance, threatens to subvert Deleuze and Guattari’s revolutionary rhetoric altogether. Yet Deleuze and Guattari’s employment of a discourse that romanticizes colonial margins only partially accounts for the political conservatism of the nomadic metaphor in *Anti-Oedipus*. For the particular version of nomadism it privileges—hunter gatherer rather than pastoral—contributes significantly to the impression that Deleuze and Guattari’s theorizing ultimately eschews real political engagement in favor of a solitary escape into delirium and the consolations of a revolutionary aesthetic.

Hayden White’s elaboration of traditional distinctions between the “Wild Man” and the “barbarian” in his archaeology of “the forms of wildness” helps to illuminate the political implications of Deleuze and Guattari’s rhetorical choice. According to White, classical authors tended to personify wildness in two ways, based on “the difference between those men who lived under *some law* (even a false law) and those who lived under *no law at all*” (165). “Barbarians” typically belonged to the former category—a recognition by classical writers of “the uncomfortable fact that barbarian tribes were able to organize themselves, at least temporarily, into groups large enough to constitute a threat to ‘civilization’ itself” (165). The lawless wildmen, however, seen as incapable of political or military organization were conventionally depicted as solitary figures, “identified with the wandering life of the hunter” (162). White concludes, therefore,

That the Wild Man and the barbarian represented different kinds of threats to “normal” men. Whereas the barbarian represented a threat to society in general—to civilization, to racial purity, to moral excellence—whatever the ingroup’s pride happened to be vested in—the Wild Man represented a threat to the *individual*, both as nemesis and as a possible destiny, both as an enemy and as representative of a condition into which an individual man, having fallen out of grace or having been driven from his city, might degenerate. (166)

Deleuze and Guattari’s representation of the solitary nomad hunter clearly derives not from classical nor even from more recent images of barbarism, but from the Wild Man mythos whose positive and negative variants stretch from Hobbes, Montesquieu, and Rousseau to Marx, Freud and Lévi-Strauss. The schizo-nomad’s Zarathustra-like struggle to produce himself as “a free man, irresponsible, solitary, and joyous, finally able to say and do something simple in his own name... a name that no longer designates any ego whatever” (AO 131) closely resembles White’s portrait of the lawless Wild Man as seen through a Rousseauist lens that transforms his “threat” to civilized man into an ideal of natural freedom. Moreover, the nomad hunter’s association with individual psychic processes and the flow of unconscious desire recalls the image of the Wild Man as a figure “in whom the libidinal impulses have gained full ascendancy” (White 166).

As I have argued, Deleuze and Guattari’s decision to privilege the nomadism of savagery while disparaging or disavowing the nomadism of barbarism stems from their metaphorical critique of Freud which replaces his dark myth of wildness with a Rousseauistic alternative. But this rhetorical strategy has the unfortunate effect of limiting the imagery of schizonomadism to a tradition of primitivist representation that fits awkwardly with the revolutionary project of schizoanalysis. By refusing to explore the metaphoric potential of barbarism as an image of social revolution, in other words,

the proto-nomadology of *Anti-Oedipus* has the unfortunate effect of suppressing the very sorts of apocalyptic political associations they wish to conjure. Deleuze and Guattari clearly want nomadism to connote *both* natural freedom on an individual level, associated with the romantic strain of the Wild Man tradition, and the apocalyptic destruction of the social order, associated with barbarism. Indeed, they wish to place social and psychic investments on a single continuum of desiring-production and to demonstrate that real social transformation is unthinkable without the psychic liberation of desire. If Deleuze and Guattari's claims for the revolutionary potential of desire often sound politically ineffectual, it may be because they articulate schizoanalysis in terms of primitivist imagery that reasserts the traditional division between "the individual" and "society" they wish to bridge. Schizoanalysis thus seems to emphasize solitary rebellion at the expense of collective political action and makes itself vulnerable to the accusation that it is only the latest in a long line of insular and politically irresponsible "Euro-American modernisms [which] celebrate singularity, solitude estrangement, alienation, and aestheticized excisions of location in favor of locale—that is, the 'artist in exile' [who] is never 'at home,' always existentially alone, and shocked by the strain of displacement into significant experimentations and insights" (Kaplan 28).

This may also help to account for the rhetorical shift characterizing the announcement of a need for "nomadology" in *A Thousand Plateaus*. There the "soft" nomadism of schizoanalysis recedes and the warlike animal-raising nomads formerly identified with the rise of the imperial State suddenly become its fiercest opponents—vectors of pure difference and deterritorialization. The signs of this paradigm shift are

already visible in the occasional references in *Anti-Oedipus* to those who “destroy civilizations, in the manner of the great migrants in whose wake nothing is left standing” (85), to the Mongols and Ghengis Khan, to the ransacking of the Roman Empire (87). These scattered invocations of revolutionary “barbarism” only begin to suggest the more overtly combative, collectivist, and political inflection the new nomadism acquires as Deleuze and Guattari attempt to divest it of associations with the solitary Wild Men of modernist poetics. “The desiring-machines are at the door, they make everything shake when they enter,” Deleuze and Guattari tell us in *Anti-Oedipus*. This is another of their prescient moments, for as the submerged metaphor of barbarism in this image suggests, “the barbarians are at the gate,” and the nomadology of *A Thousand Plateaus* looks forward to the invasion.

**Invasion of the Centaurs:
The Nomadology of *A Thousand Plateaus***

An image comes at once to mind: the invasion of the centaurs that is recorded on the pediment of the Temple of Zeus at Olympia. Drunken and incensed, the centaurs burst in upon the civilized festivities that are in progress. But a stern Apollo, the guardian of the orthodox culture, steps forward to admonish the gate-crashers and drive them back. The image is a potent one, for it recalls what must always be a fearful experience in the life of any civilization: the experience of radical cultural disjuncture, the clash of irreconcilable conceptions of life. And the encounter is not always won by Apollo.

THEODORE ROSZAK, *The Making of a Counter Culture* (42-43)

The challenge of the second volume of Deleuze and Guattari’s *Capitalism and Schizophrenia* is not simply the breadth of its reference or the sheer number and complexity of the new concepts it introduces, but its ambiguous relation to its precursor, *Anti-Oedipus*. As Bogue suggests, *A Thousand Plateaus* “takes up many of the themes of

Anti-Oedipus...but in ways that do not so much complement as complicate the elaborate schemata of the first work” (124). Holland agrees, suggesting that “one way of understanding the relation of *A Thousand Plateaus* to *Anti-Oedipus* is to imagine Deleuze and Guattari setting out to ‘deconstruct’ in the second volume any binary oppositions left standing at the end of the first”—a “deconstruction” that proceeds not in the Derridean sense but through “multiplying terms” (55). Yet it is difficult to tell whether these innovations make *A Thousand Plateaus* less or more utopian than *Anti-Oedipus* in the articulation of a revolutionary libidinal politics of deterritorialization and mutation—that is, a setting in motion of guerilla-style cultural practices that result in individual (or better still) group exits from molar identities, what Deleuze and Guattari call becoming-minor or becoming-other. Some of Deleuze and Guattari’s staunchest “defenders”²³ and most brilliant interpreters—Holland, Patton, and translator Brian Massumi—find much that is productive and useful in the Deleuzo-Guattarian “tool-box,” but simultaneously emphasize a subtle dampening of the call to arms in the second volume of *Capitalism and Schizophrenia* that expresses itself in Deleuze and Guattari’s sober refrain: “It is time once again to multiply practical warnings” (188). Patton, for instance, remarks on the “ambivalence” that characterizes the elaboration of concepts like the war-machine and the line of flight in *A Thousand Plateaus*, the “prudence of Deleuzian political morality,” and concludes his otherwise enthusiastic excursus by quoting the nomadologists’ own closing caution, “never believe that a smooth space is enough to save us” (66-67, 79, 80; *ATP* 625). Holland is even more emphatic about the “new-found caution—a kind of ‘post-anti-humanism’—[that] intervenes in *A Thousand Plateaus* to qualify the former

anti-Oedipal enthusiasm for the para-personal, the molecular, the schizophrenic” (“Deterritorializing” 63). *A Thousand Plateaus* is, “perhaps...a lot less revolutionary than the *Anti-Oedipus*,” or, at the very least, “a lot less romantic”: “Any lingering suspicions of an earlier exaggerated or uncritical enthusiasm for ‘schizophrenia’ should now be dispelled by the very cautious, nuanced, treatment of deterritorialization and the body-without-organs” (63). Meanwhile, Deleuze and Guattari’s least sympathetic critics may be counted on to emphasize precisely the opposite tendency—to see, in other words, an essential continuity in tone and argument between both volumes. In his lengthy and hostile review of *A Thousand Plateaus*, for example, Christopher Miller characterizes nomadology as preeminent among current “anti-identitarian” theories that view identity as “not only a construction but actually an ‘identitarian’ prison, from which we might or must escape” (172, 173) and calls for “a less utopian, less contradictory, less arrogant, and less messianic theorization of movement, a nomadism that acknowledges something outside itself,” i.e. a “positive cosmopolitanism that remains meticulously aware of localities and differences” and does not indulge in “pretending that [borders] don’t exist” (209).

Utopian anti-humanist blueprint or prudent post-anti-humanist toolbox? Polemics aside, *A Thousand Plateaus* seems to be both of these things simultaneously, and I would like to explore how the conflicting impulses of utopianism and pragmatism in *A Thousand Plateaus* are organized and coordinated by transformations of the earlier volume’s nomadic metaphor to a degree heretofore unnoticed. Deleuze and Guattari’s multiplication of concepts—and indeed, their entire philosophical “non-system”—is

designed to frustrate any search for a master-term or “key” that would unlock the network of communicating passages between the diversely arrayed plateaus of their rhizomatic text. Still, it is not merely by accident that Plateau 12, “1227: Treatise on Nomadology—The War Machine,” has emerged as one of the “ways in” most well-traveled by curiosity-seekers and converts alike. Commenting on the massive outlay of theoretical concepts in *A Thousand Plateaus*, Jameson has suggested—too forcefully perhaps, but not without reason—that “the ultimate appearance of the great, mythic State/Nomad opposition is a way of recontaining all this complex and heterogeneous material: something like a narrative and even...an ideological frame that allows us to reorder it into simpler patterns” (“Marxism” 413). “History,” as they lament by way of introduction, “is always written from the sedentary point of view and in the name of a unitary State apparatus, at least a possible one, even when the subject is nomads. What is lacking is a Nomadology, the opposite of history” (23). It may seem perverse to attribute “recontainment” to a nomad philosophy that hitches its war-chariots to innumerable lines of flight, desert-bound. Nonetheless, many of Deleuze and Guattari’s most important concepts—the war machine, the line of flight, smoothness, speed, and exteriority—all come together under the aegis of nomadism and its philosophical correlate, “nomad thought,” the significance of which is developed across multiple plateaus.

Like *Anti-Oedipus*, then, *A Thousand Plateaus* articulates its social, political, and psychic diagnoses of capitalism via a poetic imaginary of movement and rest, nomad and sedentary. The concept of nomadism itself, however, changes quite dramatically from the first volume to the second. Whereas the potentially liberating “schizonomadism” of

Anti-Oedipus had been associated with the deterritorialized spaces within the social machine of savagery (particularly the forest), the despotism of the early State and its oppressive law of signification with barbarism, and the ambiguous deterritorializing energies of capitalism with civilization, in *A Thousand Plateaus* “[t]he neat sequence of primitive, barbaric, and capitalist social machines is disrupted by the addition of a nomadic machine” (Bogue 124) whose qualities and implicit “evolutionary” position suggest a subtle but significant rearrangement of theoretical priorities. In a number of places, the nomadic primitive continues to function as it did in *Anti-Oedipus*, as a type of social formation privileged for its uncanny (and of course “unconscious”) ability to ward off the invidious formation of the State. But the savage is no longer the only anthropological representative of nomadism, which has split off from the social machine of savagery to constitute a second, apparently more privileged category. This bifurcation is most evident in the elaboration of “regimes of signs” in plateau five where Deleuze and Guattari complicate their earlier Anti-Oedipal typology of social machines, isolating four distinctive forms of signification, each of which is tied to a specific social regime. The first is a familiar-looking “signifying regime” associated with paranoia and despotism in which all meaning is ultimately regulated; symbolically, it is a regime of “faciality” in the sense that meaning is tied to the approving or disapproving face of the despot-god and policed by his army of “interpretive priests[s]” and “bureaucrats” (112-14). The second is a “postsignifying regime” associated with the despot-god’s “averted gaze,” and thus implying a loss of stable meaning (119). Third, Deleuze and Guattari identify a “presignifying regime” associated with “hunter nomads” (118), which is clearly the

savage machine of *Anti-Oedipus*. Finally, and most importantly, there is a “countersignifying semiotic”—a regime “whose most notable representatives are the fearsome, warlike, and animal-raising nomads” such as “the great nomads of the steppes, from the Hyksos to the Mongols” (118).

Accompanying this bifurcation of nomadism into “hunter” and “animal-raising” varieties is a complementary (and necessary) revision of the barbarian despotic machine—a revision apparent in the un signaled reinterpretation and redeployment of figures and texts used to present the nomadism of *Anti-Oedipus*. In that text, barbarians had been associated with a Nietzschean narrative of state formation, and their mobility had been accordingly suppressed or de-emphasized: “*They come like fate, without reason, consideration, or pretext; they appear as lightning appears, too terrible, too sudden*” (Nietzsche qtd. in *AO* 191, 195). In *A Thousand Plateaus*, however, this very quotation signals “the flash of the war machine, arriving from without”:

“They come like fate, without reason, consideration, or pretext...” “In some way that is incomprehensible, they have pushed right into the capital. At any rate, here they are; it seems that every morning there are more of them.” (353)

The significance of Kafka’s nomads—those of the second citation who have “pushed right into the capital”—has been correspondingly altered as well: from symbolic creators of the state to exemplars of the war machine’s vector of deterritorialization.²⁴ Even the despotic, desert-dwelling “paranoiac,” “the artist of the large molar aggregates” (*AO* 192, 194, 279) is reclaimed for nomadology in Volume Two. In *Anti-Oedipus*, the paranoiac “Colonel [T. E.] Lawrence[, who] lines up the young naked corpses on the full body of the desert,” was directly opposed to one of Deleuze and Guattari’s favourite schizos,

“Judge Schreber[, who] attaches little men by the thousands to his body” (279-80); in *A Thousand Plateaus*, the desert has become the arena of smooth space and Lawrence’s *Seven Pillars of Wisdom* is invoked and praised as a textbook on the nomadic art of guerilla warfare as “nonbattle” (563, n. 104). The “fearsome, warlike, and animal-raising nomads” of nomadology, in other words, emerge at the intersection of a double-bifurcation, (appropriately) “between” the former categories of savage nomads and barbarian states.

Though they do not cite Kroeber’s distinction between “primitive nomads” and “pastoral nomads,” Deleuze and Guattari clearly have something of this nature in mind, and despite their insistence that they are “not suggesting an evolutionism” (119), the elaboration of these categories frequently displays an overt hierarchical preference for pure nomadism (see Miller 185-87). “No doubt,” they suggest during a coy,²⁵ but largely favorable, account of the war machine, this apparatus “is realized more completely in the ‘barbaric’ assemblages of nomadic warriors than in the ‘savage’ assemblages of primitive societies” (359). In fact, the previously lauded primitive nomad often looks more rooted and “arborescent” in *A Thousand Plateaus* than ever before. “Primitive societies have nuclei of rigidity or arborification that as much anticipate the state as ward it off” (213), they caution, and the animal-raising nomad thus finds the primitive nomad no less an antagonist than other sedentary types:

Smooth or nomad space lies between two striated spaces: that of the forest, with its gravitational verticals, and that of agriculture, with its grids and generalized parallels, its now independent arborescence, its art of extracting the tree and wood from the forest. But being “between” also means that smooth space is controlled by these two flanks, which limit it, oppose its development, and assign it as much as possible a communicating role; or, on the contrary, it means that it turns against

them, gnawing away at the forest on one side, on the other side gaining ground on the cultivated lands, affirming a noncommunicating force or a force of *divergence* like a “wedge” digging in. The nomads turn first against the forest and the mountain dwellers, then descend on the farmers. (384)

The result of this shift in emphasis and preference, from primitive to pastoral nomadism, is a typology of “abstract machines” whose nomadic terms often seem to replicate the structure of Morgan’s primitivist admiration for the barbarian’s “negation” of modernity which, as Jameson points out, generated “a negation of the negation—a second, supplementary Other in the form of the Savage—something like the remainder or waste product, the convenient result of an operation of ‘splitting’ whereby everything unpleasantly uncivilized about the Iroquois can be separated off and attributed to ‘truly’ primitive or tribal peoples” (“Marxism” 396).

Although Deleuze and Guattari do not advertise this subtle abjection of the primitive nomad in favour of his pure pastoral counterpart in *A Thousand Plateaus*, the revision may be read simultaneously as a critique, a refinement, and a complication of that earlier allegorical figure. First, the ascent of pure nomadism instantiates an unpersuasive “rejection” of the residual evolutionism and primitivism of the nomadic metaphor in *Anti-Oedipus* by switching from temporal to spatial discourses of Otherness—a move reminiscent of the synchronic turn in early twentieth-century anthropology’s definition of the primitive, with similarly disappointing results. Miller suggests that “Deleuze and Guattari’s use of the term ‘primitive’ reveals a profound ambivalence—or perhaps just confusion—about its validity” (206); their audacious decision to critique evolutionism and primitivism through the substitution of one primitivist figure for another should alert us to the real significance of the shift to pure

nomadism in *A Thousand Plateaus* and its second, entirely conventional, task of conceptual refinement and elaboration. In its “purest” (most conceptual) form, the nomadic metaphor of *A Thousand Plateaus* is considerably more utopian than its forerunner, combining “absolute deterritorialization” with an aggressive, anti-State orientation in the startling image of the nomad war machine. Third, even as the double-structure of pure nomadism unifies the postidentitarian motif of “the intermezzo” and the revolutionary motif of barbarian invasion in a single utopian figure, the very impurity of the “pure” nomad—that is, his inevitable connectedness to settlement and civilization—is displaced onto the less utopian plane of the text, which is populated not by pure concepts and pure nomads, but by quasi-nomadic “syncreti[c]” (161) figures (the migrant, the metal smith, the engineer, the private thinker, etc.) in whose constant traffic between striated and smooth space Deleuze and Guattari record the more cautious, flexible, and pragmatic nomadology praised by Patton and Holland, a politics of becoming that refuses to turn becoming itself into an idol:

You have to keep enough of the organism for it to reform each dawn; and you have to keep small supplies of significance and subjectification, if only to turn them against their own systems when the circumstances demand it, when things, persons, even situations, force you to; and you have to keep small rations of subjectivity in sufficient quantity to enable you to respond to the dominant reality. Mimic the strata. You don't reach the BwO [body without organs], and its plane of consistency, by wildly destratifying. (160)

In the context of an overarching anti-humanism, this final “post-anti-humanist” qualification is, paradoxically, the most revolutionary and the most valuable of *A Thousand Plateaus*. For although Deleuze and Guattari embody a certain utopian vision of “flow,” “becoming-minor,” “absolute deterritorialization,” “smoothness,” etc. in the

figure of the pure nomad, this conceptual absolute is itself subject to the same law of deterritorialization at a higher level. “The warrior is in the position of betraying everything” (354); so are the nomadologists, including, even, their own injunctions: “Make rhizomes, not roots, never plant!” (24). The shift to a metaphoric of (im)pure pastoral nomadism allows Deleuze and Guattari simultaneously to celebrate and to subtly interrogate the political efficacy of that utopian “never.”²⁶ *A Thousand Plateaus* certainly enjoins us to “go nomad,” and critics like Miller and Kaplan are right to question the primitivism and ethnocentrism of Deleuze and Guattari’s categories. But Miller’s discovery of “a certain cosmopolitan arrogance at work” in what he sees as nomadology’s indifference to “people and things that *are* stuck within the various interiorities of the world” (191) overstates the degree to which the revolutionary injunction to “go nomad” signifies a utopian postidentitarianism. The pure nomad is double in *A Thousand Plateaus*, and his ultimate function is to figure a bridge between its pragmatic and utopian currents of postidentitarian politics, to do, in other words, what the barbarian nomad has always done in European discourse: signify that ambiguous space between the present and the future, between one civilization and another yet to come.

The Smooth Space of Post-primitivism

Why return to primitives when it is a question of our own life?

DELEUZE AND GUATTARI, *A Thousand Plateaus* (209)

Why indeed? But Deleuze and Guattari will repeatedly do so, despite the most ingenious evasions. Outwardly, as Miller has shown in considerable detail, *A Thousand Plateaus* eschews the temporalizing discourses of evolutionism and primitivism, only to

reconstitute them “under erasure” as when, for instance, it distinguishes “two types of segmentarity, one ‘primitive’ and supple, the other ‘modern’ and rigid” (210). Because Miller finds Deleuze and Guattari’s project irresponsibly euphoric in general, he is not inclined to make distinctions between the various primitive figures of *A Thousand Plateaus*, much less speculate on their relation to precursor-figures in *Anti-Oedipus*. Deleuze and Guattari’s scare-quote critique of primitivism—whereby the repeated insistence that “[t]here is no reason to identify a regime or a semiotic system with a people or historical moment” (119) appears increasingly hollow as “heavy-handed cultural representation through dualism” clearly emerges as the rule rather than the exception—seems merely to confirm that they are declaiming in bad faith (208). When viewed in relation to *Anti-Oedipus*, however, the new emphasis on pastoral over primitive nomadism begins to look self-consciously revisionist, even if its technique is inherently self-limiting.

This revisionism is particularly apparent in Deleuze and Guattari’s treatment of Pierre Clastres, whose account of the Guayaki hunters furnished them with the prototype for savage nomadism in *Anti-Oedipus*. Miller notes that Clastres is one of several anthropologists (including Lévi-Strauss and Luc de Heusch) “whose work receives the most extended commentary and homage” in *A Thousand Plateaus*, but what seems most noteworthy about the treatment of Clastres here is actually the degree to which Deleuze and Guattari distance themselves from their much less critical treatment of his work in *Anti-Oedipus*. After briefly praising Clastres’s “break with the evolutionist postulate” that primitive societies are “societies without a State” because they “did not reach the

degree of economic development, or the level of political differentiation, that would make the formation of the State apparatus both possible and inevitable” (357), and his subsequent account of primitive mechanisms “unconsciously” directed against the formation of the State (such as war), Deleuze and Guattari turn their attention to the impasse Clastres’s opposition between ‘primitive’ counter-State societies and ‘monstrous’ State societies” seems to produce (359). For if “the state is no better accounted for as a result of war than by a progression of economic or political forces,” then the appearance of the State becomes extremely difficult to explain without a radical realignment of the terms in question:

The more deeply Clastres delved into the problem [of State origin], the more he seemed to deprive himself of the means of resolving it. He tended to make primitive societies hypostases, self-sufficient entities (he insisted heavily on this point). He made their formal exteriority into a real independence. Thus he remained an evolutionist, and posited a state of nature. Only this state of nature was, according to him, a fully social reality instead of a pure concept, and the evolution was a sudden mutation instead of a development. For on the one hand, the State rises up in a single stroke, fully formed; on the other, the counter-State societies use very specific mechanisms to ward it off, to prevent it from arising.... We will never leave the evolution hypothesis behind by creating a break between the two terms, that is, by endowing bands with self-sufficiency and the State with an emergence all the more miraculous and monstrous. (359)

Deleuze and Guattari’s solution to the problem of residual evolutionism is simply to shift the terms of the primitive-State relation from temporal succession to spatial contiguity by giving traditional anthropology an archaeological turn much like Khazanov had done:

It seems as though ethnologists, fenced off in their respective territories, are willing to compare their territories in an abstract, or structural, way, if it comes to that, but refuse to set them against archaeological territories that would compromise their autarky. They take snapshots of their primitives but rule out in advance the coexistence and superposition of the two maps, the ethnological and the archaeological.... As long as archaeology is passed over, the question of the relation between ethnology and history is reduced to an idealist confrontation, and

fails to wrest itself from the absurd theme of society without history, or society against history. *Everything is not of the State precisely because there have been States always and everywhere....* The self-sufficiency, autarky, independence, preexistence of primitive communities is an ethnological dream: not that these communities necessarily depend on States, but they coexist with them in a complex network. (429-30)

By insisting on a primal condition in which “everything coexists, in perpetual interaction” (430), the problem of residual primitivism/evolutionism should, in principle, be resolved. Yet even with such precautions, Deleuze and Guattari cannot completely avoid the discourse of origins. They do not offer anything as simple as Eden, but their positing of a primordial plenitude of complex coexistence between nomads and States recalls the forest/encampment structure of “savage” Guayaki society that reserved a tenuous, but still conceptually important space of primitive authenticity in *Anti-Oedipus*.

The emergence of pure nomadism as a privileged category, moreover, confirms that this solution is less satisfactory than it appears. Indeed, even after they have made the archaeological argument, Deleuze and Guattari circle back to the nagging question: “Can it at least be said that the hunter-gatherers are the ‘true’ primitives and remain in spite of it all the basis or minimal presupposition of the State formation?” (431; see also 222). They will of course answer in the negative, with an appeal to the principle of “reverse causality” (431) that they had already invoked in *Anti-Oedipus* to dispel any final empirical rejoinders to their archaeological argument. From a rhetorical point of view, however, even this “metaphysical” solution (Surin 102) is more ingenious than satisfying as a means of divesting savagery of all traces of temporality, for Deleuze and Guattari must still ultimately acknowledge a difference between “the Neolithic or even Paleolithic State, once it appeared” and this State “before it appeared,” when it acted as

“the actual limit these primitive societies warded off” (431). Reverse causality may “solve” this problem in theory, but it is hardly a solid basis for mythmaking. From a rhetorical point of view, pure nomadism—when its horizontal-spatial axis of barbarism is emphasized—makes a considerably better figure for a counter-State society that may be situated within an anti-evolutionary “social topology” (455) of “coexistence,” “transport,” and “transfer” (430) than the primitive hunter nomad, who is limited to what must ultimately be an historical task of “warding off” a danger that has not yet manifested itself, ever could. The shift to pure nomadism (which they define in strictly non-evolutionary terms; see 430-31) thus constitutes a gestural, or symbolic, rejection of the primitivist-evolutionary connotations of the former nomadic metaphor, not only in Clastres’s work, but in their own.

The War Machine: Between Apocalypse and Utopia

[S]uppose we were (as we might be) an influence, an idea, a thing intangible, invulnerable, without front or back, drifting about like gas. Armies were like plants, immobile, firm-rooted, nourished through long stems to the head. We might be a vapour, blowing where we listed. Our kingdoms lay in each man’s mind; and we wanted nothing material to live on, so we might offer nothing material to the killing. It seemed a regular soldier might be helpless without a target, owning only what he sat on, and subjugating only what, by order, he could poke his rifle at.

T. E. LAWRENCE, *Seven Pillars of Wisdom* (197-8)

As the purely gestural nature of the nomadic critique of primitivism in *A Thousand Plateaus* suggests, Deleuze and Guattari’s objection to evolutionism is moral rather than conceptual; they continuously denounce the prejudice of “the evolutionist vision that sees bands or packs as a rudimentary, less organized, social form” (358), but

only so that bands and packs may be properly appreciated as sophisticated “metamorphoses of a war machine formally distinct from all State apparatuses or their equivalents” (358). Moreover, as the revision of the nomadic metaphor in the direction of a spatial poetics of perpetual coexistence and interaction suggests, *A Thousand Plateaus* is at least partially driven by a project of terminological purification where its most important categories are concerned. This project extends far beyond the rather half-hearted attempt to expunge latent evolutionism, encompassing a complete and (at one level of the text) far more utopian reimagining of the nomadic metaphor of becoming and “permanent revolution.”

In *Anti-Oedipus*, the primitive territorial machine was characterized as a mixed regime, split between the (schizophrenic) forest and the (paranoid) encampment. “[T]he pure nomad does not exist” (148), Deleuze and Guattari declared, even though their typology covertly favoured savagery as a regime of relative deterritorialization when compared with the despotic regime of barbarism. In *A Thousand Plateaus*, however, pure (i.e. pastoral) nomadism figures “purely conceptual” absolutes:

In short, we will say by convention that only nomads have absolute movement, in other words, speed...It is in this sense that nomads have no points, paths, or land, even though they do by all appearances. If the nomad can be called the Deterritorialized par excellence, it is precisely because there is no reterritorialization *afterward* as with the migrant, or upon *something else* as with the sedentary (the sedentary's relation with the earth is mediatized by something else, a property regime, a State apparatus). With the nomad, on the contrary, it is deterritorialization that constitutes the relation to the earth, to such a degree that the nomad reterritorializes on deterritorialization itself. It is the earth that deterritorializes itself, in a way that provides the nomad with a territory. The land ceases to be land, tending to become simply ground (*sol*) or support. (381)

In fact, the pure nomad's "absolute movement," upon which such an account is based, is described as a refinement of the nomad hunter's counter-State mechanisms: "Primitive peoples already had mechanisms of war that converged to prevent the State formation; but these mechanisms change when they gain autonomy in the form of a specific nomadism machine that strikes back against the States" (430). In effect, the space of the forest that had been the purest sign of the nomad hunter's access to (and embodiment of) deterritorializing flows, is decisively separated from the reterritorializing space of the encampment in pure nomadism; the compromised space of the savage forest gives way to the absolute space of the nomadic steppe or desert in Volume Two.

The pure nomad's relation to points within nomadic space itself provides them with a similarly idealized figuration of becoming. For although the nomad "goes from one point to another," they insist, "the question is what in nomad life is a principle and what is only a consequence":

To begin with, although the points determine paths, they are strictly subordinated to the paths they determine, the reverse of what happens with the sedentary. The water point is reached only in order to be left behind; every point is a relay and exists only as a relay. A path is always between two points, but the in-between has taken on all the consistency and enjoys both an autonomy and a direction of its own. The life of the nomad is the intermezzo. Even the elements of his dwelling are conceived in terms of the trajectory that is forever mobilizing them.

(380)

This spatialized allegorical representation of postidentitarian becoming (as opposed to Being) clearly engages the spatial mobility of pure nomadism. Throughout *A Thousand Plateaus*, however, nomadic "in-betweenness" is frequently conjured through allusions to the historical narrative of barbarism as the moment "in-between" the collapse and rise of empires or civilizations (353, 355, 375), particularly in Deleuze and Guattari's analysis of

the two “heads” of the State, the “magician-emperor” (the despot) and the “jurist-priest-king” (the bureaucrat), between whom the nomadic war machine frequently interposes itself as a mediating force of transition (556, n. 41). The temporal axis of barbarism is not avoided altogether, in other words, but is incorporated into the praise of the nomadic intermezzo.

Most importantly, the pure nomad’s figuration of a utopian space of becoming is represented poetically by its decisive collapsing of the animal-human-machine triad that, for Lawrence and Chatwin remained a pertinent structure within which they negotiated the particularities of their different and changeable visions. From one side, Deleuze and Guattari’s comparison of tools and weapons, hunting and riding (395-98) describes a becoming-animal of the nomad that is more complete than that of the hunter and which thus more fully embodies the war machine (396); from the other, their insistence on the nomad’s intrinsic technical capabilities attacks the triad from the other side: not only is “the idea that the nomads received their technical weapons...from renegades from an imperial State...highly improbable” (394), but they are the unsung inventors of “technological elements (the saddle, stirrup, horseshoe, harness, etc.)” and of “the man-animal-weapon, man-horse-bow assemblage” (404-05).

Even as its interstitial status (both spatial and temporal) exemplifies the key principle of becoming, the image of the nomadic war machine provides a clearer figure of oppositional politics than the savage nomads of *Anti-Oedipus* (Patton 77). Whereas that earlier figure sometimes seemed to imply a nostalgic politics of escapism, the new figuration of nomadism in *A Thousand Plateaus* synthesizes the image of utopian

becoming with an apocalyptic image of attack that is unambiguously oppositional—a true “invasion of the centaurs.” Deleuze and Guattari reject any sort of evolutionary sequence in the relation between hunter and animal-raising nomads:

Economic evolutionism is an impossibility; even a ramified evolution, “gatherers—hunters—animal breeders—farmers-industrialists,” is hardly believable. An evolutionary ethnology is no better: “nomads—seminomads—sedentaries.” (430)

The revisionism of the nomadic metaphor in *A Thousand Plateaus*, however, attests to an implicit evolutionism in their own primitivist discourse reminiscent of Khazanov’s vehement defense of pure nomadism.

Nomadology’s Doubles

[T]here is a space in which the three kinds of closely intermingled lines coexist, tribes, empires, and war machines.... Take a proposition like the following one by the historian Pirenne about barbarian tribes: “The Barbarians did not spontaneously hurl themselves upon the Empire. They were pushed forward by the flood of Hunnish advance, which in this way caused the whole series of invasions.” On one side, we have the rigid segmentarity of the Roman Empire, with its center of resonance and periphery, its State, its pax romana, its geometry, its camps, its limes (boundary lines). Then, on the horizon, there is an entirely different kind of line, the line of the nomads who come in off the steppes, venture a fluid and active escape, sow deterritorialization everywhere, launch flows whose quanta heat up and are swept along by a Stateless war machine. The migrant barbarians are indeed between the two: they come and go, cross and recross frontiers, pillage and ransom, but also integrate themselves and reterritorialize. At times they will subside into the empire, assigning themselves a segment of it, becoming mercenaries or confederates, settling down, occupying their own land or carving out their own State (the wise Visigoths). At other times, they will go over to the nomads, allying with them, becoming indiscernible (the brilliant Ostrogoths). Perhaps because they were constantly being defeated by the Huns and Visigoths, the Vandals (“zone-two Goths”) drew a line of flight that made them as strong as their masters; they were the only band or mass to cross the Mediterranean. But they were also the ones who produced the most startling reterritorialization: an empire in Africa. Thus

it seems that the three lines do not only coexist, but transform themselves into one another. Again, we have taken a summary example in which the lines are illustrated by different groups. What we have said applies all the more to cases in which all the lines are in a single group, a single individual.

GILLES DELEUZE AND FELIX GUATTARI, *A Thousand Plateaus* (222-23)

On the fringes of the steppe—in-between the steppe and the empire—a second, more ambiguous figure emerges, represented in this “summary example” by the migrant barbarian, whose appearance complicates the utopian discourse of pure nomadism. Deleuze and Guattari are not being prescriptive in this elaboration of Pirene, as they often appear to be (despite occasional disavowals) in their treatment of pure nomadism: the migrant barbarian is not offered as a revolutionary model, but merely as an illustration of the concept of segmentarity and the variations of its lines (the nomadic line of flight, the rigid line of the State apparatus, and the supple line of “so-called *primitive* segmentarity”) (222). Yet, these migrant barbarians who move between the conceptual poles of nomad and State, dwelling among both at different times, for their own reasons, surely embody the more sober political qualifications that coexist in *A Thousand Plateaus* alongside the intimations of utopian becoming, as when they concede (impatiently, grudgingly) that it is “indispensable for women to conduct a molar politics, with a view of winning back their own organism, their own history, their own subjectivity: ‘we as women...’ makes its appearance as a subject of enunciation” (276). This figure reappears frequently in *A Thousand Plateaus*, in many guises: the migrant (380), the man of war who betrays the State (354), the engineer (362), the journeyman (368), the “quasi-nomadic” smith (372). All of these figures in motion between nomad and sedentary are so many “de facto mixes” (384), whose ultimate referent is the mixed-regime primitive

hunter nomad who turns out not to have been dispensed with after all, merely raised to a more abstract level of significance.

Significantly, however, the pure nomad is himself implicated in this type of mixture and transformation, for not only do Deleuze and Guattari invoke a version of the “nomadic alternative” model to counter evolutionism, suggesting that “the most ancient nomadism can be accurately attributed only to populations that abandoned their semiurban sedentarity, or their primitive itineration, to set off nomadizing” (430), they also note that “Nomads turn imperial” too (136). The distinction Deleuze and Guattari introduce between nomads and migrants is thus appropriately marked at every turn by a profound ambiguity:

The nomad is not at all the same as the migrant; for the migrant goes principally from one point to another, even if the second point is uncertain, unforeseen, or not well localized. But the nomad goes from point to point only as a consequence and as a factual necessity.... Nomads and migrants can mix in many ways, or form a common aggregate; their causes and conditions are no less distinct for that (for example, those who joined Mohammed at Medina had a choice between a nomadic or a bedouin pledge, and a pledge of hegira or emigration). (380)

Nomad and migrant are distinct, by this account, yet by no means opposites. In fact, they appear to be complementary: the migrant dwells at one point or another, the nomad dwells in the intermezzo between those points. Such a conception of the migrant seems less sophisticated than a postcolonial theorization of “hybridity” like, for instance, Homi Bhabha’s, which emphasizes processes of translation and negotiation between competing identities. As Robert Young has noted, in an otherwise encouraging exploration of how concepts from *Anti-Oedipus* and *A Thousand Plateaus* could be adopted or adapted for postcolonial critique, Deleuze and Guattari’s notions of decoding, recoding and

overcoding, as well as their notions of deterritorialization and reterritorialization, are too schematic for postcolonial analysis because they

imply a form of cultural appropriation that does not do justice to the complexities of the way in which cultures interact, degenerate and develop over time in relation to each other. Decoding and recoding implies too simplistic a grafting of one culture on to another. We need to modify the model to a form of palimpsestual inscription and reinscription, an historical paradigm that will acknowledge the extent to which cultures were not simply destroyed but rather layered on top of each other, giving rise to struggles that themselves only increased the imbrication of each with the other and their translation into increasingly uncertain patchwork identities. (*Colonial 173-74*)

The migrant who “goes principally from one point to another” evinces a related conceptual oversimplification. And yet, Deleuze and Guattari’s concession that “nomads and migrants can mix in many ways” suggests not only that they regard “emigration” as a potential means of embarking on a creative “line of flight,” but that nomadism entails a necessary connection to fixed points, and even if it ideally passes through them, this passage may not be as swift as they sometimes imply. The two positions seem in fact constantly reversible—a point Deleuze and Guattari affirm in their discussion of religion as a war machine that “mobilizes and liberates a formidable charge of nomadism or absolute deterritorialization,” even though it also reterritorializes:

it doubles the migrant with an accompanying nomad, or with the potential nomad the migrant is in the process of becoming....The necessity of maintaining the most rigorous distinctions between sedentaries, migrants, and nomads does not preclude de facto mixes; on the contrary, it makes them all the more necessary in turn. And it is impossible to think of the general process of sedentarization that vanquished the nomads without also envisioning the gusts of local nomadization that carried off sedentaries and doubled migrants (notably, to the benefit of religion). (384)

What this porous distinction signifies, I would argue, is the reemergence of the suppressed temporal axis of pure nomadism (on which the pastoral nomad acts as a

syncretic mid-point between conceptually purer, more stable configurations and thus appears as a “de facto mix” of the two) in the form of nomadology’s more conservative double: the migrant as syncretic “organism” who will “keep small supplies of significance and subjectification” to guard against being simply swept away, “plunged into a black hole, or even dragged towards catastrophe” (160-61). Deleuze and Guattari’s distinction between nomad and migrant, in other words, opens a space in their abstract discourse for becomings that are “slower” and more situated than the utopian vision of speed and perpetual revolution figured by the nomad’s war machine.

Rosi Braidotti’s Deleuze-inflected feminist nomadology takes this current of sobriety as representative of nomadology in general: “Being a nomad, living in transition, does not mean that one cannot or is unwilling to create those necessarily stable and reassuring bases for identity that allow one to function in a community. Rather, nomadic consciousness consists in not taking any kind of identity as permanent” (*Nomadic* 33)—a position she goes on to articulate by describing the necessity of “a pragmatic mixture of autonomous structures and integrated practices” in “implementing and sustaining institutionalized feminist projects” (34). Massumi also presents nomadology (in the form of “becoming-other”) as counseling a situated form of politics that is not strictly oppositional but involves molar “camouflage” (105) and “sidestepping” (106) when under threat:

Tactical sabotage of the existing order is a necessity of becoming, but for survival’s sake it is just as necessary to improve the existing order, to fight for integration into it on its terms. These are two sides of the same coin, and they could be practiced in such a way as to reinforce rather than mutually exclude one another. Neither is an end in itself. Their combined goal is the redefinition of the

conditions of existence laid down by the molar order: their conversion into conditions of becoming. (104)

These kinds of qualification seem to be implicit in Edward Said's brief account of the "Treatise on Nomadology" section of *A Thousand Plateaus*—an "immensely rich book" which he finds "mysteriously suggestive" for his own study of *Culture and Imperialism* (331). Calling for a "new critical consciousness" that would acknowledge the practical importance of identity politics—"insist[ing] on one's own identity, history, tradition, uniqueness" (330)—and yet radically complicate, and eventually move beyond, the limiting and dangerous notion of "pure" identities and cultures, Said invokes Deleuze and Guattari's concepts of the war machine, the nomad, and metallurgy as metaphors well-suited to conveying the "integrative realities" (331) of "the political map of the contemporary world" (332) whose "tensions, irresolutions and contradictions" are articulated by the "homeless wanderers, nomads, and vagrants, unassimilated to the emerging structures of institutional power, rejected by the established order for their intransigence and obdurate rebelliousness" (332). Said speaks of the "unhoused, decentered, and exilic energies...whose incarnation today is the migrant" (332) in terms of Deleuzo-Guattarian nomadology, in other words, but he views their theorizing of identity as a nomadism of "tensions" and "contradictions"—not pure deterritorialization. It is extremely telling that the emphasis of Said's brief comparison alludes to nomadism but focuses on metallurgy—a much more ambiguous figure in *A Thousand Plateaus* signifying, as Said correctly notes, "[p]recision, concreteness, continuity, form" (332)

Whereas Said tends to simply collapse Deleuze and Guattari's distinction between the nomad and the migrant into his own version of situated nomadism, other critics who

have sought connections between nomadology and postcolonial theory have indicated that the figure of nomad is in some ways too utopian in its projection of perpetual transformation. Lisa Lowe, for instance, argues that Deleuze and Guattari's notion of nomadism "interrupts that binary schemas which tend to condition the way in which we read and discuss not only postcolonial literature, but postcolonial situations in general," and may thus be useful because "[b]inary conceptions may be neither radical nor extravagant enough to account for the heterological sense in which social terrains are not monolithically determined by either colonizer or colonized, but are characterized by conditions of emergence, hybridity, and the coexistence of competing yet uneven strata, not only of nation and race, but of gender, class, caste, and region" (47). And yet, she warns that "[w]hile appreciating the suggestiveness of the term, nomadism should not exclude the use of tactical, provisional oppositions in practical resistances to domination" and wishes to "inscribe the theoretical discussion of nomadism" (apparently because Deleuze and Guattari do not) "within a framework which stress that practical struggles against colonial domination necessarily occur through strategically fixed fronts, boundaries, and center" (48). I agree, but it seems to me that such a qualification is already present in *A Thousand Plateaus* in the way in which the euphoric postidentitarian yearnings associated with nomadism overlap and intermingle with the "communicating" figures of the barbarian migrant and the itinerant smith.

"Only Assemble": Nomadology as Bricolage

Is there a need for a more profound nomadism than that of the Crusades, a nomadism of true nomads, or of those who no longer even move or

imitate anything? The nomadism of those who only assemble (agencement). How can the book find an adequate outside with which to assemble in heterogeneity, rather than a world to reproduce?

GILLES DELEUZE AND FELIX GUATTARI, *A Thousand Plateaus* (222-23)

As necessary and important as critiques of the latent primitivism, evolutionism, sexism, and ethnocentrism in Deleuze and Guattari's nomadology have been—and my own reading obviously owes an enormous debt to these critiques—there is a way in which some of the more virulent criticism of nomadology's representations misses the mark. Rather than viewing Deleuze and Guattari merely as naïve or mischievous primitivizers (as both Miller and Pels suggest we do), it may be useful, and certainly fairer, to attempt to grasp the rhetorical significance of what seems, upon reflection, to be a willed poetics of “molarity” in their work. Braidotti has suggested that “contemporary French philosophers are not systems-builders” but

providers of services, of ‘toolboxes,’ working with ideas which are programmes for action rather than dogmatic blocks. First and foremost is their concern for the relevance of their work in drawing up connections and linkages between philosophy and the fundamental problems and preoccupations of our age. Faithful to the insight that one never thinks in a void, the French post-structuralists present themselves as diagnosticians of their time and age.

(*Patterns* 3)

This connection-drawing, she suggests, is accomplished by a technique that is “akin to Lévi-Strauss's idea of a constructive ‘*bricolage*’” in that it is a mode of thinking “which connects the act of reflection to the context which engendered it” (3). On this basis, it becomes possible to see ways in which nomadology's stubborn insistence on thinking its particular vision of utopian transformation through primitivist figures such as the nomad (or sexist figures like “woman”) might be grasped as a performative gesture which attempts to embody the very transformation it seeks to accomplish.

There is clearly a profound contradiction between Deleuze and Guattari's claim that their nomadism is purely conceptual—"It is not the nomad who defines this constellation of characteristic; it is this constellation that defines the nomad" (423)—and their insistence on using empirical sources on "real nomads" as the basis for elaborating their concepts. As Miller suggests, the nomadologists "straddle the fence between purely intellectual nomadism and anthropological nomadism" (179). Because of the strong reactions the work engenders, debates over the status of anthropological representation in *A Thousand Plateaus* tend towards polarization: Miller finds that nomadology remains mired in ethnocentric, exoticist representation; Patton defends it as a conceptual exercise with a specific rhetorical purpose: "The invocation of the nomadic warriors of the past is clearly intended to assist the reappearance of the same forces in the present, although not in the same guise. At the level of the text, the effect of this dislocation between principle and example is to render explicit the character of the book as artifice, as an assemblage" (77).

Braidotti's account of Deleuze as *bricoleur*—that is, as a thinker who addresses the style of his thought and expression to the particularity of the problems he wishes to address, using available tools in new and unexpected ways—seems to suggest a third alternative that would grasp both positions simultaneously. The nomads of *A Thousand Plateaus* are simultaneously "real" (though obviously stereotyped) and virtual, and this doubleness figures the linkage between two moments: the present and the future, molar being and molecular becoming. The molar metaphor of pure nomadism in *A Thousand Plateaus*, in other words, might be read as an attempt to figure the passage through the

striations of the present—colonialism, racism, primitivism—to the “nomadological” utopia of smoothness and flow—a passage which is itself utopian, which is to say, strictly aesthetic. Along similar lines, Ian Buchanan argues that “the entirety of the mythopoetic dimension of Deleuze’s work...needs to be investigated for its figurative aims, not embraced for itself” (74). Since the most fundamental aim of Deleuze and Guattari’s philosophy is precisely to free thought from all confines—a utopian proposition to be sure—they are in a sense constrained by the very language in which they work, and their only choice is to work through that language, to move through molarity to the other side.

As Buchanan insists:

[O]ne might be forgiven for thinking Deleuze’s thought is advocating a nomadic existence in favour of a sedentary one, he is certainly enthusiastic enough about it to make it seem so, but that would be to misconstrue demonstration for demagoguery... Deleuze’s philosophy does not find its pretext in some hazy fantasy of becoming a plains Indian, or Steppes peasant. These are merely figures, ways of making the point that our conception of philosophy is not the only possible one, that, in other words, there are other ways of thinking and doing things from the way we do. (74)

That the nomad is a molar figure *par excellence*, they might say, “so much the better”; for just as Deleuze and Guattari worked through Freud’s primitivism rather than rejecting it out of hand, they embrace a stereotyped nomad in order to articulate a form of thought that would ultimately turn against molar notions of nomadism and so destroy them.

If, as I have argued, the virtue of *A Thousand Plateaus* is its refusal to fully trust the most extreme formulations of its utopian vision—a vision against which it sets an array of mixed, quasi-nomadic figures, nomadology’s doubles—then Deleuze and Guattari’s mixed and troubling style of representation might be a further “demonstration” or “performance” of this refusal. And yet, this seems too generous a reading. In the end,

Deleuze and Guattari's insistence on deriving utopian concepts from colonial stereotypes is a difficult strategy to accept, particularly since, as even Buchanan notes, it lends itself all too easily to misunderstanding. Indeed, when reading *A Thousand Plateaus*, one is often troubled by the sense that one has not misunderstood after all as Deleuze and Guattari sail-off on myriad lines of flight towards Mexico, the Orient, Africa.... The most productive and promising appropriations of nomadology seem to be precisely those that do not become intoxicated by Deleuze and Guattari's figurations, who recognize them as "so much briny jelly" (Buchanan 117) and thus either abandon them or approach them with a spirit of revision and critique. Buchanan's daring attempt to read Deleuze against the grain of his anti-dialectical pronouncements and to "extract from Deleuze's project an apparatus of social critique built on a utopian impulse" (8) tends towards the former option, largely dispensing with Deleuze and Guattari's rhetoric of nomadism. Braidotti's feminist reinterpretation of Deleuze as a ground for her own "politics of location" embraces the rhetoric of nomadism, but in ways that illuminate and further develop the more cautious forms of nomadism I have been tracing here. The implied revisionism of nomadology's metaphors in her articulation of a political fiction of "embodied" nomadism at the end of *Patterns of Dissonance* points precisely to the deep ambivalence of Deleuze and Guattari's own figural strategies:

I hope we can reconcile the lightness of the new era with the heaviness of a female genealogy which produces the uncomfortable awareness that, however molecular, this is still a man's world. I hope we shall be able to think multiplicity and lightness, speed and difference but also carry the burden of our luggage: on the one hand the historical memory of oppression, on the other the weight of feminist epistemology, feminist ethics, feminist politics. Most of all, I hope the female feminists can carry this historical burden and still make the conceptual

jump to the next millennium. Like the acrobats we have had to become, may we jump long and jump high, and still land on our own two feet. (284)

Chapter 4

Apocalyptic Cartographies:

The Nomadic Hinge in *The Stars My Destination* and *The English Patient*

The nomad and the cartographer proceed hand in hand because they share a situational need—except that the nomad knows how to read invisible maps, or maps written in the wind, on the sand and stones, in the flora.

ROSI BRAIDOTTI, *Nomadic Subjects* (17)

Aboriginals, when tracing a Songline in the sand, will draw a series of lines with circles in between. The line represents a stage in the Ancestor's journey (usually about a day's march). Each circle is a "stop," "waterhole," or one of the Ancestor's campsites. But the story of the Big Fly One was beyond me.

It began with a few straight sweeps; then it wound into a rectangular maze, and finally ended in a series of wiggles. As he traced each section, Joshua kept calling a refrain, in English, "Ho! Ho! They got money over there."

I must have been very dim-witted that morning: it took me ages to realize that this was a Qantas Dreaming. Joshua had once flown into London. The "maze" was London Airport: the Arrival gate, Health, Immigration, Customs, and then the ride into the city on the Underground. The "wiggles" were the twists and turns of the taxi, from the tube station to the hotel.

BRUCE CHATWIN, *The Songlines* (154)

Because of their common implication in a temporal discourse of origins, it is tempting to posit an essential continuity between the modern primitive and the postmodern nomad in terms of their political function as signifiers of a suppressed or alternative utopian state in oppositional narratives of critical nostalgia. Yet, the way in which Chatwin's construction of a specifically nomadic transcendental home contains an implicit (though largely disavowed) diagnosis of postmodernity itself as essentially "nomadic" hints that the political function of the nomad in postmodern discourse is

neither simply utopian nor simply diagnostic, but both simultaneously. Insofar as it embodies or approaches the primitive along its temporal axis (explicitly in pure nomadism, implicitly in general nomadism), the postmodern grab-bag nomad provides a utopian sign of transcendental homecoming that sets the fantasy of nomadism in opposition to its source of articulation, a dissatisfying Western “present”; insofar as it traces an itinerary along its spatial axis, however, although it may still provide a utopian sign of homecoming,¹ its function is also inescapably cartographic and potentially allegorical. Chatwin’s nomadic metaphysics are of course part of an older Romantic tradition of the peripatetic. But as the anecdote of the “Big Fly One”—in which an Aboriginal Songline unexpectedly maps a journey through London Airport—vividly suggests, they are also inseparable from his sense that the world is not only a “Global Village,” as McLuhan thought, but a “Mobile Encampment” where “like the nomads who first sat on a horse, we again have the means for total mobility” (“Letter” 84). That Chatwin’s account of nomadism tends to suppress the allegorical connotations of nomadic cartography as a tracing of the various traveling cultures and information networks of postmodernity merely confirms its romanticism; in less strictly utopian examples of nomadology, however, the cartographic function receives equal, if not greater, emphasis.

For instance, although Deleuze and Guattari’s use of the nomadic metaphor often appears to be simply utopian or nostalgic, what has so far passed unremarked is the extent to which their articulation of a nomad politics of smoothness and speed is accompanied by the diagnosis of a sinister “new nomadism” (387) pertaining to the State in late

capitalism and its appropriation of the nomadic war machine. After presenting what appears to be a simple contrast between the State as a force that seeks “[to striate] its interior or neighboring space” and the nomadic war machine as a counter-force that flows through striations, creating “a hostile or rebellious smooth space” (386), they continue:

The situation is much more complicated than we have let on. The sea is perhaps principal among smooth spaces, the hydraulic model par excellence. But the sea is also, of all smooth spaces, the first one attempts were made to striate, to transform into a dependency of the land, with its fixed routes, constant directions, relative movements, a whole counterhydraulic of channels and conduits.... But this undertaking had the most unexpected result: the multiplication of relative movements, the intensification of relative speeds in striated space, ended up reconstituting a smooth space of absolute movement. As Virilio emphasizes, the sea became the place of the *fleet in being*, where one no longer goes from one point to another, but rather holds space beginning from any point: instead of striating space, one occupies it with a vector of deterritorialization in perpetual motion. This modern strategy was communicated from the sea to the air, as the new smooth space, but also to the entire Earth considered as desert or sea. (387)

The presentation of diagnostic (State) and utopian (counter-State) nomadism side by side in *A Thousand Plateaus* is a particularly dramatic instance of the trope’s dual-reference in postmodern discourse and suggests that its function may involve the coordination of two quite different forms of cultural politics: (1) utopian/primitivist figurations of resistant subjectivities and (2) diagnostic cartographies of the contemporary world system in which the primitivist fantasy of dwelling in travel no longer signifies simply a romanticized escape from present concerns, but becomes a metaphor, as Braidotti notes, for “tak[ing] your bearings” that is inseparable from a project of political map-making (*Nomadic* 16).²

The present chapter explores the coordinating function of nomadic figures in two literary works that engage rather different sets of questions about the composition of

“postmodernity” and propose correspondingly divergent attitudes towards the viability and political purchase of nomadic identity—Alfred Bester’s SF classic, *The Stars My Destination* (1956; 1957), and Michael Ondaatje’s postcolonial novel, *The English Patient* (1992). I wish to suggest ways in which the representation of nomads in these narratives of political awakening articulates complex relations between the self and larger (often amorphous) socio-political entities, even as it performs the more conventionally primitivist task of figuring revolutionary political strategies and projected utopian outcomes. In this regard, I argue, the nomad acts as a hinge between analyses of the present and visions of the future—a function to which it is uniquely suited because of its mixed spatio-temporal composition. Thus, although Deleuze and Guattari’s nomadology provides a useful model for reading the political implications of contemporary nomadic figures, the explanatory power of this model is misconstrued in readings which fail to take into account its internal bifurcation between articulations of nomadic subjectivity and related articulations of nomadic cartography.

Fredric Jameson’s conception of “cognitive mapping”—a “political aesthetic” which aims to situate individual experience in relation to a determining but invisible social totality—provides a useful way of theorizing this latter, often neglected, cartographic element of nomadology. The theorist who once declared, “I have frequently had the feeling that I am one of the few Marxists left” (Jameson, “Cognitive” 347), and the “post-Marxist” prophets of molecularity who are deeply suspicious, if not dismissive, of all revolutionary programs make unlikely allies, to be sure. And yet, Jameson himself has repeatedly sought (in his characteristically omnivorous fashion) to appropriate

Deleuze and Guattari's insights for his own analysis of "late capitalism," arguing that "Deleuze is alone among the great thinkers of so-called poststructuralism in having accorded Marx a fundamental role in his philosophy" such that "the whole function of [Deleuze's] work has been not to seal off the academic disciplines from the social, the political, and the economic, but rather to open them to a larger force field" ("Marxism" 395, 403). One element of Deleuze's work (as well as his work with Guattari) that Jameson finds particularly alluring is his "fictive mapping which utilizes as its representational language great mythic dualisms such as the Schizophrenic and the Molar or Paranoid, the Nomad and the State, space and time" (395)—a critical practice to which Jameson attributes "a will to monism" and a nearly Hegelian "spirit of synthesis" in its "setting in motion and...systematic rotation of an unimaginably multidimensional reality" (404) that makes it sound a great deal like Jameson's own project of cognitive mapping.³ Since Jameson's own sense of what "cognitive mapping" entails has been the subject of some confusion and has, in any case, undergone a subtle mutation from the time of its first appearance in the paper presented at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign in 1983 to its integration into *Postmodernism, or The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (1991), I begin by rehearsing the central features of this suggestive but rather slippery concept before developing its relation to nomadic cartography.



In "Cognitive Mapping" (1983), Jameson argues that the principal barrier to revolutionary politics in a postmodern age is the profound sense of "disorientation" that results from the subject's experience of postmodern hyperspace, that is, from "our insertion as individual subjects into a multidimensional set of radically discontinuous

realities, whose frames range from the still surviving spaces of bourgeois private life all the way to the unimaginable decentering of global capital itself" (351). In its prior phase, during the "imperialist" stage of monopoly capital, this disorientation took the form of "a growing contradiction between lived experience and structure" such that, for example,

the phenomenological experience of the individual subject... becomes limited to a tiny corner of the social world, a fixed-camera view of a certain section of London or the countryside or whatever. But the truth of that experience no longer coincides with the place in which it takes place. The truth of that limited daily experience in London lies, rather, in India or Jamaica or Hong Kong; it is bound up with the whole colonial system of the British Empire that determines the very quality of the individual's subjective life. Yet those structural coordinates are no longer accessible to immediate lived experience and are not even conceptualizable for most people. (349)

At least, Jameson claims, this earlier rupture between "essence and appearance" (349) that attended "the great new global colonial network" could be "figured," however weakly, however symptomatically, by the formal innovations of modernist art: the "monadic relativism," "irony," and "sealed subjective worlds" of Conrad, Proust, and Henry James (350). Such representations mattered, he insists, for if there is no possibility of figuring "new and enormous global realities," even "in distorted and symbolic ways," then authentic social transformation becomes unviable because revolutionary action is misdirected and thus self-subverting. This problem is only heightened in postmodernism, where, on the one hand, capital has entered a phase of accelerated decentralization and become so much more unrepresentable, and, on the other hand, the individual subject is thoroughly disoriented in his or her relation to this "absent cause" (350) by the experience of spatialization (depthlessness, loss of historicity, the waning of affect). The first step to thinking a way out of this impasse, Jameson argues, is a new political

aesthetic that “would not imply a return to Balzac or Brecht,” but which would nonetheless be infused by their spirit of a didactic or “cognitive” artistic practice (348). Jameson calls this as yet unrealized aesthetic “cognitive mapping” and describes it as an extrapolation of Kevin Lynch’s study of how “urban alienation is directly proportional to the mental unmapability of local cityscapes” to

the realm of social structure, that is to say, in our historical moment, to the totality of class relations on a global (or should I say multinational) scale.... [T]he incapacity to map socially is as crippling to political experience as the analogous incapacity to map spatially is for urban experience. (353)

Cognitive mapping, it is clear from this early formulation, was intended to figure *class* relations. As he says at an earlier point in the essay, “I am talking about practical politics here: since the crisis of socialist internationalism, and the enormous strategic and tactical difficulties of coordinating local and grassroots or neighborhood political actions with national or international ones, such urgent political dilemmas [such as the ‘fragmented and schizophrenic decentering and dispersion’ of the subject] are all immediately functions of the enormously complex new international space I have in mind” (351).

In the revised and expanded version of this paper integrated into the closing chapter of *Postmodernism*, however, its meaning has apparently expanded. Addressing the misunderstandings that seem to have resulted from the metaphor of mapping, Jameson laments,

Unfortunately, in hindsight, this strength of the formulation is also its fundamental weakness: the transfer of the visual map from city to globe is so compelling that it ends up re-spatializing an operation we were supposed to think in a different manner altogether. A new sense of global social structure was supposed to take on figuration and to displace the purely perceptual substitute of the geographical figure; cognitive mapping, which was meant to have a kind of oxymoronic value and to transcend the limits of mapping altogether, is, as a

concept, drawn back by the force of gravity of the black hole of the map itself (one of the most powerful of all human conceptual instruments) and therein cancels its own impossible originality. (416)

But then he performs a surprising *volte face*:

A secondary premise must, however, also be argued—namely, that the incapacity to map *spatially* is as crippling to political experience as the analogous incapacity to map spatially is for urban experience.

(416; my emphasis)

With the pointed substitution of “spatially” for “socially” in the second version, cognitive mapping turns out to have a literally cartographic component after all. Thus, Jameson ultimately confirms (not just here, but throughout *Postmodernism*), even if “‘cognitive mapping’ was in reality nothing but a code word of ‘class consciousness’...it also inflected the account in the direction of that new spatiality implicit in the postmodern (which Ed Soja’s *Postmodern Geographies* now places on the agenda in so eloquent and timely a fashion)” (417-18). Returning the compliment, Soja glosses Jamesonian cognitive mapping in explicitly spatial/geographical terms as “an ability to see in the cultural logic and forms of postmodernism an instrumental cartography of power and social control; in other words, a more acute way of seeing how space hides consequences from us” (62-63). Steven Connor concurs, noting that, “as Fredric Jameson suggests, the means to orient oneself spatially may be precisely what are missing from the postmodern world, in which...power seems not to reside in nation states but is relayed and distributed across a global network of multinational corporations and communicational structures” (255).

Cognitive *mapping* is thus not simply a metaphor; its figuration of the individual subject’s relation to the postmodern organization of global capital will have an

irreducibly spatial component, though its figurations, Jameson cautions, will not resemble any ordinary maps. For what distinguishes the aesthetic of cognitive mapping from conventional cartography is its ability to mediate two levels of understanding, the abstract and the experiential (“Cognitive” 358). As Jameson explains in response to Nancy Fraser’s challenge that “cognitive mapping” is merely another name for “critical social science,” “you can teach people how this or that view of the world is to be thought or conceptualized, but the real problem is that it is increasingly hard for people to put that together with their own experience as individual psychological subjects, in daily life.” “Aesthetics” is essential to politics, he suggests, because it “is something that addresses individual experience rather than something that conceptualizes the real in a more abstract way” (358). The project of cognitive mapping is thus to, in some measure, restore the “critical distance” (48) that has been absorbed into “the new spatial logic of the simulacrum” (18), but to do so in a way that will also register the individual’s position within the global space it maps, from the ground, so to speak, rather than from the air. It will not be “mimetic in that older sense,” but a form of “situational representation” (51). Jameson’s model here, following Lynch’s, is strictly speaking “precartographic,” drawing inspiration from earlier moments in the history of map-making and navigation: the itinerary (“diagrams ordered around the still subject-centered or existential journey of the traveler, along which various significant key features are marked—oases, mountain ranges, rivers, monuments, and the like”) and the sea chart after the invention of the compass—an invention which figures precisely the sort of coordination of perspectives Jameson seeks:

[T]he compass at once introduces a new dimension into sea charts, a dimension that will utterly transform the problematic of the itinerary and allow us to pose the problem of a genuine cognitive mapping in a far more complex way. For the new instruments—compass, sextant, and theodolite—correspond not merely to new geographic and navigational problems...they also introduce a whole new coordinate: the relationship to the totality, particularly as it is mediated by the stars and by new operations like that of triangulation. At this point, cognitive mapping in the broader sense comes to require the coordination of existential data (the empirical position of the subject) with unlived, abstract conceptions of the geographic totality. (52)

Beyond such tantalizing analogs Jameson has been fairly coy about what the new aesthetic might look like, since it “it does not exist” and remains “the concept of something we cannot imagine” (“Cognitive” 347). All he is certain of is that “[a]chieved cognitive mapping,” like its modernist precursor, “will be a matter of form” (356). Yet, in his reflections on the “postmodern” or “technological sublime” (*Postmodernism* 37) he does provide a suggestive sense of how this new aesthetic is already being rendered thematically.⁴ Jameson’s various analogies to nautical itineraries, sea charts, and *portulans* (52) turn out to be quite important in this regard, for the mapping of the sea, one of “the primary sites of the Euro-American aesthetic of the sublime” (Kaplan 90), suggests precisely which literary/artistic concept will be most essential to the new political aesthetic:

The sublime was for Burke an experience bordering on terror, the fitful glimpse, in astonishment, stupor, and awe, of what was so enormous as to crush human life altogether: a description then refined by Kant to include the question of representation itself, so that the object of the sublime becomes not only a matter of sheer power and of the physical incommensurability of the human organism with Nature but also the limits of figuration and the incapacity of the human mind to give representation to such enormous forces. (*Postmodernism* 34)

For Jameson, this question of an “unrepresentable” other which may nonetheless be figured—or even “mapped,” as in the case of the sea chart—is obviously of tremendous

interest. But the radical otherness of the sublime necessarily takes a very different form in an era that has seen not only “a radical eclipse of Nature itself,” as late capitalism “turns Heidegger’s ‘house of being’ into condominiums” (34, 35), but a revolution in technologies of “reproduction” (movie cameras, video, television, computers—“the whole technology of the production and reproduction of the simulacrum”) that far outstrips “the relatively mimetic idolatry of the older machinery of the futurist moment, of some older speed-and-energy sculpture” (36, 37). Under these circumstances, Jameson argues, it is not “Nature,” but technology which becomes the locus of terrifying enormity and sublime unrepresentability. Yet this new technological sublime, Jameson insists, is really “a figure for something else” (35). Since technological innovation is “the result of the development of capital rather than some ultimately determining instance in its own right” (35), according to this reading, the postmodern technological sublime stands revealed as the multinational sublime, rendered in a kind of “representational shorthand” (35, 38). The relatively recent SF genre of cyberpunk, a literature of “high-tech paranoia” in which “the circuits and networks of some putative global computer hookup are narratively mobilized by labyrinthine conspiracies of autonomous but deadly interlocking and competing information agencies in a complexity often beyond the capacity of the normal reading mind,” thus provides Jameson with the quintessential literary instantiation of an incipient, gestural, “poor person’s” (356) aesthetic of cognitive mapping that attempts “to think the impossible totality of the contemporary world system” (37-38).

Jameson's remarks on technology have been taken up by Scott Bukatman and Brian McHale, both of whom concur with his observation that cyberpunk is "the supreme *literary* expression if not of postmodernism, then of late capitalism itself" (*Postmodernism* 419), though McHale sees the potential for cognitive mapping in postmodernist fiction more generally in "the postmodernist resurgence of 'traditional' conspiracy theories" and other "ontological pluralizers" whose function of projecting "microworlds" may be read as another attempt to register the disorienting and seemingly disconnected spaces of multinational capitalism (141, 176-82). "Microworlds," McHale writes, following Jameson, are "scale-model worlds designed to bring into view the category of 'world' itself" (248) and are derived from the spatial poetics of medieval romance where "the category of 'world,' normally the unrepresentable, absolute horizon of all experience and perception, is itself made an object of representation through a particular metaphorical use of enclosed spaces within that world: castles, enchanted forests, walled gardens and bowers, etc." (247). What interests me particularly about McHale's reading of cyberpunk as an SF subgenre in which the projection of microworlds acquires "a new intensity of emphasis, sharpness of focus, and functional centrality" (248) is his correlation of these fragmentary spaces (particularly islands and enclaves) with a figure who functions as a connective link between them:

Cyberpunk...returns to its romance roots through its use of wandering adventure-heroes as a device for foregrounding its microworlds. "Worldness" in medieval romance (and in later subliterary genres, such as the Western) was heightened by the narrative device of the conventional knight-errant's itinerary, which took him from microworld to microworld—from castle to enchanted forest to cave to bower to another castle, and so on. (249)

SF writer Bruce Sterling calls the cyberpunk version of these knights-errant “‘sundogs’ (by analogy...with ‘seadogs,’ another adventure-hero model) and the interplanetary spaces they traverse on their itineraries from microworld to microworld are ‘sundog zones’” (250). These sundog zones, McHale suggests, are analogous to what Foucault calls “heterotopias”: “impossible space[s] in which fragments of disparate discursive orders (actualized in cyberpunk as disparate microworlds) are merely juxtaposed without any attempt to reduce them to a common order” (250). In these spaces, or “Urban Zones,” “instead of microworlds spaced out along a narrative itinerary, ...they have been collapsed together in the heterotopian space of a future megalopolis” and “[a]t the center of this imploded multiple-world space...one typically finds an even more compact zone of cultural heterogeneity and juxtaposition, a kind of dense node of collapsed microworlds...[which] can be read as a synecdoche (*pars pro toto*) or *mise-en-abyme* of the broader Zone that surrounds it” (250-51). Jameson’s famous reading of the Westin Bonaventure Hotel as a representation of the postmodern sublime is the classic example of this synecdochal technique in theoretical discourse (Buchanan 143) and his call for a form of cognitive mapping that would orient the postmodern subject to the decentered world of global capital in a way that would be politically enabling suggests ways in which the sundog (or “cowboy”) of cyberpunk who successfully navigates this impossibly complex space fulfills the role of focalizer in the Jamesonian project of cognitive mapping.

In what follows, I explore the significance of the primitivist variant of the sundog as cartographer in two very different literary works: Alfred Bester’s early cyberpunk

novel, *The Stars My Destination*, and Michael Ondaatje's postcolonial novel, *The English Patient*.⁵ In the former, the nomad emerges as a politicized version of the sundog who, by virtue of his mixed spatio-temporal composition (mobile and primitive), coordinates two forms of cultural politics. First, in his diagnostic capacity, he figures the relation between the individual and the larger social totality that Jameson finds lacking in postmodernity—he is thus a maker and reader of Jamesonian cognitive maps whose ability to locate himself spatially and politically is represented by the fact that he is miraculously “at home” in the technological sublime. Second, in his strictly utopian capacity, he figures an apocalyptic future that is closely related to the schizonomadic becomings of Deleuze and Guattari. Ondaatje's treatment of the nomad in *The English Patient* is similarly split between utopian and diagnostic functions. Although Ondaatje's novel has been read by many critics as a utopian instantiation of nomadic thought par excellence, I wish to suggest ways in which the novel's Bedouin motif also challenges the very romance of nomadism it often appears to celebrate by relating the space of the desert to a mapping of postmodernity refracted through the lens of an imperialist problematic. Ultimately, I argue, the intersection of nomadism with discourses of apocalypse in these novels' articulation of political means and utopian ends reveals another dimension of nomadism's current purchase in representations of postmodernity.

**Star Charts, Space Travelers, and Freaks:
N♂MADism as Cognitive Mapping and Becoming in *The Stars My Destination***

Happy are those ages when the starry sky is a map of all possible paths—ages whose paths are illuminated by the light of the stars. Everything in such ages is new and yet familiar, full of adventure and yet their own. The

world is wide and yet it is like a home, for the fire that burns in the soul is of the same essential nature as the stars; the world and the self, the light and the fire, are sharply distinct, yet they never become permanent to one another, for fire is the soul of all light and all fire clothes itself in light. Thus each action of the soul becomes meaningful and rounded in this duality: complete in meaning—in sense—and complete for the senses; rounded because the soul rests within itself even while it acts; rounded because its action separates itself from it and, having become itself, finds a centre of its own and draws a closed circumference round itself. "Philosophy is really homesickness," says Novalis: "it is the urge to be at home everywhere."

GEORG LUKÁCS, *The Theory of the Novel* (40-41)

Nomadology may turn out to be nothing but realism when applied to cyberpunk novels or to the intercontinental movement of computer impulses.... Nomadism is a reality.

CHRISTOPHER L. MILLER, *Nationalists and Nomads* (209)

The Stars My Destination, first published in the United Kingdom in 1956 under the Blakean title *Tiger! Tiger!*, may seem an odd text through which to explore questions specific to postmodernism, given its relatively early date of composition. Yet, as Neil Gaiman argues, Bester's book was both prescient and influential; its "protocyber elements [such] as multinational corporate intrigue; a dangerous, mysterious, hyperscientific McGuffin (PyrE); an amoral hero; a supercool thief-woman" make it "the perfect cyberpunk novel" twenty-five years too soon. Remarking on the disparity between chilly reviews in the 1950s and the warmer reception the book received when it was re-released in 1970, Carolyn Wendell likewise notes that "Perhaps the times are beginning to catch up with the novel" (28). In many ways, *Stars* bears the features of what McHale calls an "'amphibious' text, queasily poised between modernism and postmodernism" (11), or at least between modernity and postmodernity—particularly in its construction of science-fictional microworlds.

Set in the twenty-fifth century, Bester's novel imagines the solar system on the model of the imperialist stage of capitalism at the very moment that it begins to be transformed into something more closely resembling the compressed globe of "late" capitalist postmodernity. As the novel begins, the political map is divided between the dominant Inner Planets (Venus, Terra, and Mars) and the Outer Satellites (Io, Europa, Ganymede, and Callisto of Jupiter; Rhea and Titan of Saturn; and Lassell of Neptune) which "supplied raw materials for the Inner Planets' manufactories, and a market for their finished goods" (14), but the "delicate economic balance" as well as the center-periphery relationship between these two political bodies have been shattered by a quantum leap in the human capacity for transportation that "was more spectacular than the changeover from horse and buggy to gasoline age five centuries before" (13). The advent of universal "jaunting" or teleportation—the ability to "transport...oneself through space by an effort of the mind alone" (8)—marks the beginning of a crisis for the old imperial arrangement (Eurocentrism) in politics and economics as the Outer Satellites' consumption of transportation and communication technologies produced by the Inner Planets falls off and "the economic war...degenerate[s] into a shooting war" (14). Jaunting also expresses, I would argue, the particular crisis Jameson would later describe as the postmodern technological sublime, the disorienting world of postmodern hyperspace.

Although it is a mental function, jaunting is presented from the beginning as continuous with technological advance, "yet another resource of [man's] limitless mind" (9), and particularly as a development of older technologies of mobility and

communication. On the one hand, “The old Bureau of Motor Vehicles took over the new job and regularly tested and classed jaunte applicants, and the old American Automobile Association changed its initials to AJA” (12). On the other, jaunting has rendered “communication systems...virtually extinct” because “it was far easier to jaunte directly to a man’s office for a discussion than to telephone or telegraph” (42). Such a radical acceleration of transportation and communication speeds bears a striking resemblance to Virilio’s account of postmodernity as a giant transportation network in which “the airport today has become the new city” (64). Instead of airports, the cities of *Stars* have giant teleportation platforms (jaunte stages) and coordinates which citizens memorize in order to jaunte from one location to the next, obeying the mantra, “Location. Elevation. Situation” (34).

This hypermobilized world sometimes (and perhaps ultimately) becomes the occasion for panegyric, as when the narrator enthusiastically develops the Blakean subtext of the novel’s messianic vision:

It was an age of freaks, monsters, and grotesques. All the world was misshapen in marvelous and malevolent ways. The Classicists and Romantics who hated it were unaware of the potential greatness of the twenty-fifth century. They were blind to a cold fact of evolution...that progress stems from the clashing merger of antagonistic extremes, out of the marriage of pinnacle freaks. Classicists and Romantics alike were unaware that the Solar System was trembling on the verge of a human explosion that would transform man and make him master of the universe. (14)

Yet the narrative itself is often far more satiric than this, repeatedly highlighting states of isolation, confusion, and disorientation that attend the massive social transformation it registers. As Fiona Kelleghan has noticed “prisons...litter the Besterian landscape” and this “emphasis on enclosed space contributes to a claustrophobic paranoia in his

characters" (351).⁶ The radioactive scientist and entrepreneur, Saul Dagenham, comments most dramatically on the link between jaunting and its implications for individual experience:

Time was when Dagenham was one of the Inner Planets' research wizards, a physicist with inspired intuition, total recall, and a sixth-order computer for a brain. But there was an accident at Tycho Sands, and the fission blast that should have killed him did not. Instead it turned him dangerously radioactive; it turned him "hot"; it transformed him into a twenty-fifth century "Typhoid Mary."

He was paid Cr 25,000 a year by the Inner Planets government to take precautions which they trusted him to carry out. He avoided physical contact with any person for more than five minutes per day. He could not occupy any room other than his own for more than thirty minutes a day. Commanded and paid by the IP to isolate himself, Dagenham had abandoned research and built the colossus of Dagenham Couriers, Inc. (58)

The way in which heightened mobility paradoxically produces greater alienation is also suggested by the alarming fate of city-planning in the jaunte era:

Robin Wednesbury's apartment was in a massive building set alone on the shore of Green Bay. The apartment house looked as though a magician had removed it from a city-residential area and abandoned it amidst the Wisconsin pines. Buildings like this were a commonplace in the jaunting world. With self-contained heat and light plants, and jaunting to solve the transportation problem, single and multiple dwellings were built in desert, forest, and wilderness. (39-40)

This is simply the inverse, not the opposite of the "imploded" Urban Zones of later cyberpunk fiction, and its alienating results are identical: Robin's apartment is later "jacked" by a gang of "Jack-jaunters," roving hoboes, tramps, and vagabonds, the mobile predators of the jaunting age (129).

Significantly, the types of enclosed or isolated spaces which most interest Bester in *Stars* are precisely those which seem to anticipate Jameson's likening of the experience of postmodern hyperspace to schizophrenia, "the breakdown of the signifying chain" in which "the schizophrenic is reduced to an experience of pure material

signifiers, or, in other words, a series of pure and unrelated presents in time”

(*Postmodernism* 27). The Psychiatry Wing of the hospital at the Combined Terran Universities in Mexico City, for instance, contains a “Nightmare Theater” which had been designed “to shock schizophrenics back into the objective world by rendering the fantasy world into which they were withdrawing uninhabitable” and is converted into a torture device by Dagenham (61). If this space implies something about the nature of trauma for subjects of twenty-fifth century Terra who have redefined the Cartesian *cogito* from “*Cogito ergo sum*. I think, therefore I am” to “*Cogito ergo jaunteo*. I think, therefore I jaunte” (10-11), then the “living dead” (200) descendants of the “ancient Skoptsy sect of White Russia” represent the ultimate satire of the jaunting age: “The modern Skoptsys, believing that sensation was the root of all evil...submitted joyously to an operation that severed the sensory nervous system, and lived out their days without sight, sound, speech, smell, taste, or touch” (200).

Such representations of jaunting and its effects do not merely register an anxiety about the speeds of new technologies or new forms of urban disorientation, however. For as Jameson suggests, these motifs in postmodern fiction may be signs for more political forms of disconnection and confusion in the era of multinational capitalism. This political subtext is strongly suggested by the way in which the power of multinational capital in the novel is shown to rest precisely on the ability of corporate family clans—Gillette, Sears-Roebuck, Kodak, Buick, Saks-Gimbel, and especially Clan Presteign—to protect their interests against the new dangers of corporate espionage posed by jaunting by immuring themselves within impenetrable fortresses guarded by “jaunte-proof” (42)

“confusion labyrinths” (48). The labyrinth motif recurs in *Stars* to suggest a relationship between the hidden levers of social control and the disorienting effect of being on the outside looking in. The sensory-deadened Skoptsys, “white as slugs, mute as corpses, motionless as Buddhas,” are hidden in a “twisting labyrinth of...catacombs” (201) that mirrors the labyrinth surrounding Presteign’s castle in which is hidden his murderous daughter Olivia, a “glorious albino” (44) whose inability to jaunte makes her the novel’s ultimate emblem of what Deleuze and Guattari would call capitalism’s artificial reterritorializations (represented variously in the capitalist class of characters by an archaic obsession with blood, a fetishization of ancient transportation technology and a polite refusal to jaunte). Since jaunting requires precise knowledge of coordinates, Presteign and his multinational empire—“New York, Paris, Ceylon, Tokyo” (46)—will remain untouchable so long as their location remains unmappable:

It was as impossible to jaunte from an undetermined starting point as it was to arrive at an unknown destination. Like shooting a pistol, one had to know where to aim and which end of the gun to hold. But a glance through a window or a door might be enough to enable a man to memorize the L-E-S co-ordinates of a place. (48)

Bester’s analogy is more than fortuitous, for what Patrick A. McCarthy too hastily dismisses as the “comic book plot” (67) of *The Stars My Destination* involves not only an adventure story nor even simply a Blakean allegory tracing the growth and maturation of the imagination (62-4), but a political allegory of cognitive mapping in which the journey of the nomadic protagonist awakens a revolutionary political consciousness: metaphorically, how to hold the gun, and where to aim—though in the end, it avoids so

direct a confrontation in favour of a utopian gesture and the intimation of future transformations.

The protagonist in question is Gulliver (“Gully”) Foyle, an “Everyman” or “stereotype Common Man” (16-17) who gradually develops into a Christ-like saviour for the human race, a progression which McCarthy traces in illuminating detail. As it charts Gully’s metaphysical journey from brute to god, however, the narrative simultaneously charts Gully’s cognitive mapping of the “postmodern” sublime of the twenty-fifth century. Foyle’s story begins, tellingly, as a narrative of revenge: the last living crewmember aboard the spaceship *Nomad*, Foyle anticipates rescue when he spies a passing ship, *Vorga*, on which is emblazoned “the famous red and blue emblem...the trademark of the mighty industrial clan of Presteign; Presteign of Terra, powerful, munificent, beneficent”—“a sister ship, for the *Nomad* [which] was also Presteign-owned” (22). His hopes are dashed, however, as his distress call is ignored. Driven by fury, Foyle saves himself and henceforth embarks on an initially misdirected quest for vengeance. Apparently lacking any ability to extrapolate from effects to causes, Foyle raids Presteign’s Vancouver shipyards and attempts to blow up *Vorga* itself, an attempt which not only fails, but which is juxtaposed by Presteign’s “triumph[ant]” christening of another ship, “the Presteign *Power*” (52). It is only once Foyle is imprisoned in the Gouffre Martel, a jaunte-proof hospital housed in “the deepest abyss in France” (70) that his cognitive mapping properly begins, for here he meets Jisbella McQueen, a thief who informs him,

you were a fool to try to blow up *Vorga* like that. You’re like a wild beast trying to punish the trap that injured it. Steel isn’t alive. It doesn’t think. You can’t

punish *Vorga*.... You punish the brain, Gully. The brain that sets the trap. Find out who was aboard *Vorga*. Find out who gave the order to pass you by. Punish him. (75)

Foyle and Jisbella's subsequent escape from Gouffre Martel by gradually mapping its labyrinthine passageways in total darkness symbolizes Foyle's slow awakening to the composition of his reality and his triumph over the larger system which, like the hospital, prevents patients from "getting [their] bearings" (70). Indeed, a number of the details of Foyle's routine there suggest that the hospital is a microcosm of twenty-fifth century society and its alienating effects:

At eight o'clock (or it may have been any hour in this timeless abyss) he was awakened by a bell. He arose and received his morning meal, slotted into the cell by a pneumatic tube. It had to be eaten at once, or the china surrogate of cups and plates was timed to dissolve in fifteen minutes. At eight-thirty the cell door opened and Foyle and hundreds of others shuffled blindly through the twisting corridors to Sanitation. (71)

Foyle's investigations eventually lead him directly to the source of the order: Olivia Presteign. Foyle's successful tracing of his betrayal to its source precipitates his most radical subversion of the system which is transparently a symbol for revolutionary transformation, despite its apparent irresponsibility—the distribution of PyrE, a "psychokinetic" (248) "pyrophoric alloy" (216) likened to "the fission bomb of 1945" (57) and to "the primordial protomatter which exploded into the universe" (216) whose power is triggered by thought alone, "Will and Idea" (217), to ordinary people the world over. As Foyle says to the assembled capitalists and agents of political entities who have been seeking this explosive substance for their own ends, reprising the narrator's analogy of the pistol to characterize PyrE,

Stop treating them like children. Explain the loaded gun to them. Bring it all out into the open...I've ended the last star-chamber conference in the world. I've blown the last secret wide open. No more secrets from now on... (254)

Significantly, Foyle's suitability for fulfilling the role of cognitive cartographer and revolutionary social redeemer is figured in the text through a poetics of nomadic primitivism in which the fantasy of being at home in the world does not suggest an escape from capitalist civilization so much as an ability to outpace and master it by accelerating its own internal volatilities. At first, Foyle's opposition to the system is signaled by his savagery—he is repeatedly described as “a savage,” “a primitive,” “a brute,” “a Cro Magnon,” “a wild man.” This condition becomes directly inscribed as an identifying feature when, after restarting the *Nomad's* engines, he is captured by the inhabitants of the Sargasso Asteroid:

They were savages, the only savages of the twenty-fifth century; descendants of a research team of scientists that had been lost and marooned in the asteroid belt two centuries before when their ship had failed. By the time their descendants were rediscovered they had built up a world and a culture of their own, and preferred to remain in space, salvaging and spoiling, and practicing a barbaric travesty of the scientific method they remembered from their forebears. They called themselves The Scientific People. (26-27)

Despite their patent absurdity, these “scientific” people function as true primitives in the sense that their religious worship of “Holy Darwin” (28) and their biblical names like J♂seph and M♀ira (Mary) tattooed on their brows signal precisely what the novel implies is lacking in twenty-fifth century society—an age in which organized religion has been officially abolished. Their adoption of Foyle and their renaming him N♂MAD—which they tattoo across his brow in addition to covering his face with “a hideous tattoo”

of a “Maori mask” they all bear (33)—literally mark him as primitive in opposition to the multinational system, and anticipate the ultimately messianic nature of his resistance.

But within this overarching opposition, Foyle as N♂MAD is not strictly separate from the system against which he directs his revenge. His new “primitive” name, after all, is actually the name of a Presteign spaceship which, significantly, is described as both a coffin and a womb out of which Foyle/N♂MAD is “reborn” (21) in the opening chapter. The implied evolutionary difference between the primitive “Scientific People” and the nomadic Foyle becomes quite important in this regard, for although they adopt and in a sense baptize him in the name of “Natural Selection” (29), he is clearly superior to them and immediately escapes their asteroid, returning to civilization where his nomadism receives cybernetic enhancement and his primitive tattoo is removed, leaving “scars under the skin” (112) which threaten to blossom whenever he loses control of his emotions. Foyle, in other words, is subject to a Lawrentian “mark of nomadism” whose purpose is disciplinary, and like Lawrence, Foyle’s nomadic mark is a sign of evolution from a more primitive state (what they wear emblazoned on their faces, he has internalized). At the same time, however, he remains relatively primitive, and thus more truly alive than the rest of civilization whom Foyle later likens to “robots” who lack free will (247). The consequence of Foyle’s evolutionary superiority to the primitive is thus a kind of techno-primitivism, figured as a reappropriation of the State’s war machine:

He stripped and examined his body. He was in magnificent condition, but his skin still showed delicate silver seams in a network from neck to ankles. It looked as though someone had carved an outline of the nervous system into Foyle’s flesh. The silver seams were the scars of an operation that had not yet faded.

That operation had cost Foyle a Cr 200,000 bribe to the chief surgeon of the Mars Commando Brigade and had transformed him into an extraordinary fighting

machine. Every nerve plexus had been rewired, microscopic transistors and transformers had been buried in muscle and bone, a minute platinum outlet showed at the base of his spine. To this Foyle affixed a power-pack the size of a pea and switched it on.

This delicate silver outline of the nervous system stretching “from neck to ankles” is the technological complement of the Maori tattoo/scar beneath the skin of his face—making him literally a composite of primitive and modern, past and future. (It also echoes Jōseph’s disturbing surgical gown, “heavily embroidered with red and black thread illustrating the anatomical sections of the body” that made him “a lurid tapestry out of a surgical text” [29].) Most importantly, his cybernetic additions enhance his nomadic mobility such that, with the touch of “the control switchboard in his teeth” (129), Foyle’s “every sense and response in his body was accelerated by a factor of five...The effect was an instantaneous reduction of the external world to extreme slow motion” (130).

This consequence of Foyle’s accelerated nomadism has at least a symbolic affinity with his ability to cognitively map his world. For the ability to slow things down in order to restore relations of historicity and cause and effect is precisely what the simultaneity of the jaunting era seems to forbid. A similar use of deceleration to figure a process of cognitive mapping is suggested by Foyle’s alter ego, the wealthy circus-owner Geoffrey Fourmyle of Ceres whose mobile (nomadic) tents are the perfect cover for Foyle’s infiltration of the Presteign circle. Like the Presteigns and the other clans, Foyle, disguised as Fourmyle, adopts a reactionary attitude to jaunting, signaling his class through the use of slower technologies. Whereas the clans obey a strict hierarchy of devices—bicycles, small sports cars, vintage Bentleys or Cadillacs (45)—Fourmyle is prone to “display[s] of conspicuous transportation so outlandish that [they] had been

known to make seven-year melancholics laugh" (125). Initially, these displays seem merely parodic or carnivalesque:

A giant amphibian thrummed up from the south and landed on the lake. An LST barge emerged from the plane and droned across the water to the shore. Its forward wall banged down into a drawbridge and out came a twentieth century [sic] staff car. Wonder piled on wonder for the delighted spectators....The muzzle of a circus cannon thrust up from the staff car. There was the bang of a black-powder explosion and Fourmyle of Ceres was shot out of the cannon in a graceful arc to the very door of his tent where he was caught in a net by four valets. (125)

Yet the multiple layers and compartmentalizations of Fourmyle's "conspicuous" transportation displays also seem to register—and even to expose—the intricate layerings of the labyrinths and catacombs and inner sanctums which act to defend and mystify the Presteigns' power through disorientation (a disorientation ultimately figured in the speed of jaunting itself). Fourmyle's mode of arrival at Presteign's New Year's party seems to confirm this implication, as the display of "luxurious transportation" is shown to lead directly to Presteign's own doorstep:

A heavy truck rumbled down the lane. Six men were tumbling baulks of timber out of the back of the truck. Following them came a crew of twenty arranging the baulks neatly in rows.

Presteign and his guests watched in amazement. A giant machine, bellowing and pounding, approached, crawling over the ties. Behind it were deposited parallel rails of welded steel. Crews with sledges and pneumatic punches spiked the rails to the timber ties. The track was laid to Presteign's door in a sweeping arc and then curved away. The bellowing engine and crews disappeared into the darkness.

"Good God!" Presteign was distinctly heard to say. Guests poured out of the house to watch.

A shrill whistle sounded in the distance. Down the track came a man on a white horse, carrying a large red flag. Behind him panted a steam locomotive drawing a single observation car. The train stopped before Presteign's door. A conductor swung down from the car flowed by a Pullman porter. The porter arranged the steps. A lady and gentleman in evening clothes descended...

"Fourmyle!" the guests shouted. (163-64)

Given its almost archetypal status in discourses of nomadism, the coordination of horse and train in this display offers another reminder of Foyle's techno-primitivism, and hints that Presteign, though he does not yet know it, is to be the subject of "the sudden fury of a Vandal raid" (109).



Even as Foyle's techno-primitive nomadism provides a sign of being at home in the world of late capitalism that may be translated into a utopian symbol for the promise of being able to locate oneself within a world that is cognitively mappable, it also figures a utopianism of a different sort in *Stars*. For Foyle ultimately abandons his quest for revenge as he develops a conscience and ascends to a higher ethical and metaphysical purpose. Foyle's evolution from brute to semi-divine being (or from man to superman, as McCarthy suggests) is figured through the further development of his nomadism: at the end of the novel, Foyle's mind unlocks the secrets not only of space-journing, but of space-time-journing—the reclaiming of a totally smooth space that had previously been inaccessible. This reclaiming of smooth space ultimately situates Bester's novel within a Deleuzo-Guattarian ethos of perpetual becoming that is figured by Foyle's exit from molar identity during his space-time-journeys and intimated in many ways throughout the novel's fascination with monstrosity and becomings-animal.

During the early stages of Foyle's adventure, such becomings are typically degraded affairs represented by minor characters. Their resonance with key elements of Foyle's own character and its subsequent development, however, suggests that they are anticipations of the more radical, meaningful becomings he will eventually undertake.

When Foyle wishes to have his conspicuous N♂MAD and tiger tattoos removed after his escape from Gouffre Martel, for instance, Jisbella takes him to Harley Baker, a ghoulish plastic surgeon who runs the Freak Factory where, “for enormous fees and no questions asked, Baker created monstrosities for the entertainment business and refashioned skin, muscle, and bone for the underworld” (91):

The basement floor of the factory contained Baker’s zoo of anatomical curiosities, natural freaks and monsters bought, hired, kidnapped, abducted. Baker, like the rest of his world, was passionately devoted to these creatures and spent long hours with them, drinking in the spectacle of their distortions the way other men saturated themselves with the beauty of art. (95)

Baker and “his world” satirize the burgeoning of trash culture and mass spectacle in Bester’s own lifetime; but there is also a kind of unrealized possibility hinted at in the monsters themselves since Baker immediately recognizes Foyle as a candidate for his zoo, a neo-primitive exemplar of the “dead art” of tattooing (92). Indeed, the monstrous inmates, who are liberated during the ensuing raid on the Factory, literally embody Foyle’s own metaphoric self-characterizations as “a brute,” and “a freak of the universe...a thinking animal” (250).” Not only are there “bird men with fluttering wings, mermaids dragging themselves along the floor like seals, hermaphrodites, giants, pygmies, two-headed twins, centaurs, and a mewling sphinx,” but “temporal freaks” as well: “subjects with accelerated time sense, darting about the ward with the lightening rapidity of humming birds and emitting piercing batlike squeals” (100). In a general sense, the centaurs evoke Foyle’s nomadic identity⁷ and inscribe it within a poetics of metamorphosis and hybridity; more specifically, the “subjects with accelerated time sense” who emit “batlike” shrieks suggestive of sonar anticipate the cybernetic techno-

primitive enhancements that later afford Foyle not only greater mobility but a means of cognitive orientation that allows him, metaphorically speaking, to see in the dark.

Indeed, the subjects' "lightening" rapidity seems to foreshadow Foyle's fiery space-time-journing as well (100).

The potentially utopian significance of the freaks in Baker's zoo as well as their relation to Foyle himself are explored more directly in a later scene in which Foyle interrogates a man named Forrest who is high on "Analogue"—"psychiatric dope for psychotics" that allows a "twitch" (or addict)

to release himself somehow, revert back to the primitive. He identifies with a particular kind of animal... gorilla, grizzly, brood bull, wolf... Takes the dope and turns into the animal he admires. (147)

Forrest, a man who "was queer for snakes," is thus discovered naked and entwined in a heavy rope that hangs from the ceiling of his room, "squirm[ing] and slither[ing] up and down the rope, emitting mewling sounds and a musky odor" as he becomes-python (146-47). The ensuing confrontation between him and Foyle is structured as a Christian allegory of Christ confronting Satan (as the serpent):

[Foyle] whipped a knife out of his pocket, cut the rope, swung the squirming man to his back and jaunted.... Foyle arrived [on Jervis beach] with the squirming man oozing over his neck and shoulders like a python, crushing him in a terrifying embrace. The red stigmata [of the old tattoo] suddenly burst out on Foyle's face. (147)

But, like Baker's animal-human hybrids, Forrest's becoming-python also hints at a transvaluation of monstrosity that would make him a "type" (in the biblical sense) of Foyle's own romantic Satan or Blakean Tiger.⁸ For Foyle too is directly implicated in the kind of becoming-animal Forrest exemplifies. In its original black ink, his "Maori" tattoo

is “a devil mask” (28), but once it is removed it returns to his face “blood red against the pallor of skin, scarlet instead of black, truly a tiger mask in color as well as design” (111)—a change that traces the path of Foyle’s own becoming-animal as he both embodies and experiments with the “Tigroid Substance” that makes teleportation possible (11). Significantly, this explicit evocation of becoming-animal occurs at a chalet in whose basement “The Cellar Christians” meet illegally to worship in secret because although “[t]he twenty-fifth century had not yet abolished God,...it had abolished organized religion” (145). The chalet in which there is “[r]eligion in the cellar and dope upstairs” (146) implies the symmetry of these practices, both of which express a desire for self-transcendence, and thus constitute versions of primitivist transcendental homecoming, albeit a degraded ones. The becomings of a “twitch,” in other words, are only very meager anticipations of those figured by Foyle’s extraordinary “jauntes.”

Both the similarities and the differences between Foyle’s transformations and those of his precursors can be understood in terms of Deleuze and Guattari’s distinction between authentic becoming-animal, which is molecular, and imitation, which remains rooted in a molar identity and merely “set[s] up comparisons between bodies considered separately, as entities unto themselves” (Massumi 96):

Becomings-animal are neither dreams nor fantasies. They are perfectly real. But which reality is at issue here? For if becoming-animal does not consist in playing animal or imitating an animal, it is clear that the human being does not “really” become an animal any more than the animal “really” becomes something else. Becoming produces nothing other than itself. We fall into a false alternative if we say that you either imitate or you are. What is real is the becoming itself, the block of becoming, not the supposedly fixed terms through which that which becomes passes. (Deleuze and Guattari, *ATP* 238)

Becoming, in other words, is what takes place in the nomadic “intermezzo” between molar identities: “Man does not become wolf, or vampire, as if he changes molar species; the vampire and werewolf are becomings of man” (275). In a sense, the hybrid monsters of *Stars* figure becoming as this sort of interspecies fusion or “double translation” (Massumi 95). But they also seem trapped by these forms and thus remain beholden to molar identities.⁹ Baker’s hybrid freaks were either born that way (and thus have not technically undergone any transformation at all) or are medically-engineered (and are thus both “artificial” and biologically frozen in their new forms). Once freed, they are totally helpless—the floundering mermaids are literally fish out of water, and the unhappy Cyclops girl can do little more than “cram...her mouth with handfuls of butter scooped from a tub” (101). Forrest’s Analogue-induced becoming-python offers no better escape from molarity, for it is merely temporary and is thus an imitation, not a true becoming. As Massumi says,

After the imitation, both bodies revert. Nothing has changed. Nothing was translated. Nothing mutated. No new perception came. No body escaped. Nothing really moved. Everything took place on the level of the person. (97)

It will be up to Foyle himself, Bester implies, to synthesize the transcendental impulses of religion and becoming-animal into a meaningful metaphysics that would provide not simply a “return” to immanent totality but access to undreamed of possibilities of becoming through a dispersal of self and identity. Anything less is merely “Analogue.”

The text’s figuration of this utopian possibility occurs, appropriately, as the result of a “freak explosion” (230) of PyrE in “Fourmyle’s” laboratory in the basement of Old St. Pat’s—one of a chain of “psychokinetic” explosions that destroy, among other things,

“the office of one Baker, dealer in freaks and purveyor of monsters” (228). The “star-like heat” of the explosion itself sets in motion flows that promise more radical forms of becoming than those embodied by the prisoners of Baker’s zoo:

Within Old St. Pat’s it was as though a monstrous hand had churned a log jam of wood, stone, and metal. Through every interstice crawled tongues of molten copper, slowly working downward, igniting wood, crumbling stone, shattering glass. Where the copper flowed it merely glowed, but where it poured it spattered dazzling droplets of white hot metal.... Fifty feet inside was Foyle, trapped in a labyrinth of twisted beams, stones, pipe, metal, and wire. He was illuminated by a roaring glow from above him and fitful flames all around him. His clothes were on fire and the tattooing was livid on his face. He moved feebly, like a bewildered animal in a maze. (230, 232)

Just as he is about to be reabsorbed into this chaotic flux of matter, however, Foyle jauntes, and his bid to escape literal immolation sends him on a line of flight whose becomings are only dimly anticipated by the flows of metal, wood and stone. In the metaphorical register of the narration, Foyle immediately passes through a series becomings-animal; in rapid succession he “blink[s] like a glow-worm,” behaves “[l]ike a trapped firefly or some seabird caught in the blazing brazier of a naked beacon fire,...beating about in a frenzy...a blackened, burning creature, dashing himself against the unknown” (233). But this is only a prelude to Foyle’s exit from molar identity, for “blind panic force[s] him to abandon the spatio-temporal inhibitions that had defeated previous attempts,” and he thus achieves what “scores of other experimenters failed to do”:

He did not jaunte to Elsewhere, but to Elsewhen. But most important, the fourth dimensional awareness, the complete picture of the Arrow of Time and his position on it which is born in every man but deeply submerged by the trivia of living, was in Foyle close to the surface. He jaunted along the space-time geodisks to Elsewheres and Elsewhens, translating “i,” the square root of minus one, from an imaginary number into a reality by a magnificent act of imagination.

Foyle's historic breaking of the space-time barrier is, of course, a leap into the mythic time of the primitive and a fulfillment of his identity as N♂MAD. Accordingly, it is also a voyage out of molar identity—a “translation” of “T” into “i,” an infinite multiplication of the singular self into “an imaginary number.”¹⁰

Throughout the ensuing journeys,¹¹ Foyle's self-transcendence is characteristically figured as splitting. On the one hand, Foyle's own being bifurcates: the apparition of the Burning Man that has haunted him throughout his quest turns out to be none other than Foyle himself as he now jauntes through space-time on fire, unconsciously drawn back to moments in his own history—a situation that paradoxically permits him to assist himself in his earlier escape from Gouffre Martel when, as the Burning Man, he “unwittingly decoy[s] the searchers from the trail of the vanished fugitives” (239). On the other hand, like Deleuze and Guattari's schizo who “hallucinates and raves universal history, and proliferates the races” (AO 85), Foyle's splitting has a social component as well: he travels back through the entire history of creation, which Bester imagines in terms of the synthesis of science and religion epitomized by the Scientific People's worship of “Holy Darwin.” On his second jaunte through space-time, Foyle (re)enacts an evolutionary narrative, “arrive[ing] in chaos” (255), then jaunting to Reigel, a star in Orion where he “hung in space...as helpless, as amazed, and yet as inevitable as the first gilled creature to come out of the sea and hang gulping on a primeval beach in the dawn-history of life on earth” (256). He then appears to move forward through Christian history, jaunting to another solar system heated by a

red giant that is “encircled by two hundred and fifty planetoids of the size of Mercury, of the climate of Eden” (257) and ending up back aboard the *Nomad* in the “womb of the locker” where he is attended by M♀ira and J♂seph, “curled in a tight fetal ball...his eyes burning with divine revelation,” in a scene suggestive of a new nativity (McCarthy 66).

By this account, the hero’s apotheosis seems teleological, and thus appears to betray the ethos of becoming that has been central to the novel’s articulation of utopian nomadism. “Gully” Foyle begins as a restless and misanthropic Gulliver (another voyager conversant with his inner-Yahoo) who discovers a “swifter” mode of mobility in space-jaunting, but he ultimately appears to “foil” the ironies heaped upon his Swiftian namesake: rather than retreating to the barn—Swift’s satiric (?) version of becoming-animal—he synthesizes the primitive Yahoo and the rational (and morally ambiguous) Houyhnhym ideal to become a nomadic redeemer. Yet Bester is cognizant of this danger, and does not allow the narrative of spiritual evolution to freeze into a new orthodoxy. As McCarthy aptly notes, the novel “walk[s] a tightrope between the poles of destruction and resurrection” (67), and this is particularly evident in Bester’s abrupt foreclosure on the messianic structure it evokes. The novel ends with Foyle’s return to the asteroid of the primitive Scientific People where he sleeps and dreams while the world prepares for the moment when “he will awaken and read us, his people, his thoughts” (258). The novel ends, in other words, with humanity’s ironic betrayal of Foyle’s message, which is ultimately to reject “Tiger men” like himself “who can’t help lashing the world before them” and to seek the stars themselves, to “come and find [him]” by following his example and “turn[ing] tiger” in their own right, not by “tossing [their] duty and guilt

onto the shoulders of the first freak who comes along grabbing at it" (254). Even though the Scientific People fail to understand it, Bester thus confronts a challenge very similar to that faced by Jameson, Deleuze, and Guattari: how to express a dynamic utopia.¹²

Bester's solution to the challenge of figuring a process-oriented utopia of becoming and deterritorialization is, on the one hand, to project it into the future. Foyle is not only a sleeping god at the end of the novel, but a fundamentally unformed, even childlike deity who has yet to master the smooth space he has discovered. On the other hand, Bester also gestures at such a utopia more directly in the linguistic distortions and typographic experiments that signify the disorganization of Foyle's senses and exit from molar identity during his first space-time-journee. As Foyle "revert[s] from a conditioned product of environment and experience to an inchoate creature craving escape and survival" (235), he finds that he is "suffering from synesthesia":

that rare condition in which perception receives messages from the objective world and relays those messages to the brain, but there in the brain the sensory perceptions are confused with one another. So, in Foyle, sound registered as sight, motion registered as sound, colors became pain sensations, touch became taste, and smell became touch. (235)

Since he is fighting for his life, Foyle naturally experiences "the kaleidoscope of his own cross-senses" as a "trap" (235), but traps are always precursors to transformation and discovery in *Stars* and Bester himself is clearly enthralled by Foyle's predicament.¹³ His attempts to render Foyle's cross-sensory experience through concrete poems, typography, and image constitute the creative core of the book, and, I would argue, provide the most daring expression of the unrepresentable utopian space of becoming that has been hinted at by the novel's obsession with monstrosity and mutation.

Whereas previous becomings figured the exit from identity in terms of a journey between two molar bodies—man and python, woman and fish—Foyle’s cosmic nomadism figures this exit in terms of the breakdown of language and conventional modes of signification, a strategy that points to the ultimate basis of all identity in language itself. Fittingly, the first distortion Foyle encounters concerns his name which appears to him as “light in strange patterns...shouted in vivid rhythms” (233):

F O Y L E F O Y L E F O Y L E
 F O Y L E F O Y L E F O Y L E
 F O Y L E F O Y L E F O Y L E
 F O Y L E F O Y L E F O Y L E
 F O Y L E F O Y L E F O Y L E

As he splits, encountering past visions of himself, Foyle’s identity crumbles further and the linguistic distortions follow suit. Foyle asks (240),

W A Y W A Y W A Y
 H R O H R O H R O
 O E U O E U O E U

—a question so important that he repeats it a second time (241):

WWWWWWWWWWWWWWWWWW
 HHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHH
 HHHHH
 OOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOO
 OOOOO
 AREAREAREAREAREAREARE
 AREAREAREAREAREAREARE
 AREAREAREAREAREAREARE
 YYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYY
 YYYYY
 OOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOO
 OOOOO
 UUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUU
 UUUUU

In the first instance, the prominence of the red-herring “WAY,” aided by the slant of the first “beam” of the “light pattern” (239), undermines the legibility of the “YOU”—a “YOU” that is already unstable and split since it is unwittingly self-directed. Moreover, the concretization of the query as a “light pattern” of waves connects it to the typographic representation of the “sound” of the ocean heard off Jervis beach (the location of Foyle’s encounter with the “twitch” who becomes-python) that “blind[s] him with the lights of batteries of footlights” and is significantly rendered with asterisks, or “stars” (239) (Figure 18). The interpenetration of these two sets of “light waves” suggests the devastating encounter between the self and the sublime, as Foyle’s “YOU” fragments and is submerged within an ocean of starlight. By its second iteration, the question of identity has become purely decorative and subject to artful recombination, its pattern (formed by the warp and woof of the words) suggesting a textile or weave. In this regard it might be seen as a reworking of the simpler three-block “FOYLE” pattern; the relative instability of Foyle’s identity as he travels from marginal self-recognition (FOYLE) to a subject-in-becoming who no longer recognizes himself at all (YOU) seems to dictate the complexity and difficulty of the pattern in each case.

The tendency towards the increasing concretization of language into symbolic—or better still, asignifying—shapes as Foyle’s identity disintegrates ultimately constitutes a romantic (though necessarily gestural) attempt to escape from the striations of language altogether, or at least to hybridize it into a kind of “freak” or monstrosity—to make alphabetic writing revert to the “primitive” graphism represented by the “dead art” of tattooing in a metafictional becoming-nomad of the text itself. (Foyle’s tattoo is also,

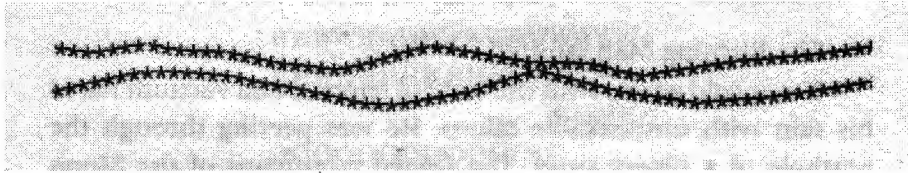


FIGURE 18
 Alfred Bester, *The Stars My Destination* (239)
 Jervis Beach

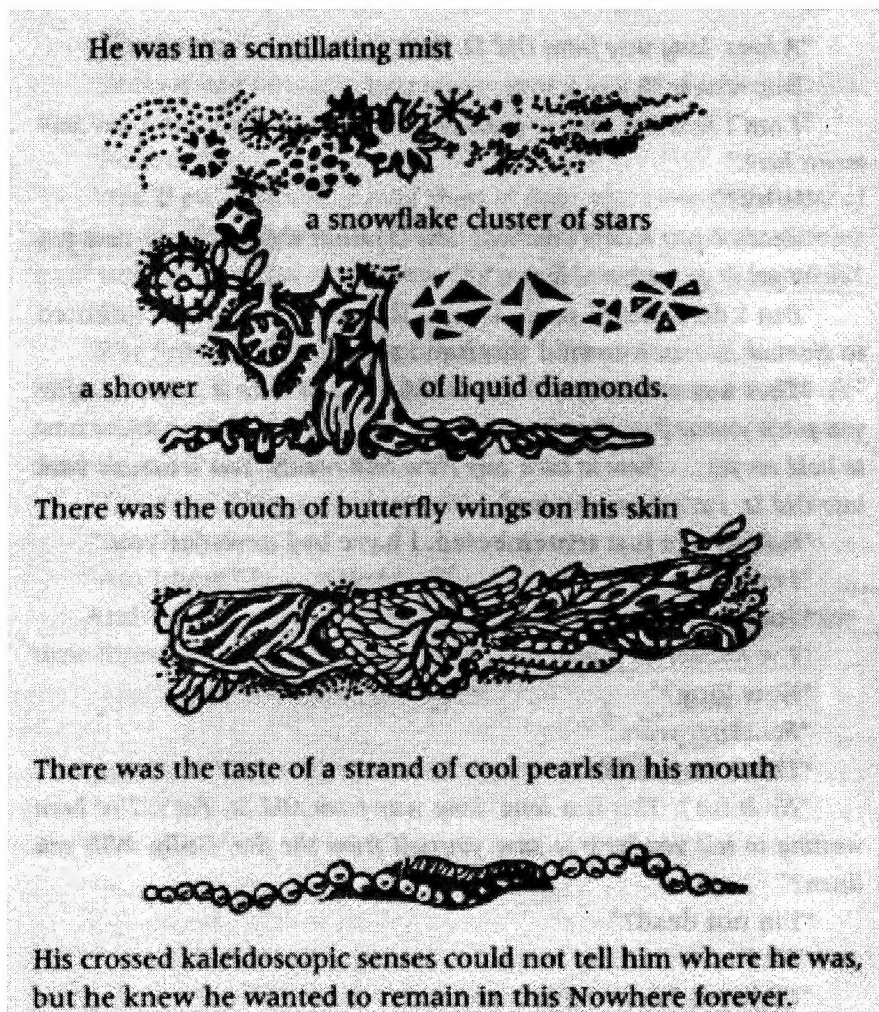


FIGURE 19
 Alfred Bester, *The Stars My Destination* (243)
 Paraspatial Synaesthesia

significantly, a word-image hybrid.) The climactic instance of synaesthetic representation is thus the most truly graphic, as if it is straining to avoid written language altogether (Figure 19). The resulting hybrid of word and image is the textual equivalent of Baker's *Freak Factory*, raised to the n^{th} degree of becoming. For rather than locking Foyle into a single form, however mutant that form might be, the text and illustrations figure more fluid and perpetual becomings. The mist, snowflake, and shower, for example, form a single visual flow that suggests multiple changes of state of a single substance, but it is a flow also intermixed with "liquid diamonds" and stars that recalls the chaotic flux of matter still sweeping through Old St. Pat's on a sea of liquid copper. The butterfly, which must emerge from a chrysalis, suggests a more organic form of metamorphosis. Meanwhile, Foyle himself has been visually decomposed into a series of what Deleuze and Guattari would call "organs" or "affects": a skin-machine and an intriguingly androgynous mouth-machine.¹⁴ Given the extraordinary range of literary allusion in *Stars*, one might even hear an echo of Ariel's song from *The Tempest* in Foyle's sensation of "a strand of cool pearls in his mouth," with "mouth" synaesthetically standing in for "eyes." Like the drowned sailor Ariel memorializes whose eyes have been changed to pearls, Foyle too undergoes "a sea-change into something rich and strange," and he does so, moreover, in a setting that is at this very moment decisively identified as a Utopia: "His crossed kaleidoscopic senses could not tell him where he was, but he knew he wanted to remain in this Nowhere forever" (243).

This utopian "Nowhere" (and "Nowhen") on the curve of space-time is what Bester calls a "para-space" (256), a concept that has been adopted and elaborated by SF

writer and critic Samuel R. Delany who defines it as a “an alternate space, sometimes largely mental, but always materially manifested, that sits beside the real world, and in which language is raised to an extraordinarily lyric level,” a space where “conflicts that begin in ordinary space are resolved” (qtd. in Bukatman 157). As Bukatman argues, moreover, paraspaces “might be endemic to the genre of science fiction, as even the earliest texts permit such linguistic intensifications directed toward the exotic spaces of, for example, *outer space* or *the future*” (157). Such a characterization of science fiction confirms Ernst Bloch’s suspicion that “our epoch has brought with it an ‘upgrading’ of the utopian—only it isn’t called this anymore. It is called science fiction” (qtd. in Buchanan 117). But the concern with “exotic spaces” also points to the fundamental compatibility between science fiction and specifically nomadic forms of primitivism that is exemplified by the becomings of Bester’s N♂MADic hero across a smooth paraspace that closely resembles Deleuze and Guattari’s “desert-like” Body without Organs. For the desert too is typically constructed as an exotic space in Western discourse where “nomadic” flows move and mingle. Foyle’s paraspace is merely a science-fictional version of this desert, just as Foyle himself is a science-fictional version of the nomad who traverses it. Moreover, the way for science fiction’s adoption of nomadic motifs has been carefully prepared by travel writers and desert romantics themselves. When asked if he had ever published in the genre, the nomadologist Bruce Chatwin replied derisively, “I hate science fiction” (*Songlines* 33). But Chatwin’s implicit distinction between nomadology and science fiction is the exception. In 1932 T. E. Lawrence had already remarked that desert exploration had reached the point where “Would-be wandering

youth will go unsatisfied till a winged generation lands on the next planet" (Foreword, *Arabia Felix* xvii). Contesting Lawrence's pessimism but not his rhetoric, Asher notes that the Sahara was "so alien" to Westerners "that even the geologists likened it to the surface of Mars" (2). Asher's own comparison of "the timeless continuum of the desert" to a "moonscape" (203) and his feeling that, as a desert wanderer, he is "part of a science-fiction scenario" (183), that he "ha[s] been suddenly deposited on an alien planet from space" (132), reaffirm the profound affinity between the nomad and the space traveler as complementary figures of utopian becoming in the literature of desert romance.



Insofar as Foyle's N♂MADic space-time-jaunting figures an anti-teleological utopia of "permanent revolution" and perpetual becoming, *The Stars My Destination* articulates a version of nomadology *avant la lettre*. Ultimately, though, Bester's treatment of nomadism is oriented towards the present and the future simultaneously; in the former it is cartographic, in the latter utopian. In this sense, it provides an imaginative hinge linking current strategies of cognitive mapping to the as yet unimaginable transformations they might one day help to effect. This coordinating function is vividly suggested by the fact that Foyle's space-time-jaunting, however utopian it feels to him, is dangerously premature and unfocused. Just as he is about to lose himself forever in the Nowhere of paraspace, he is interrupted by a telepathic message from his old jaunte-instructor, Robin Wednesbury, who directs him back to the present. "[Y]ou haven't learned how to jaunte through space-time yet," she warns,

You've got to go back and learn.... You don't know how to hold on yet...how to turn any Now into reality. You'll tumble back into Old St. Pat's in a moment.

Using synaesthetic directions like “turn around until you’re facing the loudest shadows” (244) and “make a half turn into compression and a feeling of falling” (245), Robin helps Foyle reorient himself so that he may escape from the inferno in St. Pat’s when he “tumble[s] down, down, down the space-time lines back into the dreadful pit of Now” (245). Despite its future-directed utopianism, therefore, the disorientation of the senses that occurs in nomadic paraspace simultaneously figures the potentially fatal disorientations of the capitalist present for which Foyle has earlier attempted to draw cognitive maps. Indeed, Robin’s innovative and disjunctive synaesthetic vocabulary—the only vocabulary that seems adequate to translating this paraspace into a navigable environment—suggests precisely the sort of aesthetic contortion Jameson demands in his plea for a political aesthetic of cognitive mapping that would be adequate to the task of representing postmodernity. Such an intrusion of concerns with navigation and cognitive mapping into Foyle’s self-abandonment to the pleasures of paraspace strongly suggests that Utopia, as yet, must remain purely virtual. Like Foyle, we have not yet learned “how to turn any Now into reality.” The novel’s ironic ending, in which the Scientific People revert to the “primitive” totemism of worshipping “Tiger men,” confirms this essential gap between present and future.

Yet the novel does not pessimistically mourn “the end of history,” much less the futility of utopian thought. For the time-travel paradox inherent in its figuration of the nomadic hinge between cartography and utopia projects the historical inevitability of the novel’s as yet “unrepresentable” utopian vision. As the time-hopping Burning Man, Foyle’s role in assisting his earlier self to escape from the labyrinths of Gouffre Martel

opens a kind of loop or tautological space in the narrative since Foyle's escape then seems to presuppose itself. But this paradox merely foreshadows the much greater paradox of how Robin can help him escape the space-time continuum at the novel's end. For if Foyle has discovered space-time-jaunting and has yet to master the sensory disturbances that prevent him from navigating it, how can Robin be in a position to assist him? As Foyle himself wonders, after she has mapped his escape route, "How do you know all this, Robin?":

"I've been briefed by an expert, Gully." There was the sensation of laughter. "You'll be falling back into the past any moment now. Peter and Saul are here. They say au revoir and good luck. And Jiz Dagenham too. Good luck, Gully dear..."

"The past? This is the future?"

"Yes, Gully." (245)

The "expert" must, paradoxically, be Foyle himself after he has escaped paraspace with Robin's aid; at some point in the future, utopia has already been achieved. On the means by which humanity will learn to navigate and extend themselves across the smooth paraspaces of nomadic becoming, the novel offers only Robin's elliptical well-wishes: "Good luck, Gully dear..." The ultimate coordination of cognitive mapping and utopian thinking in *Stars* thus remains strictly formal and is itself utopian. Moreover, the novel's optimism concerning the apparent inevitability of social transformation is realistically qualified by the sober example of Foyle's Sysiphean dilemma:

He was back under Old St. Pat's, reappearing only an instant after his last disappearance. His wild beatings into the unknown sent him stumbling up geodesic space-time lines that inevitably brought him back to the Now he was trying to escape, for in the inverted saddle of the curve of space-time, his Now was the deepest depression in the curve.

He could drive himself up, up, up the geodesic lines into the past or future, but inevitable he must fall back into his own Now, like a thrown ball hurled up the

sloping walls of an infinite pit, to land, hang poised for a moment, and then roll back into the depths.

But still he beat into the unknown in his desperation. (239)

Bester's nomadic protagonist who looks both forward and backward in time is the very emblem of the utopian thinker, who, as we have seen, moves continuously between beginnings and endings, between primitivist homes and futurist homecomings in order to imagine an escape from "the dreadful pit of Now."

Ultimately, Foyle's dogged determination to climb the "deepest depression in the curve" offers a defense of utopian thinking reminiscent of Jameson's peculiar claim that "utopian thought succeeds by failure" (qtd. in Buchanan 164). As Buchanan suggests, this claim implies a processual model of utopia, not "a mythical island in an unknown sea" (164). That is because "however welcome and fantastic (or even unappealing, as is sometimes the case too) specific utopias may appear to Jameson, it is still the act of fantasizing...itself that he prioritizes not the actual fantasy" (Buchanan 164-65). Such an insistence upon "discovering the best in the worst," Buchanan argues, is inherent in Jameson's contention that unconvincing postmodern representations of utopia in science fiction may in fact function as Brechtian tools of "estrangement" by which "we are returned all the more intensively to the real" (165-66). Jameson's model of utopian thought, like Bester's, thus involves "an immanent dimension—immanent because it is a failure, because it never rises above the realm in which it is and can be thought" (166). As Bester's *NOMAD* illustrates, postmodern discourses of nomadism are not—or at least not only—simplistically utopian in their projection of paraspatial deserts and Bodies with Organs where nomads and schizos run free; they are also profoundly immanent in their

estrangement of the postmodern present and in the diagnostic cartographies and cognitive maps such estrangements make possible.

**War Machines in the Desert:
The English Patient and Postcolonial Nomadism**

Only desire makes the story errant, flickering like a compass needle. And this is the world of nomads in any case, an apocryphal story. A mind travelling east and west in the disguise of a sandstorm.

MICHAEL ONDAATJE, *The English Patient* (248)

The regularity with which this passage is cited as a metafictional signpost in recent criticism suggests that nomadism's role in the poetic and political vision of Ondaatje's celebrated novel is almost beyond dispute (Simpson 226; Pesch 121; Hillger 24). An article by Annick Hillger arguing that *The English Patient* can be read as an instantiation of "apocryphal" Deleuzo-Guattarian nomad thought in which Ondaatje "rewrites" (and implicitly critiques) the sedentary, "identitarian" man of the state "by pushing him towards the nomadic pole"—a process dramatized primarily through the English patient's "encounter with nomad experience" in the desert (29)—is typical of this critical stance which reads the Bedouin as a symbol of the novel's postidentitarian politics. Foremost among the novel's "desert Europeans" (Ondaatje 135), the English patient comes to represent "a concept of self that is in line with Deleuze and Guattari's 'nomad subject,' that 'strange subject...with no fixed identity, wandering about...being born of the states that it consumes and being reborn with each new state'" (Hillger 30). David Williams and Darryl Whetter offer related readings of the desert as the corresponding ground of such a nomad subject. Williams likens it to a utopian

cyberspace where all borders dissolve and Whetter sees it more literally, but no less romantically, as a zone of metaphysical self-transcendence through travel. For all of these critics, then, the desert, the Bedouin, and the English patient exist in homologous relation—so many signs of a privileged postidentitarian ethos whose utopian promise is tragically “betrayed” by Kip and Hana following the apocalyptic climax at novel’s end. The former, Williams suggests, “retreats toward an essential identity and identity politics” by returning to India and repudiating all forms of “Englishness,” “deny[ing] difference as much as any imperialist, only to reinscribe in reversed order the old binary oppositions”; the latter retreats to “private” consolations in Canada “without realizing the promise of ‘communal books, communal histories,’ the promise of partial and contradictory identities which dies with *The English Patient*” (53).

For his part, Williams is clearly disappointed by such “retreats” from what he calls, after Haraway, the novel’s cyborg politics, and Hillger seems uncertain what to do with them, ending her article by registering a contradiction that cannot be integrated into the utopian narrative of becoming-nomad her interpretation privileges:

In presenting Hana as a nomad subject moving about in a smooth space Ondaatje conceptualizes a sense of “home” which is very different from the Odyssean “homecoming.” It is a concept of “home” which is not rooted, but mobile. At the same time, though, Ondaatje does not keep silent about the fact that there seems to be a profound nostalgia for stability and fixity, a longing for origins. Interestingly enough, it is his nomad, Hana herself, who most clearly voices this.

(31)

This note of “profound nostalgia for stability and fixity” on which the novel seems to end is indeed “interesting,” and merits closer attention than it has so far received. For although Ondaatje’s desert poetics undeniably construct the Bedouin as oppositional

symbols of nomadological hybridity which embody the lessons of the desert and originate the English patient's slogan—"Erase the family name! Erase nations!" (139)—this constitutes only one layer, and perhaps not the most important layer, of a discursive terrain every bit as shifting as the sand sea Ondaatje conjures to figure it.

After the English patient has been rescued by the nomads and sits relaxing around a fire in the desert, admiring a dancing Bedouin boy (one of many scenes in the novel calculated to evoke T. E. Lawrence), the narrator remarks, "There are always secrets and dangers around him, as when blind he moved his hand and cut himself on a double-edged razor in the sand" (22). This razor in the sand, I wish to argue, provides an essential counterpoint to the novel's euphoric evocations of desert transcendence, suggesting ways in which the English patient's climactic paean to the metaphysical vagrancy of "the nomads of faith who walked in the monotone of the desert and saw brightness and faith and colour" (261), however lyrical, contains its own implicit dangers. "All I desired was to walk upon such an earth that had no maps" (261), he laments after reclaiming his dead lover's body; but this is not the last word on the subject, for Kip/Kirpal Singh's narrative dramatizes the disabling consequences, both personal and political, of being unable to map one's location, much less claim an identity, in relation to the very places and names the English patient's desert obliterates. Commenting on the novel's apparent privileging of deconstructive strategies and figures, like the English patient's copy of Herodotus, for example, Carrie Dawson has recently argued that "there is reason to be wary of attempts to constitute Ondaatje's reading of supplementarity and intertextuality as affirmative" (62):

Admittedly, the additions the patient makes to Herodotus's text and those which Hana makes to the texts she finds in the library can be said to supplement or add to the existing narrative while also pointing to the totalizing but incomplete nature of any form of representation. However, their intertextual practices are not sustainable and are not widely available. The opportunity to lose oneself in a text or to recreate oneself as text without context is, Ondaatje suggests, a privilege which exists only for those whose bodies have not been written on. It is a privilege which is not, for example, available to Kip. (62-63)

This is a salutary reminder—and in many ways a necessary one, given the lyricism of Ondaatje's prose, which tends to overwhelm rather than reinforce the text's more sober reflections on the politics of becoming-nomad.

In her now classic critique of "the Foucault-Deleuze conversation," Gayatri

Spivak argues that

Some of the most radical criticism coming out of the West today is the result of an interested desire to conserve the subject of the West, or the West as Subject. The theory of pluralized "subject-effects" gives an illusion of undermining subjective sovereignty while often providing a cover for this subject of knowledge. Although the history of Europe as Subject is narrativized by the law, political economy, and ideology of the West, this concealed Subject pretends it has "no geo-political determinations." The much publicized critique of the sovereign subject thus actually inaugurates a Subject. ("Subaltern" 66)

Citing Deleuze and Guattari's redefinition of desire as desiring-production and the constitution of a "vagabond, nomad subject," she warns that "Deleuze and Guattari's failure to consider the relations between desire, power and subjectivity renders them incapable of articulating a theory of interests"—something she finds essential to postcolonial counter-practice (68), as when she advocates "a *strategic* use of positivist essentialism in a scrupulously visible political interest" (*In Other Worlds* 205).¹⁵

Dawson's analysis of *The English Patient* as "a bombed-out narrative whose fragments have as much to do with shrapnel and shell-shock as they do with 'snail song'" (an

allusion to one of the text's "modest images of hope shored up against the detritus of war") (60) already indicates that Spivak's postcolonial critique of poststructuralist nomadology inheres in the novel's narrative structure. I would further add that such a critique of postidentitarian thinking inheres in *The English Patient's* representation of nomadism and that it is dramatized through the confrontation between the novel's two "international bastards" (176) and "warrior saints" (273)—the English patient and Kip—each of whom embodies very different versions of nomadic politics, thus implying different relations to mapping and identity. These competing versions of nomadism¹⁶ are ultimately represented and held in tension by the novel's double-edged portrayal of the desert and its Bedouin inhabitants. For in addition to figuring utopian possibilities for the type of heterogeneous connection and reassembly memorably enshrined in the novel's nomadic counter-Bible, the English patient's palimpsestual copy of *The Histories* by Herodotus, they also exist in allegorical relation to the very names and nations they so often appear to abjure. This allegorical relation, I will argue, makes possible the text's figuration of a postcolonial aesthetic of nomadic cognitive mapping that qualifies and contextualizes its more utopian postidentitarian nomadism.



Especially in the sections of the narrative focalized through the English patient, the romantic opposition of desert and town is repeatedly asserted and elaborately developed—typically in an ascetic mode that is by now familiar. The denizens of interwar desert exploration, writers of "books about dune formation" and experts in "the lost culture of deserts," seem "interested only in things that could not be bought or sold, of no interest to the outside world," the English patient reports (143). "There is God only

in the desert,” he asserts later, once again recalling T. E. Lawrence: “Outside of this there was just trade and power, money and war. Financial and military despots shaped the world” (250). Yet desert and outside world are not as strictly opposed as the English patient’s point of view implies, for from Kip’s perspective, during his flight from the villa, “deserts from Uweinat to Hiroshima” share the same mortal “secret”: *“For the heavens shall vanish away like smoke and the earth shall wax old like a garment. And they that dwell therein shall die in like manner. For the moth shall eat them up like a garment, and the worms shall eat them like wool”* (295). In this connection, Josef Pesch has argued that the deserts of the novel are not simply utopian, but post-apocalyptic—spaces which serve as metonymies for nuclear apocalypse. Following the Deleuzo-Guattarian line of thought suggested by Hillger, we might therefore read the deserts of *The English Patient* as figuring not merely the locale of an unappropriated war-machine of nomadism (whose aim is not war, but the construction of smooth space of freeform desire and connectivity whose erasure of national and even personal striations would render war unthinkable), but also, simultaneously, the war machine of the state itself, which turns smooth space to an entirely more sinister purpose.

Something of the latter is suggested by the desert’s uncanny emission of technologies of war, particularly the buried airplane (168) (whose recovery leads to the English patient’s own fiery apocalypse) and the “museum” of buried guns which the English patient is called upon to “translate” (20) for his Bedouin benefactors by naming them and sorting their ammunition, matching shell-type to weapon barrel. This parody of Adam’s naming of the animals deflates the romantic/utopian narrative of nomadism as

well, for not only is it performed at the Bedouins' insistence and with their participation ("a man with a knife...carved a parallel code on shell box and gun stock"), it also implicates them in the very striations and dualisms that characterize the terrifying binary logic of the Western war machine and its nuclear arsenal:

He was held by the wrist again and his hand sunk into a box of cartridges. In another box to the right were more shells, seven-millimetre shells this time. Then others.

When he was a child he had grown up with an aunt, and on the grass of her lawn she had scattered a deck of cards face down and taught him the game of Pelmanism. Each player allowed to turn up two cards and, eventually, through memory pairing them off. This had been another landscape...a fully named world.... Now, with his face blindfolded in a mask of grass fibers, he picked up a shell and moved with his carriers, guiding them towards a gun, inserted the bullet, bolted it, and holding it up in the air fired. (20-21)

The Bedouins' unspecified agenda is one of the novel's more interesting aporias, and the very ambiguity of their interests is precisely what makes their symbolic burden so heavy. For, like the desert, the nomads can be reduced neither to a utopian "outside" nor to a simple allegorical reflection of State power. They are transcendently "at home" in both deserts—the English patient's desert as "geomorph[ic]" zone of "invention" and "mirage" (246) as well as its apocalyptic double.

Their relation to this latter desert is the least commented upon, but more important of the two, for as the Bedouins' ability to navigate the desert shows, being "at home" in a post-apocalyptic waste land (under whose sign the novel condemns imperialist geopolitics) means being able to read hidden signs and to construct useable maps by whatever means available. "What civilization was this that understood the predictions of weather and light?" the English patient wonders at the Bedouin's accurate prediction of

an eclipse (8-9). Later, when he must navigate alone, he recalls the methods of Bedouin guides (139):

There were two periods of time when he could not move. At noon, when the shadow of the sun was under him, and at twilight, between sunset and the appearance of the stars. Then everything on the disc of the desert was the same. If he moved, he might err as much as ninety degrees off course. He waited for the live chart of stars, then moved forward reading them every hour. In the past, when they had had desert guides, they would hang a lantern from a long pole and the rest of them would follow the bounce of light above the star reader. (249)

Such methods of navigation, which situate the individual itinerary in relation to larger totalities, recall the methods of sea navigation Jameson analogized to cognitive mapping.

Moreover, the nomads' ability to survive their desert journeys depends as well on their ability to penetrate beneath the appearance of sameness that characterizes its sandy surface. "The world ended out there. The interior was waterless," the English patient remarks, "But in the emptiness of deserts you are always surrounded by history. Tebu and Senussi tribes had roamed there possessing wells that they guarded with great secrecy. There were rumors of fertile lands that nestled within the desert's interior"

(135). As the English patient himself later notes: "In the desert the tools of survival are underground—troglodyte caves, water sleeping within a buried plant, weapons, a plane"

(174). The inability to map—"longitude 25, latitude 23" (174)—may be fatal. Indeed, the Bedouin are not opponents of mapping at all:

The Bedouin were keeping me alive for a reason. I was useful, you see. Someone had assumed I had a skill when my plane crashed in the desert. I am a man who can recognize an unnamed town by its skeletal shape on a map. I have always had information like a sea in me....I knew maps of the sea floor, maps that depict weaknesses in the shield of the earth, charts painted on skin that contain the various routes of the Crusades. (18)

Such cartographic knowledge—knowledge both of itineraries (Crusader routes) and tectonic “weaknesses” in the earth’s “shield”—does not set the English patient in opposition to the Bedouin, but marks him, rather, as a “true” nomadic cartographer.

The implications of the nomads’ ability to chart their relation to the sublime for a political allegory of cognitive mapping are eloquently spelled out in the English patient’s account of desert winds (16-18), which anticipates Kip’s horror that “all the winds of the world have been sucked into Asia” (287) following the “hurricane of heat” that “rolls across cities like a burst map” in the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki (284). For the destructive power of these winds, which “engulf” and “inter” armies (17), may potentially be harnessed or avoided by those who understand them:

There were some tribes who held up their open palm against the beginnings of wind. Who believed that if this was done at the right moment they could deflect a storm into an adjacent sphere of the desert, towards another, less loved tribe. (18)

This is perhaps the novel’s ultimate utopian promise for a political aesthetic cognitive mapping—a promise also suggested by the extraordinary agency of the tribe that “dyed a whole valley floor, blackening it to increase convection and thereby the possibility of rainfall, and built high structures to pierce the belly of a cloud” (18). The utopianism of such extraordinary displays of agency is checked by the awareness that “There were continual drownings, tribes suddenly made historical with sand across their gasp” (18), but one of the nomads’ key functions in the novel is to define the space of possible resistance against the apparently elemental power of the (imperial/technological) sublime.



Such a use of the Bedouin to allegorize the cognitive mapping of imperialism is confirmed by their many similarities to Kip, the character who is most directly engaged

in precisely such a cartographic process of mapping his own subject position in relation to the British Empire. In both structure and incident, Kip's narrative epitomizes "the journey in," characteristic of one variant of postcolonial *bildungsromans*, in which—to simplify greatly—the colonized (or ex-colonized) protagonist travels back to the imperial center, anticipating the possibility of self-realization or assimilation as a full citizen, only to be thrust back, through a series of violent and subtle encounters, into the identity of cultural outsider or imposter, an exclusion typically culminating in disillusionment with imperial ideology and an affirmation (essentialist or, more often, anti-essentialist) of "native" or "postcolonial" identity. To the extent that such narratives dramatize transformations of political consciousness in which the protagonist becomes engaged in drawing connections between immediate, personal experience and larger structures or discourses which determine the shape of his or her reality, they engage and develop the project of cognitive mapping quite directly (though not strictly in terms of "national allegory" as Jameson infamously proposes in his much criticized essay, "Third World Literature in the Era of Multinational Capital").¹⁷

Initially, and in marked contrast to his brother, whose cognitive maps of empire are already well-developed, Kip enters the British Army as believer in the imperial rhetoric of "civilization" and an admirer of "Englishness." His subsequent experiences repeatedly threaten this certainty. In particular, his sense of difference upon his arrival in England (188) anticipates what he will again experience even in the would-be utopian space of the Villa where Hana exoticizes his "brownness," leaving him feeling once again reduced to "the foreigner, the Sikh" (105). Yet, any radical redrawing of Kip's cognitive

maps is forestalled during this period of his life by his inclusion in Lord Suffolk's elite bomb disposal unit. Only with the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki—that “tremor of Western wisdom” which causes Kip to charge, and Caravaggio to confirm, that “They would never have dropped such a bomb on a white nation” (286)—does the sapper decisively discard imperialist cognitive maps and begin the painful process of drafting new ones.

The cognitive mapping of imperialism dramatized via Kip's awakening is complex, because Kip's revisionist cartography both affirms and develops that of his older brother, registering and adapting to alterations within the operation of imperialism following World War II. For Kip's brother, who is imprisoned in the 1930s for his involvement with national liberation struggles in India, the cognitive mapping of imperialism entails the recognition of a global system whose modes and channels of domination are to a large extent graspable (and thus potentially resisted) precisely because they are visible, localized, and relatively fixed: “He refused to agree to any situation where the English had power” (200). Such a map reflects the political realities of what Jameson, following Mandel, calls the imperialist stage of capital, from the point of view of the colonized. Whereas an imperial subject in turn-of-the-century London had to struggle to overcome the mystifications of geography, which hid the systematic connection between center and periphery, resulting (Jameson contends) in its symbolic figuration in the formal innovations of European modernism, a colonized subject like Kip's brother, who reports that “the English are now hanging Sikhs who are fighting for independence” (218) clearly finds the connections less difficult to discern. From this

perspective, the cognitive mapping of imperialism in *The English Patient* takes the form of Jamesonian “national allegory.”

Yet, from Kip’s earliest reported conversations with his brother, the cognitive act of “naming the system” is presented as a far less transparent affair. Kip’s attachment to the English, even in the midst of nationalist agitation when center-periphery models of global politics are rendered especially visible, implies, for instance, that the experience of colonialism can be just as disorienting and “unmappable” as the experience of postmodernity described by Jameson. In response to his brother’s warning that “Asia is still not a free continent” and his disgust “at how we throw ourselves into English wars,” Kip replies, “Japan is a part of Asia...and the Sikhs have been brutalized by the Japanese in Malaya” (218)—an answer which effectively levels political antagonisms and thus defuses what Kip most fears and what his brother most desires, “confrontation” with the colonizer (200). The novel’s judgment on the political myopia of Kip’s response is inherent in the context of the utterance, for he reports this old “battle of opinion” to Hana, “his eyes closed tight, mocking [his brother’s prophesy that]...‘One day [Kip] will open [his] eyes’” (217). By the novel’s climax, it is clear that the joke is unequivocally at Kip’s expense, and like the “joker” built into the design of the bombs he defuses, its humor is of the darkest sort. Indeed, Ondaatje builds a darkly ironic symmetry into this object-lesson in geopolitical allegiance and the limits of self-invention, for it is of course the bombing of Japanese cities that instigates both Kip’s abrupt repudiation—and redefinition—of Englishness and his redrawing of the map of Asia to inscribe his newly discovered solidarity with the Japanese:

American, French, I don't care. When you start bombing the brown races of the world, you're an Englishman. You had King Leopold of Belgium and now you have fucking Harry Truman of the USA. You all learned it from the English.

(286)

This generalization of Englishness as a synonym for imperialism's institutionalized racism has seemed, to some readers of the novel, an unfortunate reversal of the very paradigm at which it lashes out, a paranoid (molar) retreat to nativism and a betrayal of the novel's utopian vision of molecular connection. But like the suggestion of an imperial sublime in Kip's response to his brother, the pluralization of Englishness appears to register (by way of anticipation) the shift to the less immediately visible, neo-imperialist forms of domination that followed World War II and the official period of decolonization when the balance of (neo-)imperial power shifted from Europe to the United States and assumed more subtle economic—even "postmodern"—forms. As the Marxist postcolonial critic Aijaz Ahmad puts it,

One of the many contradictory consequences of decolonization within a largely capitalist framework was that it brought all zones of capital into a single, integrated market, entirely dominated by this supreme imperialist power. It was in the context of this historically unprecedented opportunity that the United States was then to launch itself on a period of enormous uninterrupted growth which lasted into the late 1960s, even to the early 1970s...and to emerge as the dominant power globally, including the zones which old colonialisms had vacated, with the power to assimilate into its own hegemony the newly-independent national-bourgeois states... (21)

By having Kip name the American bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki "English" atrocities, Ondaatje asserts the fundamental continuity of modern (European) and postmodern (American) forms of imperial domination. Kip's accusation, in other words, may be read as an incipient cognitive map of "postmodern" or "neo-" imperialism at the

very moment of its symbolic inception—a map which of course reflects Ondaatje's privileged position as historical novelist writing with the benefit of hindsight.

The postcolonial subject's cognitive mapping of neo-imperialism (from either within or outside the parameters of so-called Third World spaces) and the postmodern subject's cognitive mapping of global capitalism (typically from within the West) may thus be seen as profoundly overlapping, if not complementary, projects—particularly since, as Robert Young has argued,

postmodernism...could be said to mark not just the cultural effects of a new stage of "late" capitalism, but the sense of the loss of European history and culture as History and Culture, the loss of their unquestioned place at the center of the world. We could say that if, according to Foucault, the centrality of "Man" dissolved at the end of the eighteenth century as the "Classical Order" gave way to "History," today at the end of the twentieth century, as "History" gives way to the "Postmodern," we are witnessing the dissolution of "the West." (20)

Given the interpenetration of these two perspectives on cognitive cartography, it should not be surprising to find that *The English Patient's* figuration of a postcolonial mapping of the present shares postmodern cyberpunk's interest in a thematics of paranoia and the technological sublime as a "weak" mode of registering both disorientation and cognition.

The novel's almost obsessive fascination with the art of bomb construction and disposal is exemplary in this regard. For although Kip's epiphany seems to come all at once, consonant with the dropping of the bombs themselves, his cognitive processes are rendered figuratively, throughout the novel, in his confrontation with the technological devices of the very Western civilization he admires. In fact, the painstaking defusing of unexploded bombs becomes a metaphor not only for Kip's own disarming of imperial ideology, but for the cognitive mapping of neo-imperialism in particular, precisely

because it involves the coordination of the individual with potentially lethal, cunningly “booby trapped” structures that can only be rendered inert—and then transformed, as Kip transforms so many lethal technologies, into useful objects like telescopes (77) and can-openers (86)—by penetrating beyond immediate appearances (or experience) and carefully following lines of power back to their source. Like imperialism itself, the bombs, Kip discovers, become ever more devious as the war wears on—always “maze”-like (183, 193), they are rendered more dangerous by continual changes in structure:

Another SC-250kg. It looked like the familiar kind. They had defused hundreds of them, most by rote. This was the way the war progressed. Every six months or so the enemy altered something. (191)

The sapper thus has to develop a special perceptual apparatus if he is to survive:

He had learned diagrams of order when he joined the army, blueprints that become more and more complicated, like great knots or musical scores. He found out he had the skill of the three-dimensional gaze, the rogue gaze that could look at an object or page of information and realign it, see all the false descants.... The rogue gaze could see the buried line under the surface, how a knot might weave when out of sight. He turned away from mystery books with irritation, able to pinpoint villains with too much ease. (111)

Given the resonance of Kip’s “three-dimensional gaze” with the connection-drawing injunction of cognitive mapping, it is telling that his relation to the bombs is explicitly cartographic. He “has to deliver maps of the cleared areas to headquarters” (87), of course, but disposal itself also involves reading a bomb’s “mapboard” (99) and Kip is constantly engaged in diagramming his work, even leaving behind “a small handbook that had a map of bombs” (291) when he departs on his not entirely ironically named “Triumph” motorbike.¹⁸

What makes these thematics of bomb-disposal particularly apposite to a consideration of the discourse of nomadism in the novel is the way in which their mapping of an imperial/technological sublime echoes and intersects with the nomadic allegory of cognitive mapping that I have already discussed, filling out an alternative to the English Patient's more Romantic conception of "nomadic" politics. Like the Bedouin, Kip routinely confronts a treacherous geography whose smooth surface conceals both dangers and opportunities which he is uniquely qualified to interpret. In this regard, Kip's careful "travell[ing] of the path of the bomb fuze" (102) through the garden of the villa recalls the expert navigation of desert routes by the nomadic Bedouin. The connection between nomadism and bomb-disposal as homologous signs of cognitive mapping is also suggested by Kip's defusing of a bomb during the early years of his training with Lord Suffolk:

Kirpal Singh stood where the horse's saddle would have lain across its back. At first he simply stood on the back of the horse, paused and waved to those he could not see but who he knew would be watching. Lord Suffolk watched him through binoculars, saw the young man wave, both arms up and swaying.

Then he descended, down into the giant white chalk horse of Westbury, into the whiteness of the horse, carved into the hill. Now he was a black figure, the background radicalizing the darkness of his skin and his khaki uniform. If the focus on the binoculars was exact, Lord Suffolk would see the thin line of crimson lanyard on Singh's shoulder that signaled his sapper unit. To them it would look like he was striding down a paper map cut out in the shape of an animal. But Singh was conscious only of his boots scuffing the rough white chalk as he moved down the slope. (181)

Kip's entry into "the stomach of the giant white horse of Westbury carved into the rolling chalk hills in 1778" (184) to defuse a bomb discovered there brings together the motifs of nomadism and bomb-disposal in a number of ways. In addition to being a nomadic animal—associated in the novel with the motif of knighthood, which also attaches to

Kip—the chalk horse carved directly onto the landscape recalls the nomadic tribe described by the English patient who “dyed a whole valley floor, blackening it to increase convection” (18) in order to control the weather. By so linking Kip’s map-making to nomadism, Ondaatje constructs nomadism not in unitary terms, but as a hinge between competing political aesthetics.

**Written in the Sand:
Nomadology and Post(modern)-Apocalypse**

Everything has already become nuclear, faraway, vaporized. The explosion has already occurred; the bomb is only a metaphor now.

JEAN BAUDRILLARD, “The Anorexic Ruins” (34)

Globalization is a process of profound unevenness.... “It is just another face of the final triumph of the West,” some say. I know that position. I know it is very tempting. It is what I call ideological postmodernism: I can’t see round the edge of it, and so history must have just ended. That form of postmodernism I don’t buy. It is what happens to ex-Marxist French intellectuals when they head for the desert.

STUART HALL, “The Local and the Global” (182-83)

As we have seen, the nomad’s ascent to a position of discursive prominence in the culture of postmodernity generally—and particularly in some areas of poststructuralist philosophy and postcolonial literature and theory—registers and responds to a variety of contemporary transformations and concerns. On the one hand, the idealization of nomadism as a desired state is symptomatic of the postmodern condition of time-space compression in which mobility, speed, and instantaneity seem to have become the dominant features of life in the neo-primitive “global village.” Responding to the anxieties this bewildering condition occasions and organized by the trope of “dwelling in travel,” the primitivist fantasy of a general nomadism has emerged to offer nostalgic

visions of transcendental homecoming and complacent daydreams of techno-primitive omnipotence. On the other hand, the longstanding opposition between nomadism and the state, has made the nomad an irresistible figure of political dissent for poststructuralist and postcolonial theorists eager to explore the subversive potential of mobile and flexible forms of resistance. Of course, the forms this dissent takes and the elements of the nomadic stereotype each form emphasizes differ and overlap, not only with each other, but also with the accommodationist fantasies of nomadic homecoming and futurist euphoria. Ondaatje and especially Bester furnish mixed assemblages of this sort in which mobile and cartographic elements of the nomadic archive organize competing political aesthetics with ambivalent results, even as these aesthetics ultimately rest on primitivist tropes of “homecoming” to ground both their vision of post-identitarian transformation and their more practical attempts at cognitive mapping. The search for a nomadic transcendental home, in other words, has a dual significance in these works, as the location of “home” flickers between a troubling present and a desired future.

Yet these works by Bester and Ondaatje also point to ways in which the prevalence of nomadism in contemporary discourse both reflects and responds to the motif of apocalypse that has become ubiquitous among figurations of postmodernity.¹⁹ In *The Stars My Destination*, for instance, nomadism and apocalypse are structurally and thematically inseparable. Foyle’s acceptance of his role as nomadic prophet is signified potentially catastrophic democratization of PyrE, a weapon and energy source likened to “the fission bomb of 1945” (57) that he distributes randomly to the world, hoping that humanity “can all turn uncommon if they’re kicked awake like I was” (255):

Die or live and be great. Blow yourselves to Christ gone or come and find me, Gully Foyle, and I make you men. I make you great. I give you the stars. (255)

Although, as this challenge attests, humanity's deliverance is premised on the success of the mutual deterrence Foyle has set up, its transformative implications are in fact figured in the "nuclear" apocalypse he aims to forestall:

PyrE is a polyphoric alloy. A polyphore is a metal which emits sparks when scraped or struck. PyrE emits energy, which is why E, the energy symbol, was added to the prefix Pyr. PyrE is a solid solution of transplutonian isotopes, releasing thermonuclear energy on the order of stellar Phoenix action. Its discoverer was of the opinion that he had produced the equivalent of the primordial protomatter which exploded into the Universe. (216)

As a phoenix-like combination of destruction (PyrE is "pronounced 'pyre' as in funeral pyre," Prestein says) and the primordial energy of creation, PyrE is "apocalyptic" in the Biblical sense—a sign of creative destruction. Despite the subtle ironies of its conclusion, in other words, *Stars* offers an optimistically redemptive fable in which annihilation is merely a figure for evolution—an evolution which is both epitomized and shepherded by a post-human N♂MAD. As we have seen, Ondaatje's representation of apocalypse ultimately rejects this sort of metaphoric maneuver, even though *The English Patient* repeatedly flirts with such a vision of creative destruction in its mingling of "nomadic" escapes from identity with apocalyptic images and themes. Moreover, these texts are not unique in correlating nomad and apocalypse. Deleuze and Guattari's nomadology is articulated in the shadow of what they enigmatically name the "new earth"—a term which refers to a post-capitalist socius that they speculate will be the result of environmental apocalypse brought on by capitalism's (apparently) ceaseless development (Holland, *DG* 112-15). The *Mad Max* films, in which bands of techno-

primitive biker-nomads roam a post-apocalyptic Australian waste land in search of petrol, and Mel Gibson and Tina Turner assist nomadic bands of children in finding “a way home” provide yet another version of this conjunction.²⁰

The pairing of nomad and apocalypse in these works attests to their complementarity in postmodern discourse. They are linked, formally, through a shared poetics of the desert as wasteland and both evince strong biblical overtones. But they are related functionally as well, since, as Torgovnick asserts of the primitive generally,

it suggests to us not only beginnings, but endings—desired endings, feared endings. It is no accident that the narratives collected by anthropologists like Lévi-Strauss or linguists like Chenevière often tell creation stories or stories of apocalypse. (245)

Torgovnick is right, and it is important to signal the precise meaning of “apocalypse” in this context. Pesch has pointed out that the notion of “apocalypse” often becomes unmoored from its biblical “revelatory” meaning in contemporary writing; rather than signaling a time when “beginning and end coincide, and a New Jerusalem and a new life are promised to a happy few,” it has “become a synonym for total destruction, annihilation, and nuclear end of the world” (117). In primitivist fictions where nomad and apocalypse converge, however, revelation is seldom far away, and nomadism often becomes integral to what Richard Dellamora calls “the apocalyptic dream of an escape into a new order of existence” (xi). In *The Stars My Destination*, the nomad’s ability to survive the end—figured by his own private fiery apocalypse as he “jauntes” through space-time in the guise of “the burning man,” collapsing past and future into a blur of nearly simultaneous instants—literally heralds the founding of such a new order of existence, “a human explosion that would transform man and make him the master of the

universe” (14), radically altering the very nature of “man” in the process. Though its treatment of post-apocalyptic themes is much more critical, *The English Patient* also makes nomadism central to its vision of a new order of existence—this time, a post-national, post-identitarian order in which it becomes possible “to walk upon...an earth that had no maps” (261). Whereas Bester makes nomadism and apocalypse synonymously utopian, Ondaatje, with characteristic ambivalence, ultimately offloads the utopian aspects of apocalyptic narrative onto the nomad so that, even as his representation of nuclear devastation joins a tradition of “post-apocalyptic writing [that] reverses the future-orientation of [revelatory] apocalyptic thinking” by locating apocalypse historically and remembering its traumas (Pesch 118), his narrative nonetheless preserves a virtual space for the very sorts of transformation and transcendence often associated with apocalyptic writing in the nomad.²¹ Such articulations of nomadism and apocalypse recycle the nomad’s fabled “resilience” and uncanny ability to confront the privation of the wasteland with an adaptive Toynbeean *tour de force* into a figuration of apocalyptic transformation that, as Bester and Ondaatje’s nomads suggest, transcends space, time, and identity. Ultimately, then, nomad and apocalypse are complementary because both are fundamentally utopian.²²

The utopian function of these profoundly interconnected discourses has been particularly important for a number of writers and theorists who are skeptical of diagnoses of postmodernism like Baudrillard’s which assert not only that the apocalypse has already taken place, but that its liberatory promise was a chimera all along. In the desert of Baudrillard’s post-apocalyptic present where “the end of history” in the form of

capitalist democracy has been announced by Francis Fukuyama—"apocalypse now," as Kevin Pask calls it (182)—we seem to be condemned to "an infinite horizon" that implies "mere repetition, a ceaseless doing again of deeds that issue in frustration and failure" (Dellamora xi). In the context of such diagnoses of postmodernism as post-apocalypse, the nomad's function can only be complacent or reactionary—that is, an identification with nomadism provides an accommodation to the present and constructs a privileged site from which to contemplate the so-called "end of history." As Kaplan has shown in her analysis of Baudrillard's post-apocalyptic desert wanderings in *America*, for example, his text "position[s] the theorist as nomad par excellence" and suggests that "the philosophical pleasures of the desert are available only to the subject who can emulate nomadism, who appears to be unattached, and who has an unquestioned power and ability to deterritorialize" (74). Baudrillard, in other words, finds that the nomad's stereotypical fortitude and knowledge of the desert qualify him as the prototypical citizen of a post-apocalyptic world.

Conversely, for those who implicitly reject such pronouncements of historical exhaustion, such as Bester and Ondaatje, these same stereotypical qualities subtend the emergence of nomadism as a signifier of as yet unconceptualized historical transformation during a time when history only appears to have ended. The nomad becomes the symbolic guarantor of post-apocalyptic history—a guarantor of narrative "after the end" when all narratives seem to have been permanently forestalled or doomed to repetition. Nomadism thus confirms the essential paradox that all apocalyptic narrative is premature because ultimate ends can only be projected, not recorded; as

Frank Kermode once observed, “arithmetical predictions of the End are bound to be disconfirmed” (qtd. in Dellamora, “Preface” xii). The equation between walking and narrative in so much nomadological discourse—Chatwin’s nomadic Songlines and Ondaatje’s palimpsestual deserts and nomadic books, for example—might therefore serve as an emblem for this utopian vision of a “post-apocalyptic” return of history.

Conclusion

Nomadic Ideology: Authenticity and Representation

[A]nthropological definitions of nomadism...see nomadism as being a kind of second nature to a whole people. As long as whole races or communities can be designated or defined as being of a certain sort, then the grounds for racism remain intact. A counter-strategy is to call nomadism a practice and a knowledge potentially present in relation to any event, potentially effective in relation to any struggle for survival.

STEPHEN MUECKE, *Reading the Country* (217)

"What kind of question is that?" Every Mzeini [Bedouin] was baffled when I asked what the meaning of Bedu, or Bedouin was. After a pause, he or she would answer "al-Bedu rahhāla," the Bedouin are nomads.

SMADAR LAVIE, *The Poetics of Military Occupation* (153)

This study has attempted to read Khazanov's intuition about the peculiar longevity and imaginative purchase of the nomadic myth in twentieth-century thought through the historicizing lens of the postmodernism debate as it has been laid out not only by Jameson, but, in less self-conscious ways, by a host of philosophical thinkers, be they travelers, adventurers, novelists, or counter-cultural *provocateurs*. It is tempting, and not entirely inappropriate, to see the proliferation and popularization of nomadic figures in recent decades as a symptom of late capitalism rather than a response to it: the nomad is what the primitive becomes in postmodern culture now that the notion of "home" has itself become thoroughly mobile and spatialized; it is a new figure for the same old nostalgia. But I have tried to emphasize that to the extent that we can speak of a shift towards specifically nomadic versions of primitivist discourse in postmodernism, we are dealing with a phenomenon that is in many cases a willed and strategic response to an

earlier primitivism, though certainly no less problematic for that. Jameson's contention that one of the casualties of the shift from modernity to postmodernity has been a loss of "critical distance" provides a helpful context in which to view this change in rhetorical strategies. For the notion that "some of our most cherished and time-honoured radical conceptions about the nature of cultural politics may...find themselves outmoded" (48) now that "aesthetic production today has become integrated into commodity production generally"—now, in other words, that transgressive art and literature "no longer scandalize anyone and are not only received with the greatest complacency but have themselves been institutionalized and are at one with the official and public culture of Western society" (4)—suggests that the nomadic turn in postmodernism can ultimately be read as a utopian (counterfactual) attempt to preserve the (modernist) primitivist space of critical distance without seeming to endorse its evolutionary postulate.

At its simplest and most direct, this conserving/transforming gesture exploits the nomad's longstanding association with spatial categories of mobility to imply a break with older evolutionary paradigms of the primitive. At its most complex and abstract, it self-consciously flaunts its primitivist associations even as it disavows them, enacting an ironic performance that seems designed to foreground its own artifice in order to figure some as yet unrepresentable utopian horizon. In either case, the turn to a metaphoric of nomadism seems a risky strategy for Western writers. For as I have sought to show, not only is "the nomad" an irreducibly primitivist figure in Western discourse, but also the shift from modernist primitivism to postmodernist nomadology is itself implicitly evolutionary—a reenactment of the kind of "progress" that T. E. Lawrence attributed to

the Bedouin and that underwrites Khazanov's exclusionary (and equally spurious) notion of pure nomadism.

If the nomad takes his place in the curio cabinet of Euro-American Others alongside the Oriental, the African, the primitive, etc., as an "ideological fiction" (Said, *Orientalism* 321), two related questions immediately present themselves: is it possible to represent nomadic practices (as opposed to identities) in ways that do not reify "the nomad" as a discursive object, and conversely, what are we to make of those indigenous assertions of nomadic identity that Spooner calls "nomadic ideology" (36)—that is, the ideology of some indigenous groups whose self-identification with pure nomadism appears to replicate or confirm the most hackneyed tropes of Western primitivism in its celebration of would-be "nomadic" virtues like honor, independence, and freedom against the supposed depravities and constraints of settlement? Edward Said provides a useful line of approach to these problems in his riposte to the first wave of criticism of *Orientalism* when he writes,

The methodological failures of Orientalism cannot be accounted for either by saying that the *real* Orient is different from the Orientalist portraits of it, or by saying that since Orientalists are Westerners for the most part, they cannot be expected to have an inner sense of what the Orient is all about. Both propositions are false. It is not a thesis of this book to suggest that there is such a thing as a real or true Orient (Islam, Arab, or whatever); nor is it to make an assertion about the necessary privilege of an "insider" perspective over an "outsider" one. (322)

Such a vision of identity refuses "authenticity" as a guarantor of non-repressive representation, but it by no means writes off what Said, in *Culture and Imperialism*, calls "discrepant experiences" (31): "the massive knotted and complex histories of special but nevertheless overlapping and interconnected experiences—of women, of Westerners, of

Blacks, of national states and cultures” to which it is not necessary to assign “an ideal and essentially separate status” (32). Nomadism too could fruitfully be seen in such rigorously historical terms—not as a fixed, “essential” identity, but as a discrepant, unstable, variously interconnected, and sometimes strategic experience or practice. As Said suggests, moreover, “[t]he notion of ‘discrepant experiences’ is not meant to circumvent the problem of ideology” but to permit “us to appreciate its power and understand its continuing influence” (32-33). “Nomadic ideology,” in other words, does not point to an ontological baseline of authenticity against which anthropological articulations of the “true” nomad could be measured, any more than it can guarantee the location from which a “real” nomad might speak—though it might contingently do so, particularly in contexts of resistance to colonial or state authorities where assertions of an essentially and even stereotypically “nomadic” identity might prove tactically or existentially advantageous.



Such issues of representation and authenticity, as well as the strategic implications of claiming a nomadic identity, have been productively explored by the Israeli anthropologist Smadar Lavie in *The Poetics of Military Occupation: Mzeina Allegories of Bedouin Identity Under Israeli and Egyptian Rule* (1990), a book whose deconstruction of stereotypes of pure nomadism provides an illuminating complement to Michael Asher’s laudable, but sometimes fetishistic, treatment of the same theme in *The Last of the Bedu*, which I considered in Chapter Two. Lavie’s research was initially stimulated, she says, by her early suspicion of her own culture’s “Zionist frontier mythology,” the imperial nostalgia that advocated “making the desert bloom, all the while mourning the

eradication of desert spaces, and museumizing Negev Bedouin culture even while expropriating Bedouin land” (7). Accordingly, *The Poetics of Military Occupation* provides an extended refutation of the desert myths that had played a central role in her early cultural education—especially “the whole Hollywood Ten Commandments media image of [Bedouin] tribes that Israel promoted to attract tourists” (8)—arguing that the identification of Bedouinism with the notion of pure nomadism has been merely fictional for some time because “the constant military occupation of the South Sinai precluded the Mzeina the identity that both turn-of-the-century travelers’ accounts and contemporary nostalgic literature or media accounts inscribed for the Bedouin: fierce romantic nomads on loping camels in the vast desert” (6). As an economic and cultural activity, pastoral nomadism is so marginalized, in fact, that the Mzeina paradoxically appear to be “a Bedouin tribe without a Bedouin culture” (29), a people who are now primarily wage laborers rather than mobile pastoralists (154).

Lavie’s rejection of romantic images of the Bedouin is supported by the ways in which the Mzeina themselves have responded to such primitivist representations of their culture. For Lavie argues that the Mzeinis’ reification of an essentially nomadic Bedouin identity in public performances for tourists is a form of strategic essentialism that provides the Mzeina with a means of negotiating the grim realities of military occupation and the severely limited options for survival and self-expression such circumstances impose. The interactions with “exotica-hunting tourists” (224), in other words, are carefully staged performances by individuals who exploit foreigners’ desire for primitive “authenticity” for money, which in some cases helps to fund symbolic modes of

resistance to cultural imperialism. Lavie's best example of this practice is provided by Shgētef, a Mzeini entrepreneur who specializes in "building and renting traditional-style Bedouin palm-frond huts to the many tourists who wanted to vacation in what they envisioned as authentic desert settings," hawking "touristy simulations of traditional Bedouin attire imported from the West Bank, and later [during Egyptian occupation] from Cairo," and conducting and marketing "Desert Tours on Camelback" (221). The proceeds from his business subsequently go not to the purchase of "semidilapidated pickup trucks or jeeps," "Japanese transistor radios and cassette recorders, or elegant Swiss watches" but to "the building of hewn-stone mosques that mushroomed in all the heavily toured communities"—perhaps, Lavie speculates, as "a response to the presence of so many scantily clad tourists" (222). Shgētef's public performance of a stereotyped Bedouin identity, in other words, exemplifies its dual advantage for the Mzeina. On the one hand, "many of [them] preferred the creative, clever job of running their own enterprises marketing their culture to sinful foreigners, when the only apparent alternatives were miserable unskilled jobs in similar enterprises run by their occupiers" (223-24). On the other hand, these self-run enterprises could then be used to support concrete forms of cultural self-assertion. In these ways, at least, assertions of nomadic identity are patently strategic.

Such an account of Mzeini strategy recalls Asher's praise of the Bedu, which similarly approves this type of performance as an illustration of their syncretic adaptability. As he wryly notes during his own tour of the area "inevitably called 'Lawrence's Well'" because of its historical associations, his guide, Sleiman,

regretted having to travel to Aqaba by camel when he might have made more money more easily in a motor-car. I felt too that he was taken off guard by my Arabic, accustomed to using a few well-honed foreign phrases to control visitors. Like almost everyone involved in mass tourism, he regarded foreigners as a predictable herd species without the attributes of individual humanity. Tourists were the new flocks of the Huwaytat in Wadi Rum. (76-77)

But Lavie's exploration of nomadic ideology goes much further than Asher's by attempting to negotiate not only camel-tour performances of authenticity staged for cultural outsiders, but more intimate, much more complex performances, enacted within the community itself at times when cultural identity becomes a subject of explicit debate among the Mzeina themselves. That is, Lavie confronts the emergence of nomadic stereotypes and discourses of nomadic authenticity *within* the self-representations of this profoundly hybrid Bedouin culture. When she asks the Mzeina Bedouins to define "*Bedu*," for example, they uniformly reply "'*al-Bedu rahhāla*,' the Bedouin are nomads" (153), an identity they hold to despite the fact that it can only be lived as a paradox:

Salīm, an angular young man, expressed [this paradox] succinctly. Answering my question about what being a Bedouin meant, he said with a bit of chutzpah and sarcasm: "*al-Bedu ralīn wal-Mzeina shaghalīn*"—"whereas the Bedouin are nomads, the Mzeina are laborers." I liked this rhyme. When I said it to other Mzeini men and women, many laughed and said, "This is our life." Salwa, a feisty woman in her midthirties, added, "Our men are laborers. We are not free like the Bedouin on that radio program from Saudi Arabia...." (154)

Similarly, the stark contradiction of "a fully dressed pious Bedouin...cater[ing] to shockingly naked hippies on the spectacular Sinai beaches, where a hybridized oxymoron had sprung up between Western tourism and its romantic image of outlandish Bedouin life" (322) is not as easily reconciled by the notion of "strategy" as an account like Asher's implies. As Lavie documents, the notion that "'selling sins' was a better way to make a living than doing menial labor for the occupier" was by no means an

uncontroversial position (323). For some, the lived contradiction of “wage-working at playing the image of the noble nomad” (323) was so difficult to accept that it constituted a major source of conflict among the Mzeina, often erupting into apparently irreconcilable arguments over what Lavie, citing the Mzeina themselves, refers to as the nature of “genuine Bedouin identity” (29).

One implication of this emblematically “postmodern” situation, in which the Mzeina rely on Saudi Arabian radio shows and on “their depiction by the tourist guides” to provide them with “a model for authentic Bedouin life” (72, 350), is that Bedouin identity has become merely a “simulation” in Baudrillard’s sense of the term—that is, a copy of a copy in which the original model is permanently lost, if, indeed, it ever existed (Lavie 29). As Lavie repeatedly points out, the Mzeina “were not free-spirited nomads, not even historically” (29), for their “longstanding belief in the pure essence of the classical Bedouin tribe” is contradicted as early as the eighteenth century by the disappointment of romantic European travelers seeking “free-spirited nomads” in the South Sinai, but finding only groups of Bedouin “skimping along in wage-labor poverty and therefore not free economically or politically” (324). Thus, indigenous assertions of “authentic” cultural traditions and folkloric narratives of “genuinely” nomadic past (72) interpenetrate ambiguously—and for some Western critics, uncomfortably—with the Mzeinis’ pragmatic simulation of “authentic” Bedouin identity for tourists who enter their encampments and settlements “as if visiting some sort of human zoo” (222). This situation might make it seem as if the Mzeina have become, in a sense, dupes of their own performances, the victims of a kind of nomadic false-consciousness.

Lavie argues, however, that rather than reconstituting an essential Bedouin identity, the indigenous discourse of authenticity (nomadic ideology) is more accurately understood as another form of strategic essentialism—one that is performed not for outsiders, but among the Mzeina themselves as an improvisational (albeit temporary) solution to the existential problem of maintaining a distinctive identity while living under constant military occupation and economic dependence.¹ To this end, the bulk of Lavie's study explores how the Mzeina managed this "crisis in cultural existence and identity" through the performance of allegories that reframe contemporary paradoxes as "legends" by narrating them according to the conventions of a traditional form of oral story-telling known as the *Kān Ya Makān* (which means both "once upon a time there was a place" and "it has or has not happened that")—"a genre of fantastic tales that are didactic in showing shining examples of noble Bedouin behavior occurring in the 'pure,' ideal setting of free-spirited nomadism, outside the context of any colonial power or its nation-state replacement" (316). As Lavie explains, at moments of crisis, individuals would adopt the voice of one of seven conventional "characters" drawn from Mzeini folklore—"traditional stories, poems, and proverbs about a pantheon of heroic or foolish deeds of a pantheon of picturesque textual characters like Sheiks, Fools, Madwomen, Symbolic Battle Coordinators, and Old Women" (29)—that best corresponded to their own status within the group. The resulting allegories of the new "fantastic" quotidian thus became recognizable as part of an ongoing narrative of Bedouin experience, as, in other words, "authentic legends of contemporary reality" (325):

These newly invented stories, cast in the "once-upon-a-time" genre, ceaselessly delineated for the Mzeina the boundaries between their own culture and the

cultures of their occupiers. Individual trauma became a metonymy for the geopolitical trap...[and] the characters' experiences, molded into stories, succeeded in bringing to the surface other already familiar and easily recognized Bedouin stories, poems, and proverbs from the reservoir of their collective memory—about past intertribal agreements, legal disputes, migration cycles, folk remedies, hospitality protocols, kinship and marriage patterns, issues of life and death, and the history of resistance to colonialism. (325)

Through their improvisational reinvigoration of a literary genre that traditionally represents nomadic ideology in fictional or “legendary” form, these allegories illuminate the strategic import of Mzeini claims to cultural authenticity, which is to anchor a manifestly hybrid experience lived in the painful and disabling context of colonial occupation in some sense of cultural distinctiveness and autonomy—an autonomy tantalizingly embodied in the stereotype of “free-spirited nomadism.” In this way, stereotypes of true Bedouinism and indigenous discourses of nomadic ideology provide the Mzeina with an existentially useful archive of “fictional” self-images that they employ to prevent “hybridity” from sliding into complete assimilation—an archive that is never in danger of calcifying into an essentialism precisely because it must be continually re-enacted in the context of an overarching condition of syncretism. As Lavie puts it, the stories' aesthetic unity is temporarily able to overcome the lived experience of cultural fragmentation and assert “the transcendent significance of Bedouin identity” (333):

the Mzeina culture, being under the continual threat of effacement, tells itself in an allegorical way that it exists, metonymizing private experience for the history of the collectivity, and conjoining the local poetics of storytelling with the global political realities of neocolonialism.... The allegorical transcendence contains embedded within its ironies and paradoxes fearless criticism not only of the occupiers, but of the Mzeina themselves. Thus, the allegories contain their own indigenous poetics of the military occupation that has so shaped the Mzeina tribal identity. (338)

Lavie's insistence on confronting such performances of authenticity in Mzeina discourses of nomadism marks the difference between her approach and that of a postmodern Arabist like Asher. Whereas Asher's representation of a hybrid, highly adaptive Bedouin identity tends, paradoxically, to fetishize the Bedouin anew, making them symbolic guarantors of a syncretic form of transcendental homecoming, Lavie's analysis of nomadic ideology allows for a more complex and less idealized understanding of the flexibility of Bedouin cultures. Such distinctions are important, for as I have already argued, Asher's rewriting of nomadic ideology into a mantra of perpetual (and universal) "adaptation" recycles the primitive into a source of reassuring wisdom for Western readers who are anxious about their own ability to adapt to the accelerated pace of postmodernity. Moreover, it risks trivializing (or even effacing) the problem of resistance to cultural and material imperialism by replacing it with the "premature Utopianism" that characterizes certain rejections of essentialism in the name of generalized celebration of cultural hybridity (Spivak qtd. in Moore-Gilbert 199). Conversely, Lavie's exploration of the ongoing uses of Bedouin stereotypes and notions of nomadic authenticity not only for tourists but within Mzeina culture confronts rather than evades practices of strategic essentialism and thus situates the myth of pure nomadism within a contested field of cultural representations and agendas that productively troubles not only old essentialist stereotypes, but guards against the construction of emergent forms of primitivist idealization that would transform nomadism into an oxymoronic emblem of the authentically syncretic.

Significantly, Lavie's text also points to ways in which Western or non-indigenous representations of groups historically identified as "nomads" that tend towards essentialist or salvage paradigms of re-collection and mourning might sometimes be read with a sort of binocular vision that considers not only the content but the context of their articulations. For although Lavie links her account of the Mzeinis' difference from "classical nomads" (154) to a processual model of culture that largely resists the melancholy tone of salvage ethnography,² and although her work has been justly praised by Clifford for its representation of the Mzeina not as a "pure" (and therefore vanishing or tarnished) "native" population, but as a contemporary, syncretic, even cosmopolitan "traveling culture" crisscrossed by "inside-outside connection" in the form of "television, radio, tourists, commodities, armies" ("Traveling" 28), her representational practices are not wholly uncomplicated by a certain familiar nostalgia. Just as Asher struggles to see the transition from camel to Toyota in positive (or at least neutral) terms, so Lavie, when confronted by her "informant" Rāshed's anger that "[t]he tourists have made [the Mzeina] into fools" because, even though they idealize them as "real" Bedouin, the Mzeina children "don't know this desert, their own land, as well as some of these Batānka tourists do" but simply "want to hang around Eilat, and eat white bread soaked in factory milk," dreaming of "owning Mercedes taxis and screwing in the foreign style" (237-38), seems to repeat the old formulas, albeit self-consciously:

There were five whole minutes of silence. In that moody limbo of the waning day, I mourned how so many romantic pasts are dissolving into the transnational future, and the anthropologist [that is, Lavie's professional persona] wanted me to stop being sentimental and try to rescue this disappearing culture by getting it into text. (238)

Such ambivalence towards the dynamic model of cultural syncretism that is one of her study's basic theoretical assumptions is also apparent in even her most explicit disavowals of the historical basis for the Bedouin myth of pure nomadism, which tend to be qualified rather than categorical: "For the Mzeina, their identity as Bedouin is what is at stake [in their use of allegory], and it *may* indeed never have existed as they yearn for it to be" (319; my emphasis).

In a less rigorous writer, such ambivalence could be interpreted as theoretical backsliding into what might be called post-redemptive ethnography—that is, into a form of ethnographic discourse in which the anthropologist has arrived too late even to "salvage" supposedly fragile cultural essences (as traditional redemptive ethnography professes to do) and is left impotently to mourn "essences" and "authenticities" that have already vanished and may thus only be projected back onto an indefinite stretch of historical time. Lavie cannot be accused of anything so reductive, however, for these apparent lapses in tone must be contextualized within the profoundly dialogic aims and strategies of her ethnographic project: "to let the voices of the colonized speak as the Self, revealing their perception of the West as the exotic Other" (30) and "to engage [her] voice with the voices of Mzeini men and women, while avoiding the poetically powerful exoticizations typical of Western multivocal depictions of Other worlds" (36).

Accordingly, Lavie's work balances a series of "theater-script-like polyphonic dialogues" of Mzeini conversations with more theoretical chapters that assert rather than mask her own ethnographic authority and is written "in such a way that it could be translated back into Arabic, its language of origin, and be read by those about whom it was written" (36).

In fact, beyond simply providing Lavie with “raw material” and a potential audience, the Mzeina were creatively involved in the production of the text to a significant degree. In order to protect the identity of a former narcotics smuggler, for instance, she met with him and “together [they] conjured up out of [her] field data a fictional smuggler, an invented character who had in him many elements of a typical ex-smuggler, even though he was heavily censored by [their] joint effort” (37). Subsequently, she solicited Mzeini responses to “large portions” of her study in public readings, and later, on a separate occasion, subjected her study to a revealing test:

In 1988 I read my work, but anonymously, along with other Israeli texts about [the Mzeinis'] lives, in order to elicit their critique. Comparing my work to the other ethnographies, the old man said, “All the people write *about* us, about what *they* think we are, except one—the one that just writes us, exactly as we talk, and laugh, and gesture [with our hands], just as we are.” From his wry smile and a process of elimination, I deduced that the one that just wrote them was I. (37)

The tension between a Cliffordian embrace of the syncretic and what appears to be a more conservative strain of residual romanticism in Lavie’s work should be read in light of this old man’s endorsement as evidence of a rhetorical balancing act between competing cultural perspectives in a text that Lavie hopes will circulate in two quite different cultural contexts, among two quite different audiences. On the one hand, Lavie’s investment in processual models of identity locates her discourse within an academic/institutional context as a contribution to theoretical debates over the definition and meaning of culture. On the other hand, the ambivalent replication of “nomadic ideology” within her own discourse can be read as an attempt to represent the Mzeina “just as [they] are,” that is, just as they might represent themselves—a process which, as Lavie argues, is much less essentialist than it sounds. For the Mzeina “as [they] are” are

shown to be deeply engaged in strategic allegorizations of essentialist identity, and given that Lavie attempts to represent these self-exoticizing practices not only *for* but *with* and *to* the Mzeina themselves, her own subtle exoticizations and equivocations concerning the historical likelihood of an “authentic” Bedouin past could be read as strategic endorsements and even contributions to the Mzeinis’ project of self-representation. This binocular approach to the politics of representation inheres in what Lavie herself describes as the bifurcation of her narrative voice, which, during the composition of the text,

was gradually splitting into two antiphonal voices, speaking for two different parts of my Self. First was Smadar, the ordinary human woman, participating in the lived experience of the Mzeina. It was possible for Smadar to gradually merge herself into the tight-knit family and friendship networks of the Mzeinis.... Then there was the Western-trained anthropologist, observing the activities in the field as if from a distance and comparing them to other parts of her data and to other cultures she had read about in anthropological books and articles.... Sometimes in the text, Smadar and the anthropologist converse with each other. At times, the anthropologist instructs Smadar how to conduct herself and her research to optimize the rate of data return, but at other times, Smadar has to remind the anthropologist that there is much more to the “field” than fieldwork.

(38-39)

Despite its implication of a somewhat romantic competition between head and heart, this “splitting,” I would argue, is more than simply gestural; it instantiates a mode of binocular cultural representation that demands new, equally binocular modes of reading. This is a risky form of reading, to be sure. It courts the danger of revalorizing the very archive of primitivist representations of nomadism that it initially sought to critique. But, in the case of an ethnographic project as nuanced and sensitive to the problems of speaking for others and to the dangers and difficulties of self-assertion under colonial rule as Lavie’s, such a risk is not only worthwhile, but theoretically valid and philosophically

necessary. Questions of strategic essentialism, in other words, must enter not only into our consideration of indigenous cultural politics, but into our assessment of the politics of representation in at least some Western or non-indigenous texts as well if we are to do more than simply pay lip service to Said's crucial rejection of the reactionary representational principle of "the *necessary* privilege of an 'insider' perspective over an 'outsider' one." For although I have no wish to challenge the practical advantages such a hierarchy of voices often affords in achieving concrete political aims, the philosophical premise that epistemological value accrues only to the self-representations of cultural "insiders" merely inverts the primitivizing or Orientalizing gaze without deconstructing it and thus reconstitutes an essentialist and inflexible discourse of authenticity.



Among the twentieth century's vast archive of nomads and nomadisms, a project like Lavie's, which attempts a dialogic negotiation of this very difficult terrain of representation, is the exception rather than the rule. For as we have seen, nomadology does not merely employ, but invents its nomads, drawing upon anthropological theories and representations of nomadism in ethnographic and historical texts that are themselves deeply implicated in the act of constructing what Asad rightly calls a "theoretically unviable concept" (426). Ironically, many of these reinventions are placed in the service of avowedly or at least implicitly political projects, where the nomad provides an imaginative center from which the cultural critic laments personal or social ills, explores strategies for dissent, and dreams of utopian possibilities—attitudes and projects that are manifested variously as critical nostalgia in the form of a counter-factual idyll of transcendental homecoming, as a diagnostic political cartography, as a more

confrontational and apocalyptic vision of nomadic invasion, or, as is most usual, some combination of the three. Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri's recent, well-publicized endorsement of nomadic Deleuzo-Guattarian strategies and rhetoric in *Empire* (2000)—an analysis of globalization and a call to arms against what they term “imperial post-modernity”—points to the underlying logic of these primitivist narratives of opposition and dissent when it prophesies that “[a] new nomad horde, a new race of barbarians, will arise to invade or evacuate empire” (213). In an era of neo-imperialism, an identification with the fabled “power of the nomad horde” (213) can no doubt seem like an energizing political strategy, and this strategy pertains as much to the sentimental or nostalgic nomadologists who dream of a flight from the city gates as it does to the revolutionaries who seek to batter them down. Whether it takes the apologetic form of Chatwin's assertion that “Nomads rarely, if ever, destroyed a civilization” (“Nomadic” 89) or the militant form of Deleuze and Guattari's injunction to “destroy civilizations in the manner of the great migrants in whose wake nothing is left standing once they have passed through” (AO 85), the reappropriation and inversion of the morally-charged structure of barbarism is a fundamentally political gesture; as the transition of the nomadic metaphor from general to pure over the course of *Capitalism and Schizophrenia* to signal a shift from escape to invasion attests, these apparently divergent postures are really two sides of the same coin.

As I have sought to show, however, political allegories of this sort reinscribe primitivist and colonial figures in ways that are theoretically untenable and politically regressive because they do not escape the pitfalls of representation, despite the fact that

many of the works in which these allegories appear contain or imply refutations of primitivism, evolutionism, and colonial discourse. To the extent that they invent nomadic identities centered on mobility, freedom, and independence, invocations of both pure and general nomadism participate in an allochronic discourse of authenticity that problematically locates would-be “nomadic societies” in a mythic state of temporal remoteness from the present. As Clifford has warned, such representational practices entail a “withdrawal from any full response to an existing society” (“Ethnographic” 114), and this withdrawal in turn poses real political dangers for the society so-described because Western images of primitive “authenticity” construct a hierarchy of identities that threatens to delegitimize voices that do not immediately conform to the romantic stereotype. Gareth Griffiths argues, for instance, that “recent representations of indigenous peoples in popular discourse [in Australia], especially in the media, which stress claims to an ‘authentic’ voice,” effect a kind of “liberal violence” that “re-enact[s] its own oppressions on the subjects it purports to represent and defend” precisely because it “disavow[s] the possibilities for the hybridized subjects of the colonizing process to legitimate themselves or to speak in ways which menace the authority of the dominant culture precisely in so far as it ‘mimics’ and so subverts it” (70, 76). Lawrence’s growing disgust for the Bedouin who succumb to the “civilization disease” he brings to the East epitomizes the danger of this sort of imperialist nostalgia, a nostalgia that continues to haunt Chatwin’s metaphysical raptures about the Australian Songlines, and to trouble certain elements of Deleuze and Guattari’s Clastres-inspired imagining of nomads as “a society against the state.” To the extent that “Aboriginal political rhetoric [in Australia]

has come to be suspicious of the term 'nomad' applied to Aboriginal people...because in the land rights legislation it might seem to threaten claims to 'continuing traditional association'" (Michaels 43), discourses that reinforce notions of nomadic authenticity are inescapably problematic.

What distinguishes postmodern discourses of nomadism from more straightforward discourses of primitivism, however, is their partial inversion of the modernist paradigm that saw the primitive as frozen in mythic time and the modern as free to change and develop. In many cases, the conventional assignation of the pure nomad to an evolutionary position "between" primitive and modern, as well as the mythologized spatial mobility of both pure and general nomadism (which can be invoked to suggest circuits of encounter and exchange with settled cultures rather than strict autarky) underwrites a paradoxical form of primitivism whereby the nomad represents both authenticity and syncretism or flexibility simultaneously. In this unusual situation, the nomad is momentarily freed from his temporal prison, only to be immediately reappropriated by Western discourse. Rather than entering into a meaningful dialogue with his Western interlocutors, he is reified by the nomadologist into a symbol of primal or natural hybridity that then becomes a counter in larger philosophical debates from which "nomads" themselves (that is, the people or groups to whom the term is applied) are excluded or marginalized, debates which thereby reaffirm and perpetuate what Trouillot calls the savage slot at the very moment they seem to destroy it. Although my critique of this emergent and paradoxical form of "syncretic primitivism" has focused primarily on Asher's ambivalent disavowals in *The Last of the Bedu*, it is actually a

central feature of most postmodern nomadology. To the extent that they glorify the nomad as a techno-primitive who is literally and conceptually “on the move,” prone to perpetual transformations, unexpected conjunctions, and utopian becomings, Deleuze and Guattari, Bester, and Ondaatje all exploit a poetics of syncretic primitivism in the name of a postidentitarian politics of hybridity and flux. It is difficult to conceive of a better testament to the continued vigor and flexibility of the primitive as a signifier than the way in which these versions of syncretic nomadism are able to assimilate even the most progressive assaults on temporal distanciation. Moreover, since the discourse of nomadic syncretism is merely an inversion of the more traditional discourse of nomadic authenticity, it heralds correspondingly symmetrical political pitfalls for would-be “nomads.” Whereas classically primitivist discourses of nomadism threaten to delegitimize manifestly hybrid identities, nomadic discourses of primitive syncretism run the opposite risk of subverting tactical forms of essentialist identity politics that are as necessary to the sorts of economic and existential gains of groups like the Mzeina as disavowals of nomadic identity are to the success of Aboriginal land claims.

Nicholas Thomas’s riposte to recent repudiations of nativism and essentialism by both Clifford and Said identifies precisely the difficulty facing critiques of the politics of representation as it concerns nomadism at the present moment:

What both these critiques pass over is the extent to which humanism and essentialism have different meanings and effects in different contexts. Clifford writes as though the problem were merely intellectual: difference and hybridity are more appropriate analytically to the contemporary scene of global cultural transposition than claims about human sameness or bounded types. I would agree, but this does not bear upon the uses that essentialist discourses may have for people whose projects involve mobilization rather than analysis. (187-88)

Thus, although Dick Pels's caricature of nomadology as an academic "'field trip' to the Tropical Museum exposition on 'Nomads in Central Asia'" is essentially on target in its indictment of "theoretical tourism," it is important to bear in mind that ours is not the only gaze fixed upon simulated mock-ups of "weather-beaten shepherds herding flocks of skinny goats across the endless tundra" (64). As Asher recounts,

On the last evening of my stay I returned to find Dakhilallah and his wife glued once again to the TV. "Sit down! Sit down!" Dakhilallah said, without looking up. "This is about the Bedu!" In fact, it was a weekly soap in which ham actors dressed as Bedu made melodramatic speeches and came and went between very clean-looking tents on camels and horses.... My abiding memory of the "Last of the Nabataeans" will be of them sitting glued to a TV set watching a soap opera that presented a pale imitation of a life they had left only a decade before, but to which they would never return. (73)

Rather than reading this situation as an allegory of the loss of authentic nomadism, as Asher does, we would do better to follow Lavie's lead in seeing the engagement of "ex-nomads" with colonial discourse as a way of negotiating the complex realities of neo-imperialism and globalization. As such, it provides a necessary qualification to blanket critiques of primitivist stereotypes.

Of course, such a move towards the contextual interpretation of nomadic stereotypes and an emphasis on strategy over more detached intellectual analysis is not without pitfalls of its own. It is perhaps tempting to view the more flexible and strategic forms of nomadic discourse I have tried to discern embedded within what seem to be nomadology's most euphoric utopian expressions as an acceptable compromise, offering the best of both worlds. Deleuze and Guattari's migrant barbarians (and perhaps even their nomads), who move between smooth and striated spaces as it serves them, and the literary nomads of Bester and Ondaatje, who take up a position between political

cartography and utopian becoming, seem alike to embrace the practical and the strategic as principles guiding the production and deconstruction of identity. Surely in such representations, one might hope, we have the formula for a nomadology that would accurately reflect “true” nomadism—a formula that would satisfy the conditions of Miller’s challenge that “If we are to become nomadologists, we must not let ourselves think that our ‘immer[sion] in a changing state of things’ absolves us from ‘reflecting upon the world’” (33). I would argue, however, that even this temptation should be scrupulously resisted, in favor of declining the invitation to be nomadologists of any sort at all. Such a refusal need not preclude local, specific, dialogic explorations of “nomadism” like Lavie’s, insofar as nomadism is understood to be a practice or an identity that is strategic rather than essentialized. But in our own theorizing, at least, invocations of nomads will always remain problematic because the shift towards the abstraction of such overdetermined anthropological figures does not avoid the problem of representation simply because the nomadologist reassures us of its conceptual benignity. If Braidotti is correct in asserting “the empowering force of...political fictions” (*Nomadic* 3), then we should at least be careful that our political fictions do not reproduce what they are designed to subvert. As Kaplan rightly argues, it is not a matter of “dismissing or rejecting poststructuralist critical practices out of hand,” but of “arguing for versions of poststructuralism”—and, I would add, postcolonialism—“that destabilize colonial discourses as overtly as they deconstruct logocentrism” (24). Our challenge is neatly figured in Constantine Cavafy’s poem, “Waiting for the Barbarians,” which I would propose as a kind of counter-myth to nomadology. After a day of preparations and

excitement, the citizens of Cavafy's nameless city face "sudden bewilderment" and "confusion" (30):

...night has fallen and the barbarians haven't come.
And some of our men just in from the border say
there are no barbarians any longer.

Now what's going to happen to us without barbarians?
Those people were a kind of solution. (31-35)

As theorists this is also our dilemma, or it should be. For the translation of nomadism into the moral structure of barbarism in the articulation of critical concepts and oppositional theories can only reproduce primitivism and perpetuate the savage slot. Like the bewildered citizens of Cavafy's poem, our task is to learn to live without barbarians, to discover new solutions.

Endnotes

Introduction

¹ Without denying the very real destruction of ways of life, moreover, Rosaldo points out that pronouncements lamenting the demise of “traditional” or “primitive” oases of authenticity are prone to exaggeration and, in any case, perform the more serious theoretical mystification of reifying “culture” as a static entity with a definable shape whose borders define membership and posit a scale upon which pure and corrupt identities may be legislated. Current theories of culture in the humanities and social sciences have moved sharply away from models of this type, emphasizing instead the transactional, processual, inherently hybridized nature of social being.

² Victor Li, for instance, has suggested that “the triumph Jameson claims for multinational capitalism is premature” and that Jameson risks “reifying capital in his constant reiteration of its universal triumph” (“Naming” 136, 135).

³ As the ensuing argument should make clear, I am not suggesting that postmodernism’s “simulated” savages are degraded copies of some authentic primitive. On the contrary, “the primitive” has always been a simulated category of thought. For this reason, I do not place the primitive in quotation marks. This practice follows a similar usage in Torgovnick (20) and Li (“Premodern” 105).

⁴ Clifford and Hall are joined, in Pels’s roundup of “nomadic narcissists” and “privileged nomads,” by Iain Chambers, Henry Louis Gates Jr., Paul Gilroy, Donna Haraway, Julia Kristeva, Dean MacCannell, Chantal Mouffe, Edward Said, Gayatri Spivak, and Robert Young—to name only a few of this distinguished and diverse company of “postmodern” *flâneurs* over whom the watchful spirit of Deleuze himself presides. For it is Deleuze’s “model of nomadic subjectivity,” Pels suggests, that “precisely legitimizes this metaphoric shift from the ‘real’ or literal to the ‘imagined’ and self-stylized condition of migrancy, and inspires a romanticized image of nomadic life which is much better suited to the flight of ideas (of fancy?) than the flight from economic hardship or oppression” (65).

⁵ In addition to adroitly figuring the mirror-stage of Pels’s “nomadic narcissism,” this mawkish primal scene allegorizes the “endless tundra” of contemporary cultural studies which, in Pels’s estimation, has become an interdisciplinary wasteland, devoid of landmarks. This, I suppose, would make the “flocks of skinny goats” herded by the shepherds of postmodern nomadology graduate students.

Chapter One

¹ For a detailed survey of both postmodern and postcolonial nomadologists see Kaplan (63-100) and Pels.

² In this sense, “sociocultural evolutionism was not a simple transposition of biological thinking to the social realm” even if it was “deeply implicated in the Darwinian revolution” (Stocking, *Victorian* 150).

³ Fabian contends that “Protoanthropologists of the Renaissance and Enlightenment *philosophes* often accepted the simultaneity or temporal coexistence of savagery and civilization because they were convinced of the cultural, merely conventional nature of the differences they perceived; evolutionary anthropologists made difference ‘natural,’ the inevitable outcome of the operation of natural laws. What was left, after primitive societies had been assigned their slots in evolutionary schemes, was the abstract, merely physical simultaneity of natural law” (147).

⁴ See Stocking 106-7.

⁵ Tylor’s vision of a female Civilization complicates McClintock’s claim that, although gendered, “the family image is an image of disavowal, for it contains only men, arranged as a linear frieze of solo males ascending toward the apogee of the individual *Homo sapiens*” thus “represent[ing] evolutionary time as a *time without women*” (39). If McClintock is generally correct that “from the outset, the idea of racial progress was gendered but in such a way as to render women invisible as historical agents,” then Tylor’s heroine figures an intriguing return of the repressed.

⁶ As in Tylor’s allegory, moreover, the author gives away the spuriousness of his empirical claims by his aesthetic embellishments; he admits that “the gibbon is represented at twice the scale of the others” (Stocking, *Victorian* 144).

⁷ The term was coined by Marvin Harris in *The Rise of Anthropological Theory*.

⁸ In their study of *Pastoralists at the Periphery* (1994), Harold Koster and Claudia Chang have recently concurred with the necessity of dissolving the category of pure nomadism on the grounds that, “The only way pastoralism can be analytically investigated in relation to the growth of industrial capitalism is by leaving behind the trappings of a nomadic model and accepting a model of pastoralism that does not posit a pristine or pure form” (12). “As long as the romantic stereotype of the isolated nomad is perpetuated,” they maintain, the view of pastoralists as “marginal people...still among the exotic and ‘irrelevant’ foragers, herders, and fishers far from the centers of important activity in the modern world...will maintain currency” (2).

⁹ In terms of conceptual longevity, the nomad is perhaps most similar to the cannibal—a figure whose “reality” continues to be the subject of intense debate. (See Arens and Obeyesekere.)

¹⁰ On the emic/etic distinction, see Harris 568-604. As defined by their originator, Kenneth Pike, they indicate the difference between internal and external cultural categories in the interpretation of meanings (Harris 570-71).

¹¹ This observation appears in a general-interest article on nomadism intended for a popular audience that Dyson-Hudson wrote for *National Geographic*, so its casualness can hardly be faulted as weak scholarship. It is curious, however, that this is one of the very few mentions of the genealogical basis of “nomadism” in the categories of evolutionary anthropology.

¹² Technically, Sir John Dalrymple and Lord Kames were the first to publish on four stages theory in 1757 and 1758 respectively, but their work, Meek argues, is derivative. George Stocking accepts Meek’s identification of Turgot and Smith as independent originators of four stages theory, though the claim rests upon conjecture about the nature of lectures that no longer exist. See Meek 68-76, 99, 106-16, 126 and Stocking 14.

¹³ The most baroque variant of this is surely the monumental ten-stages theory propounded in Condorcet’s *Sketch for a Historical Picture of the Progress of the Human Mind* (1795), of which Meek declares, “*C’est magnifique* – but it stands well outside the broad tradition of the eighteenth-century four stages theory” (208), because it quickly abandons the latter’s explicitly materialist premise.

¹⁴ Among these factors, Montesquieu cites “the nature and the principle of the government,” “the climate,” “the properties of the terrain,” “the degree of liberty that the constitution can sustain,” “the religion of the inhabitants, their inclinations, their wealth, their number, their commerce, their mores and their manners” (Montesquieu 8-9). Meek acknowledges that “Montesquieu’s sustained use, in [Chapter XVIII], of the notion that differences in manners and social institutions are related to differences in the mode of subsistence has no parallel in any of the earlier literature [leading up to the four stages theory], and there would seem to be little doubt that this part of *The Spirit of the Laws* was of considerable importance in the subsequent development of the four stages theory.” However, he continues, such anticipations must be seen in the context of the work as a whole, in which “Montesquieu was concerned to investigate the relation between the ‘laws’ and a whole number of different aspects of the condition of society—of which the mode of subsistence was only one, and in his opinion by no means the most important one” (34).

¹⁵ The priority accorded to mode of subsistence by four stages theorists was in some ways anticipated by several earlier Enlightenment “streams of thought”: Hugo Grotius’s, Samuel Pufendorf’s, and John Locke’s speculations on the origins and development of

private property; Jacques Bénigne Bossuet's providential theory of history; and the battle of the Ancients and the Moderns, particularly as it played out in some obscure writings on horticulture by Sir William Temple and in that early foray into comparative religion, Fontenelle's *The Origin of Fables* (Meek 14-26).

¹⁶ Although framed as a search for general laws from an analysis of specific cases, stadial theory was fundamentally animated by an analysis of contemporary political economy that had already made the law of progress its underlying general principle. Meek is reluctant to reduce the four stages theory to "a wicked capitalist plot" (130), but he concedes that "men like Turgot and Smith were apt to ascribe the superiority of contemporary European society (in so far as they did in fact recognize its superiority) to the existence of certain important socio-economic institutions and phenomena which then as now were often coming under attack—notably inequality, property rights, and the accumulation of capital. In order to demonstrate the inherent utility of these things, what better than to make the developmental process start with an American-type society in which none of them existed, and in which the people (it could be said) *therefore* lived at a very low material and cultural level? One could then very effectively correlate the gradual process of society towards 'perfection' with the gradual emergence and growth of the institutions and phenomena in question" (129). Rather than being the result of logical extrapolation from simplicity to complexity guided by hints from classical authorities, in other words, the sequence of socio-economic "modes of subsistence" imagined by the stadial theorists is better understood as the naturalized, mythic expression of a constellation of related speculative narratives concerning the very elements of commercial society it seeks to justify—the most important of which was the rise of private property.

¹⁷ The importance of private property in determining the sequence of the four stages theory is evident, for instance, in Adam Smith's *Lectures on Jurisprudence* (1762-63). On the correlation of material and moral advance, see Fania Oz-Salzberger.

¹⁸ Cornelius de Pauw's idiosyncratic *Recherches Philosophiques sur les Américains* (1768-69) presents a similar, though even more revealing version of this hierarchy of nomadisms. "The nomads," he claims (a group comprised of "pastoral peoples or shepherds" such as "[t]he Tartars, the Arabs, the Moors, and the Lapps"), "differ from [cultivators] in that they are obliged to go in search of pasture-land and to accompany their flocks and herds," whereas hunters "are the most savage of all: wandering, and unsure of what is in store for them from one day to the next" (qtd. in Meek 146-47).

¹⁹ As Hayden White has argued, narrative history is a fundamentally fictional genre, regardless of its representational claims and its reference to "actual" events. Not only is the narrative historian's selection and "emplotment" of events to constitute the beginning, middle, and end of his narrative founded upon prior imaginative choices relating to the fictional mode in which he envisions the unfolding of his history (romance, comedy, tragedy, or irony), but what counts as an event has also been determined by a prior

creative act. Thus, the figurative language and literary topoi of historical discourse assume a much greater importance than they may at first seem to merit. Because he deals primarily with a field of nineteenth century historiography which had repudiated the previous century's more overtly speculative tradition of philosophical history, White's investigation into the literariness of historical narrative is mainly concerned with questions of form, structure, and tone—considerations which are entirely appropriate to a mode of historiography which consciously eschewed outright invention for the representation of actual events. When applied to the conjectural histories of the preceding century, which were obviously less constrained by the mimetic demand of representing specific historical "events," the potential for purely "poetic" choices to shape historical narratives according to pre-determined literary patterns becomes even richer. Indeed, because "conjectural" history is by its very nature inventive, the events it narrates can, to a large degree, be tailor-made for its emplotment of history in what White refers to as the Romantic mode.

²⁰ The eighteenth-century poetics of progress are a good deal more complex than I am able to explore here. One of the most superb examples of this complexity is Ferguson's *An Essay on the History of Civil Society* (1767) whose rhetoric illustrates the ways in which conventional four stages theory forms an allegory of progress, even as it questions the notion of historical progress and the optimistic conclusion of contemporary stadial theorists like Smith and Turgot by introducing an alternative, more cyclical metaphor of "progress": the development and eventual decline of the individual from birth to death.

²¹ I deal with the Victorian transformation of the four-stages theory as it relates to the category of nomadism in Chapter 3, focusing particularly on Frederick Engels's interpretation of work by American anthropologist Charles Morgan.

²² Khazanov calls it "tripartite theory," but cites all the usual suspects: in antiquity, Dicaearchus and Varro; in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Montesquieu, Herder, Condorcet, Mortillet, Lubbock, Morgan and Engels (85).

²³ Because he is interested only in "sedentary animal husbandry in primitive and traditional societies," modern dairy farmers, for example, do not figure in this section of the typology. It is precisely this kind of absence that causes Koster and Chang, whose primary interest is pastoralism, to call for the dissolution of the category of pure nomadism.

²⁴ Compare, for example, A.L. Kroeber's 1947 account of "Culture Groupings in Asia." Khazanov criticizes Kroeber's account on the grounds that its conception of an Asian "pastoral belt" is "inadequate" (40). But Khazanov is only criticizing the scope, not the spirit of that earlier typology. As he insists, "the existence of different types of nomadism, the representatives of each type of which are closer as a whole to one another than to representatives of other types, is an objective fact" (40).

²⁵ Khazanov admits that “in the majority of the regions in which nomadism is widespread it is not completely homogeneous”; “In no way do the nomads within these regions constitute identical groups”; “owing to specific local adaptation, historical factors and a number of other reasons, some nomads are more similar to the nomads of other regions than they are to their own immediate neighbours”; “Between these regions in which nomadism is widespread there are intermediate and marginal areas, and it is difficult to classify the pastoral nomadism of these areas into any one of the main types”; “each of the main types of nomadism can in turn be subdivided almost *ad infinitum* into sub-types, forms and subvarieties, etc.”; “Nevertheless...” (40).

²⁶ For example: “The forms of pastoralism which have been examined are also different methods of economic adaptation which, in the final analysis have been determined by the sum total of very diverse factors. At the same time it is important to bear in mind that in specifically functioning societies these forms are not absolutely static; on the contrary, they merely point to the parameters of a changeable economy which is capable of transformation, they can succeed each other on the same territory and this does not always happen in identical sequence” (25).

²⁷ Toynbee’s analysis of nomadism as a “*tour de force*” of ecological adaptation is a foil for his main interest—a study of how “primary” (or “unrelated”) Civilizations arise as the result of a challenge to the “primitive cake of custom.” For this model of historical change, Toynbee draws directly on an allegorical reading of Judeo-Christian myth in which Adam and Eve in Eden represent “primitive man in the food-gathering stage of economy, after he had established his ascendancy over the rest of the flora and fauna of the Earth,” the Fall “symbolizes the acceptance of a challenge to abandon this achieved integration and to venture upon a fresh differentiation out of which a fresh integration may—or may not—arise,” and “the sexual intercourse between Adam and Eve, which follows, is an act of social creation...[that] bears fruit in the birth of two sons who impersonate two nascent civilizations: Abel the keeper of sheep and Cain the tiller of the ground” (1.87). This Fall, in Toynbee’s ecumenical scheme, is, in the long run, unquestionably fortunate, since the cycling of “the successive rises and falls of the primary and the secondary civilizations” is to him not a meaningless repetition, but the progressive movement of “the wheel of civilization” which carries “the chariot of Religion forward and upward” (Toynbee qtd. in Winetrou 33). But as the fatal outcome of Abel’s example suggests, not all challenges will be happily met and a civilization may be “immobilized” if it is a response to a challenge “of an order of severity on the borderline between the degree that affords stimulus to further development and the degree that entails defeat” (1.198). In this unusual case, the result is a *tour de force* in which the extraordinary challenge is met—spectacularly—but future development is permanently forestalled by the insurmountable restrictions imposed by involution. The Nomad’s mastery of the steppe is, for Toynbee, a quintessential example of this impressive but socially stagnating *tour de force* that results in a paradoxical loss of agency as the nomad discovers that “[t]he formidable environment which he has succeeded in conquering has insidiously enslaved him” as he and his kinsmen “become

the prisoners of an annual climatic and vegetational cycle” (1.202), while even their most spectacular irruptions into the histories of sedentary societies are robbed of “deliberate intention” (1.203). The nomad’s interactions with the outside world, in Toynbee’s estimation, are utterly determined by two external forces, “one force which pushes and another force which pulls”: “He is sometimes pushed off the Steppe by an increase of desiccation which puts his former habitat beyond even his powers of endurance; and again he is occasionally pulled out of the Steppe by the suction of a social vacuum which has arisen in the domain of some adjacent sedentary society through the operation of historic processes such as the breakdown of a sedentary civilization and the consequent *Völkerwanderung*—causes which are quite extraneous to the nomad’s own experiences” (1.203). In response to such determinism, Khazanov can only follow Lattimore, whose *Inner Asian Frontiers of China* provided an early criticism of Toynbee’s conceptualization of “the natural environment [as] a kind of impersonal machine, grinding out the destinies of peoples who live within a certain range of aridity of climate” (Lattimore xlii).

²⁸ As David Womersley and J. G. A. Pocock have pointed out, despite occasional lapses into primitivist clichés, Gibbon’s philosophical history goes to extraordinary rhetorical lengths to distance its presentation of barbarism not only from the Scythian and Gothic cults of noble savagery, but even from the considerably more subtle implication of barbaric accomplishments to be found in the contemporaneous representations of stadial theory. Womersley notes, for instance, that “although Gibbon used the language of stadial theory...he was nevertheless resistant to the tendency of that theory to construct a path of easy gradient between barbarism and civil society” because he “found the interval between them both wider and deeper than this would allow” (xxxix). Gibbon’s refusal “to subscribe to the fashionable admiration of barbarism” (xlix), he continues, can be traced in the *Decline*’s “critical revision of that theory into a binary, rather than a four-stage, form” (xlviii-xlix) whereby the putative advances of the shepherd stage were merely collapsed back into a generalized discourse of savagery in which “the barbaric was the primitive opposite of the civilized” (li).

²⁹ The “rudimentary higher religions” of primary civilizations did not produce significant “chrysalis-churches,” according to Toynbee (2.160).

³⁰ Gibbon’s primitivism is extremely ambiguous—an ambiguity which reflects his complex engagement with both primitivist and anti-primitivist ideas in eighteenth-century discourse, particularly as they were embodied in the primitivist literature of Gothic theory and the anti-primitivist literature of the four stages theory, each of which he addresses in the *Decline*. See J. G. A. Pocock, “Gibbon and the Shepherds: The Stages of Society in the *Decline and Fall*” and Karen O’Brien, *Narratives of Enlightenment* (167-201).

³¹ It is in this connection that Toynbee's example is offered alongside that of "Lattimore's brilliant book," *Inner Asian Frontiers of China*, whose daring synthesis of "synchronic research and...historical materials...in every respect...stands out on its own" (11).

³² Despite the progressivism of Toynbee's historiography, his deep reservations about modern technology occasionally prompt sentimental eulogies for the primitive of this sort.

³³ Rosaldo's reading of Pritchard and Le Roy Ladurie emphasizes their production of ethnographic authority. The evident artificiality of such rhetoric of "the displaced modern pastoral" (96) thus amounts, Rosaldo suggests, to a return of the repressed: "the narrators can enjoy relations suffused with tender courtesy that appears to transcend inequality and domination," but, "through a literary metamorphosis, the figures of domination reappear...as 'natives' in shepherds' clothing" (97). Insofar as Khazanov's study represents a modern version of armchair anthropology, it is less concerned with disguising power-relations in the field, and his motives seem more purely primitivist (for what it's worth!).

³⁴ Ingold distinguishes between social relations of "tenure" and material relations of "territoriality" (165).

³⁵ The table of contents lists an alternate, foreshortened version of this title: "Nomadic Peoples Find Freedom and Identity in the Life They Follow." The table of contents emphasizes the essay's role as a general introduction to the volume, not only because of its placement but because it is the only essay whose title is not explicitly designated as a case study.

³⁶ Cf. Dyson-Hudson: "We should not really be surprised to find so many forms of nomadic life" (16).

³⁷ There is a contradiction in the reference to "neo-barbarism" that discloses a fundamental tension in Chatwin's work caused by the historic moral ambiguity of pastoral barbarians which threatens to disrupt Chatwin's primitivism. I address this point in the next section.

³⁸ Meek, as we have seen, emphasizes the contrast between agriculture and commerce that would clearly have been visible in the 1750s and 60s in the European countryside (127-28), but the contrast between agriculture and still "earlier" modes of subsistence would have been just as great if not greater, thus drawing agriculture, which was still manifestly part of contemporary life, however tenuously, into a broader contrast between modern and primitive economic forms. When approaching the question of the relative temporal distancing between modes of subsistence, it is necessary to consider not only the distance between one mode and another, but the relative distance between agglomerated modes and their antecedents.

³⁹ One could argue, in fact, that the (nomadic) pastoralist and the (sedentary) farmer occupy this middle-position jointly, particularly since Williams's analysis of the associations of the country is undertaken not simply under the rubric of the literary georgic, which praises and gives instruction in the activities of country life, but under the broader category of the "pastoral," which, as he points out, etymologically as well as historically is inseparable from the figure of the shepherd. Addressing "the confusion which surrounds the whole question of 'pastoral,'" Williams points out that, since Hesiod, writing about the country has concerned not merely "settled agriculture" but "an epic of husbandry, in the widest sense": the tenth Idyll of Theocritus has a background of sowing and harvesting, but this is an exception; the normal work is the herding of goats, sheep and cattle" (24, 25). Williams is making a point about the foundational artificiality of the pastoral as a genre—by the time of Theocritus (third century BCE), "the working year of Hesiod [ninth century BCE], ploughing, tending vineyards, keeping pigs and sheep and goats" has been "significantly altered" and idealized (25)—but the particular form the idealization takes in Theocritus also reveals the centrality of the shepherd to literary constructions of "the country." The overlapping of pastoralism and agriculture in literary representations of each is most evident in their common, mutual association with "feudal" values. The nostalgia for a kind of benevolent feudal paternalism and the idealization of the feudal citizen-warrior are recurrent features of both agricultural and pastoral representations throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, particularly in the discourse of Gothic theory and the revived Gothicism of Victorian paternalism (to say nothing of their combination in Soviet anthropology's hypothesis of "feudal nomadism"). Even so, the particular ways in which feudal values are embodied in the farmer and the nomad reflect their relative states of civility on the scale of progress. I explore this interrelation of pastoral nomadism and agriculture on the basis of feudal values as it is embodied in representations of Bedouinism in Chapter 2.

⁴⁰ We have already had occasion to remark that the cycles of Toynbee's *Study* are cumulative and progressive rather than merely circular (Winetroun 33); the same applies to the cycle suggested by the title of Gibbon's *Rise and Fall*. As Pocock argues, Gibbon's thesis, that "the secret of Roman decline lay not in luxury—the classical moral explanation—but in despotism," meant that this decline "cannot recur in Europe, which is a republic of independent states and not a unified empire" ("Gibbon" 196). This certainty of progress, despite the cyclical theme, owed directly to Gibbon's faith in the "bourgeois ideology" (195) which, in the eighteenth century, was replacing "the antique (and Machiavellian) concept of civic virtue" (196). That the "progress" marked by these cycles has a religious or a civic referent is obviously less important to the temporal anatomy of barbarism than the simple fact that they do, ultimately, progress.

¹ Her reading of *Heart of Darkness*, for instance, also emphasizes the dark vein of Romanticism running through Conrad's portrayal of Kurtz—a point to which I will return.

² The nod to Fredric Jameson in this footnote is somewhat obfuscating, since his periodization of postmodernism as the “cultural dominant” of a new “multinational” phase in the development of capital plays no part in the subsequent discussion of “postmodernism,” and Torgovnick is clearly not interested in the type of periodization I am proposing here.

³ For a related critique of Torgovnick's tendency to reinvent the primitive, see Perloff 352.

⁴ It is necessary to proceed with caution when speculating on the sources of Lawrence's intense psychological discomfort—with his own identity, with his relations with others, and with the “modern” world—despite (or because of) the sheer volume of Lawrence's self-examinations, to say nothing of the speculations of more than fifty biographers. As Tidrick puts it, “Lawrence is a rich seam to mine for anyone who is interested in the way we exist in other people's minds, but this means that any final assessment of him is probably impossible” (171-72). Nonetheless, on the subject of transcendental homelessness, some elements of Lawrence's biography are too suggestive to pass over. On the discovery of his illegitimacy, for instance, Lawrence writes,

One of the real reasons (there are three or four) why I am in the service is so that I may live by myself. She [Lawrence's mother, Sarah Junner] has given me a terror of families and inquisitions. And yet you'll understand she is my mother, and an extraordinary person. Knowledge of her will prevent my ever making any woman a mother, and the cause of children. I think she suspects this: but she does not know that the inner conflict, which makes me a standing civil war, is the inevitable issue of the discordant natures of herself and my father, and the inflammation of strength and weakness which followed the uprooting of their lives and principles. They should not have borne children. (qtd. in Mack 27-28)

In his prize-winning biography of Lawrence, John E. Mack suggests that the deracination implied by “the discrepancy between his parents' avowed Christian values and their position as pillars of the church in Oxford society and the actualities of their unmarried state” recounted here “was the most disturbing aspect of the illegitimacy for Lawrence and had the greatest influence on his later development” (28). Whether or not this aspect of Lawrence's illegitimacy, or even whether the illegitimacy itself, was the greatest source of Lawrence's particular existential homelessness is difficult to say, but it is difficult to dismiss out of hand, particularly since, in *Seven Pillars*, Lawrence would so frequently lament his loss of religious belief. More important for recent critics has been Lawrence's homosexuality, which I discuss below.

⁵ O'Donnell has also noticed that “The occasional gardens and oases Lawrence encounters are perceived as forces of corruption, and he is always relieved to ride out into

the desert beyond them. Value is not in the fecundity of the oasis but in the sterility of the desert" (99).

⁶ Silverman regards Lawrence's rape as the moment of "desublimation" which makes it impossible to sustain his previous idealizations of the Bedouin.

⁷ As O'Donnell points out, Lawrence's materialism—his belief that "the mental and physical were inseparably one: that our bodies, the universe, our thoughts and tactilities were conceived in and of the molecular sludge of matter (*Seven* 477)—paradoxically renders the difference between "nothing" and "everything" immaterial (93).

⁸ "By 1810," Tidrick reports, the convention had become so entrenched that "most narratives of travel in the Levant," even ones consisting mainly of very negative reports, "contained a set piece on the Bedouin in which they were described as independent, faithful and hospitable," a circumstance which implies that "the traveler who wished to produce a saleable narrative for a public familiar with Gibbon had to include such a piece" (22).

⁹ As Alice Chandler has shown, the medieval revival in both the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was fundamentally a form of nostalgia that looked to the immediate English past for images of a social order that would address contemporary feelings of a "lost sense of closeness in society and at home" (3). As such, it was a "structure of feeling" that lent itself to appropriation by other discourses expressive of "transcendental homelessness," though, as we shall see, it was by no means identical with all forms of primitivism. For a superb account of the medieval revival, see Chandler's *A Dream of Order: The Medieval Ideal in Nineteenth-Century English Literature*. For a more detailed account of the relation between neo-medievalism and the literature of Arabian travel, as well as Lawrence's debt to both, see M. D. Allen, *The Medievalism of Lawrence of Arabia*.

¹⁰ Not surprisingly, *T. E. Lawrence* also contains a barely qualified refutation of the charges of "imperialism." Said's critique of Lawrence in *Orientalism* merits one grudging mention in the body of the work—"the straw-man Western racist that Edward Said posits" (109)—and unceremonial burial in two footnotes (142).

¹¹ Nietzsche's psycho-historical cultural criticism is part of what Jeffrey Perl has called "the tradition of return" in modern literature. In general, this tradition is rooted in the nineteenth-century philosophies of history of Burkhardt and Walter Pater and views Europe as the protagonist in a three-stage Homeric odyssey of youth, wandering, and return. Modeled on the Renaissance, the paradigm of classical rebirth whose promise remained as yet unfulfilled, these "ideologies of return" anticipated the immanent rebirth of the classical ideal.

¹² Hobbes's and Rousseau's diametrically opposed theories of the origins of civil society (rationalist and romantic respectively) implied very different views of human nature. Rousseau's idyllic account of "natural man" as innocent, sociable, and morally good is actually more textured (and convoluted) than is often acknowledged, but in general it was considerably closer to the convention of the noble savage than Hobbes's account of primeval man as "existing in a condition of war, where all men are enemies." In Hobbes's view "[g]overnment is based on the resignation of the individual, through fear of his fellow man, of the dangerous independence which he possessed in the primitive state"—a theory that "obviously leaves no room for images of a Noble Savage" (Fairchild 25).

¹³ Lawrence predictably contrasts these "dark" African "animalities" with Islam's "Semitic character" in Arabia, where it "express[es] the monotheism of open spaces" (365).

¹⁴ Tabachnick invites us to "Compare Marlow's statement on the tribesmen in Africa: 'It was unearthly and the men were...No, they were not inhuman...that was the worst of it—this suspicion of their not being inhuman'" (88; Tabachnick's ellipses), and then glosses this passage with a reading by Alan Sandison who claims that "confrontation with the primitive" leads to a cataclysmic psychic situation in which "the whole basis of identity is undermined" (89). The point is, however, that whatever "threat" Marlow (or Lawrence, for that matter) experiences from this recognition may just as likely prompt a reactionary retrenchment of racist categories, as Chinua Achebe, and more recently Patrick Brantlinger, have shown. Once restored, Tabachnick's oclusions of the origin passage make it difficult to regard Marlow as a cultural relativist in any meaningful sense of the term: "The earth seemed unearthly. We are accustomed to look upon the shackled form of a conquered monster, but there—there you could look at a thing monstrous and free. It was unearthly, and the men were—No, they were not inhuman. Well, you know, that was the worst of it—this suspicion of their not being inhuman. It would come slowly to one. They howled and leaped, and spun, and made horrid faces; but what thrilled you was just the thought of their humanity—like yours—the thought of your remote kinship with this wild and passionate uproar. Ugly." (32)

¹⁵ On Lawrence's lifelong interest in Homeric epic, culminating in his translation of *The Odyssey* in 1931, and its relation to Lawrence's Arab portraits, see James Notopoulos.

¹⁶ In any case, as I explain below, Lawrence's conception of modern "decadence" was sufficiently different from Nietzsche's anti-Christian polemic that he was free to make religious asceticism emblematic of self-overcoming in a way that Nietzsche himself would have found unthinkable.

¹⁷ As Foster points out, moreover, Nietzsche's "pictures of renewed humanity" might be interpreted as "projections of a personal longing for recovery" by a man who had

“suffered from chronic diseases with phases of remission that could be perceived as returns to relative health” (113).

¹⁸ The word “older” in this quotation is rather ambiguous, for it seems to confirm Said’s assertion that “Paradoxically, the Arab seems to Lawrence to have exhausted himself in his very temporal persistence. The Enormous age of Arab civilization has...served to refine the Arab down to his quintessential attributes and to tire him out morally in the process. We are left with [Gertrude] Bell’s Arab: centuries of experience and no wisdom” (230). As I have been arguing, however, this is a complex form of “primitive simplicity” (Said 230), which does not correspond perfectly with the notion of the primitive as it is articulated elsewhere in *Seven Pillars*. Here, Lawrence seems rather to make “older” indicate not historical priority, but maturity, since it is contrasted directly with the more “primitive” English.

¹⁹ The status of Lawrence’s cultural observations in relation to biologicistic notions of “race” is ambiguous and thus, controversial.

²⁰ Lawrence’s increasing disenchantment with the Bedouin is one of the central aporias of *Seven Pillars*. As Tabachnick correctly points out, Lawrence leaves the introspective and the action-oriented levels of the book in a sort of broken juxtaposition, so that the attribution of motives (particularly in this instance) is a matter for speculation. Since Tabachnick makes little conceptual distinction between the Bedouin in their idealized state and in their degraded state, he evidently sees Lawrence’s disgust as a recognition of his own brutishness. Allen has suggested that the disenchantment may simply be the result of the disjunction between real and romanticized Bedouin, a disjunction which led Lawrence to retreat to the pure and reliable fantasy of Malory. I incline towards O’Donnell’s view that the shift reflects what Lawrence perceives as a real slide into savagery, brought on by his own contagious presence—“imperial nostalgia” in the sense that Renato Rosaldo defines it. It is also possible to see the shift in Lawrence’s attitude as a purely rhetorical device signaling his growing disenchantment with the medieval heroic ideal the Bedouin represent—in other words, as pure allegory.

²¹ This shepherd in some ways resembles Nietzsche’s description of the satyr in *The Birth of Tragedy* who, “like the idyllic shepherd of more recent times, is the offspring of a longing for the primitive and the natural” but is the very opposite of “the flattering image of a sentimental, flute-playing, tender shepherd”: “On the contrary, the satyr was the archetype of man, the embodiment of his highest and most intense emotions, the ecstatic reveler enraptured by the proximity of his god, the sympathetic companion in whom the suffering god is repeated, one who proclaims wisdom from the very heart of nature, a symbol of the sexual omnipotence of nature which the Greeks used to contemplate with reverent wonder” (61).

²² On the importance of the Cain and Abel myth in Chatwin’s work, see Meanor 31.

²³ Harvey also defines modernism as “a troubled and fluctuating aesthetic response to the conditions of modernity produced by a particular process of modernization” (99).

²⁴ “Thinking builds upon the house of Being, the house in which the jointure of Being fatefully enjoins the essence of man to dwell in the truth of Being. This dwelling is the essence of ‘being-in-the-world.’ The reference in *Being and Time* to ‘being-in’ as ‘dwelling’ is no etymological game....The talk about the house of Being is no transfer of the image “house” to Being” (259-60)

²⁵ On Conrad’s imbrication in “fin de siècle” anxieties about civilization which lead to a certain ambivalent Nietzschean appreciation of the primitive in *Heart of Darkness* see Ian Watt (161-68), K. K. Ruthven, and Torgovnick (145-54). Torgovnick in particular sees Conrad’s fascination with headlessness and decapitation in his portrayal of Kurtz’s atavism as anticipations of Bataille’s headless Homme Acéphale who represents “the primitive as brutish, yet potentially sacred” (150).

²⁶ Clifford goes on to question the value of the hotel as postmodern chronotope, both because it seems too nostalgic for a “golden age” of modernist travel and because it ignores complexities of “race, class, and sociocultural ‘location’” (31-33). He suggests that this problem applies even to Meaghan Morris’s suggestion that the motel—as a “relay or node” connected to a highway with no pretensions of hominess such a lobby—would make a better postmodern chronotope (33). Chatwin’s disenchantment with hotels as symbols of materialism in some ways anticipates Clifford’s critique.

²⁷ There is no question that Chatwin offsets the most sinister aspects of his Aunts’ house with gratitude for their role in helping him recognize and negotiate his own nomadic identity. His Aunt Ruth especially points him towards books which fuel his later obsessions and which solidify Chatwin’s identity. Yet, even Ruth’s role in providing him with the book on Australia and a poetry anthology, *The Open Road*, requires some qualification in light of Chatwin’s later lament about “the absurdity of trying to write a book on Nomads” (178). Chatwin’s access to “nomadism” at this point in his life is, in other words, still somewhat constrained.

²⁸ Chatwin is in fact citing the beliefs of a Chinese schoolmaster who happens to be an ex-musicologist, but Chatwin clearly endorses his views. Despite the ubiquity of quotations in Chatwin’s pastiche, there is little sense of a dialogic encounter with other points of view in *The Songlines*. The Chinese musicologist, like most of Chatwin’s other authorities ventriloquizes Chatwin’s own theories. As Salman Rushdie says of Chatwin’s claim that he was the model for Arkady, “Bruce...is both sides of the dialogue” (233).

²⁹ Chatwin goes on to assert that linguistic difference is a feature of geographic difference and “the distribution of the human species over the land,” so that “the basis for a universal language can never have existed” (269). Australia’s two hundred languages thus form the basis of a competing myth of linguistic diversity that ultimately supplants “the myth of Babel” in *The Songlines*.

³⁰ Colville's arresting painting may be read as a romantic and somewhat nostalgic meditation on the passing of the steam locomotive, rather than an assertion of the inevitability of the train's superiority over the horse. Whereas the frontispiece to Marvin's book links the train to a narrative of progress, in other words, Colville mourns its demise. In doing so, however, he nonetheless relies heavily on the horse-train homology to achieve the effect of pathos as the two "horses" race towards mutual oblivion. "Horse and Train" is, in fact, authentically uncanny in its use of the motif of the double or *doppelgänger*. In light of the evolutionary narrative we have been considering, the train "confronts" the image of its own death in the dark horse that bears down upon it.

³¹ In a related context, Koster and Chang have noted that "As a natural symbol, domesticated animals may appear antithetical to the heavy machinery so typical of the emerging urban industrial capitalism of the nineteenth century, but they and their owners played an integral role in this expansion, as they had in the earlier development of commerce" (3).

³² The slippage between machine and animal in the correlation of "man-boat" and "man-horse" dramatically confirms Haraway's claim that "[t]he cyborg appears in myth precisely where the boundary between human and animal is transgressed" (152). There might also be a hint of modern anxiety about bureaucratic and assembly-line overspecialization projected onto Toynbee's lament that "Eskimos [and] Nomads... achieve what they achieve by discarding as far as possible the infinite variety of human nature and assuming an inflexible animal nature instead. Thereby they have set their feet on the path of retrogression. Biologists tell us that animal species which have adapted themselves too nicely to highly specialized environments are at a dead end and have no future in the evolutionary process. That is exactly the fate of the arrested civilizations" (1.217).

³³ Lawrence wrote *Seven Pillars* as a disillusioned Romantic who had already started down the path towards machine-worship he details in *The Mint*, a mere seven years later (even though it would only be published posthumously); the exultation of "speed" in his account of Bedouin warfare often seems to anticipate later technological obsessions (202, 308, 347), as does the frequent conflation of energy and mobility:

The distribution of our raiding parties was unorthodox. We could not mix or combine tribes, because of their distrusts: nor could we use one in the territory of another. In compensation we aimed at the widest dissipation of force; and we added fluidity to speed by using one district on Monday, another on Tuesday, a third on Wednesday. Thus natural mobility was reinforced. In pursuit, our ranks were refilled with fresh men at each new tribe, and maintained the pristine energy. (347)

As the end of the campaign approaches and his spiritual malaise grows, Lawrence makes the animal/technology homology explicit: "For a year and a half I had been in motion,

riding a thousand miles each month upon camels: with added nervous hours in crazy aeroplanes, or rushing across the country in powerful cars” (514).

Chapter Three

¹ To approach Deleuze and Guattari’s work developmentally cuts against the grain of their avowedly anti-developmental approach. Deleuze in particular repeatedly insists upon the experimental nature of his thought and on its partial, improvisational, non-systematic nature. As Brian Massumi puts it in his pithy *User’s Guide*, “This is not a package deal” (54)—concepts appear, are explored, and are subsequently abandoned. There is, however, a high degree of overlap between the concepts and ideas explored in the two volumes of *Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (the fact that they were conceived as successive volumes itself suggests a close relation between their analyses), and a number of Deleuze and Guattari’s more sympathetic critics have seen *A Thousand Plateaus* as a development of the first volume. I discuss these below.

² Deleuze and Guattari argue that “what Freud and the first analysts discover is the domain of free syntheses where everything is possible: endless connections, nonexclusive disjunctions, nonspecific conjunctions, partial objects and flows” (54). Expanding upon Freud’s original formulation, they claim that these endless conjunctions and disjunctions of the unconscious are not familial: “It is the function of the libido to invest in the social field in unconscious forms, thereby hallucinating all history, reproducing in delirium entire civilizations, races, continents, and intensely ‘feeling’ the becoming of the world. There is no signifying chain without a Chinaman, and Arab, and a black who drop in to trouble the night of the white paranoiac” (98).

³ There are echoes of Herbert Marcuse’s historicization of Freud in *Eros and Civilization* in Deleuze and Guattari’s formulation as well. But as Holland points out, their adherence to Reich is more important, even “categorical,” because the Oedipus complex still operates as “a model for social authority, oppression and repression” in Marcuse’s “mythical-historical schema” (*Deleuze* 5). On Deleuze and Guattari’s debts to earlier attempts to merge Freud and Marx by Marcuse, Reich, and Norman O. Brown, see Holland 4-11.

⁴ See Holland 83-85, 97-99.

⁵ “For just as capital separates the worker from the means of life and defers gratification until after work, after pay-day, and after-retirement, the castrating father separates the child from the nurturing mother and defers gratification until maturity and the founding of a new family” (Holland 84).

⁶ Deleuze and Guattari refer to this as the “paralogism of displacement.” See *Anti-Oedipus* 114-15.

⁷ See Holland 55.

⁸ See Holland 6-7.

⁹ Schizoanalysis “proposes to demonstrate the existence of an unconscious libidinal investment of sociohistorical production, distinct from the conscious investments coexisting with it” (AO 98; see also 104-05).

¹⁰ Deleuze and Guattari assert: “Before being a mental state of the schizophrenic who has made himself into an artificial person through autism, schizophrenia is the process of the production of desire and the desiring-machines” (24).

¹¹ Laing remarks that “The madness of our patients is an artifact of the destruction wreaked on them by us and by them on themselves. Let no one suppose that we meet ‘true’ madness any more than that we are truly sane” (qtd. in Deleuze and Guattari 132).

¹² Holland remarks that “The critical or destructive task of schizoanalysis...target[s] reterritorialization, recoding, and paranoia wherever they operate—bringing not just psychoanalysis to the point of autocritique, but contemporary society as a whole, in several of its major determinations: Oedipal, ascetic, capitalist” (97).

¹³ “Territorialization” designates the mapping of the infant’s erogenous zones whereby he or she learns to invest desire in some organs but not others.

¹⁴ As yet, this contrast refers primarily to relative states of movement and rest, and thus only faintly anticipates the grand development of the nomad-sedentary metaphor found in *A Thousand Plateaus*.

¹⁵ Another example of the care with which Deleuze and Guattari coordinate rhetorical and conceptual demands in their invention of neologisms is the notion of “desiring-machines”: “The concept of ‘desiring-machines,’ ...while serving cognitively to connect libido and labor in a single term...also serves key polemical purposes,” according to Holland. “Foremost among these will be to replace the theatre model of the psyche found throughout Freud with a factory model” (21-22).

¹⁶ Morgan states, for example, that “[d]ifferences in the culture of the same period [middle barbarism] in the Eastern and Western hemispheres undoubtedly existed in consequence of the unequal endowments of the continents; but the condition of society in the corresponding status must have been, in the main, substantially similar” (22).

¹⁷ Clifford expands Williams’s account of this “structure of feeling” to ethnography generally in “On Ethnographic Allegory” (113-14).

¹⁸ Deleuze and Guattari also quote this passage, though curiously, without the last two words.

¹⁹ The parable implied by the schizo-neurotic opposition is exemplified for Deleuze and Guattari by Lenz's stroll in Henry Miller's *Sexus*, which links movement and rest, interiority and exteriority in a narrative sequence: "This walk outdoors is different from the moments when Lenz finds himself closeted with his pastor, who forces him to situate himself socially, in relationship to the God of established religion, in relationship to his father, to his mother. While taking a stroll outdoors, on the other hand, he is in the mountains, amid falling snowflakes, with other gods or without any gods at all, without a family, without a father or a mother, with nature" (2).

²⁰ See Torgovnick 170.

²¹ Deleuze and Guattari's speculation about how a revolutionary break with capitalism could be effected exudes a similar sense that "utopian vision" outstrips "real possibilities." See *Anti-Oedipus* 378.

²² See Young, *Colonial Desire* 159-74.

²³ This is to speak "arborescently," as if Deleuze and Guattari were practitioners of the kind of "State philosophy" that proceeds by the creation of acolytes and "interpreters." Deleuze memorably travesties this type of master-student model of philosophizing in favour of intellectual couplings that would produce "monstrous" offspring (qtd. in Massumi 2). Holland, Patton, and Massumi are hardly "defenders" or still worse acolytes in any conventional sense. Nonetheless, it is helpful to draw a clear line of demarcation between those critics who see Deleuze and Guattari as potentially stimulating and productive, and those who dismiss them out of hand.

²⁴ These same two passages are quoted in conjunction in *Anti-Oedipus* 195.

²⁵ "We certainly would not say that discipline is what defines a war machine: discipline is the characteristic required of armies after the State has appropriated them. The war machine answers to other rules. We are not saying that they are better, of course..." (358).

²⁶ Of course, one might legitimately ask, "Why stop here?" Deleuze and Guattari's apparent willingness to violate their own injunctions in the name of a meta-anarchism that would prevent even deterritorialization from (paradoxically) "freezing" into what they call, disparagingly, "habit," cannot escape the logic of legality: the new determination to avoid habit at this "higher" level will only succeed in pushing the law of disobedience to a still higher level, and then... In the end, the will to deterritorialize, if reduced to a "law," might lead to the bizarrely circular and possibly quite dangerous acceptance of territorialization. But Deleuze and Guattari's answer to this objection

might be their insistence on pragmatism. *A Thousand Plateaus* is profoundly ambivalent in its articulation of nomadology. At times it seems like a law or system that demands deterritorialization. Yet this paradoxically anarchic law is subject to local reinterpretations. As Massumi puts it in his oft-cited gloss, Deleuze “calls his kind of philosophy ‘pragmatics’ because its goal is the invention of concepts that do not add up to a system of belief or an architecture of propositions that you either enter or you don’t, but instead pack a potential in the way a crowbar in a willing hand envelops an energy of prying.... The question is not, Is it true? But, Does it work?” (8).

Chapter Four

¹ There are, in other words, both chronological and cultural forms of primitivism, each of which has a utopian function. However, as Lovejoy and Boas point out in their classic treatment of this distinction, (spatial) cultural primitivism “is very often combined with chronological primitivism” (7), so spatial and temporal forms of primitivism tend to be mutually reinforcing and difficult to separate.

² Braidotti characterizes her own “nomadic aesthetic” as the production of “cartographies”:

that is to say, a sort of intellectual landscape gardening that gives me a horizon, a frame of reference within which I can take my bearing, move about, and set up my theoretical tent. It is not by chance therefore, that the image of the map, or of map-making is so often present in my texts. The frequency of the spatial metaphor expresses the simultaneity of the nomadic status and of the need to draw maps; each text is like a camping site: it traces places where I have been, in the shifting landscape of my singularity. (16-17)

Significantly, her metaphors are drawn not only from Deleuze and Guattari, but from “The globe-trotting writer Bruce Chatwin [who], in his book *The Songlines*, shows admirably the extent to which, in Gypsies, Australian aborigines, and other tribes, the nomad’s identity consists in memorizing oral poetry, which is an elaborate and accurate description of the territories that need to be crossed in the nomad’s never-ending journey” (17). The way in which Braidotti lifts a patently political allegory of cartography out of Chatwin’s metaphysical discourse of transcendental homecoming illustrates precisely the sort of overlap between diagnostic and utopian visions I am suggesting here.

³ For a critique of the compatibility of Deleuze and Guattari’s work with Jameson’s that nonetheless points to a number of illuminating points of contact, see Homer 70-97. The most sustained defense of the viability of the Deleuze-Jameson encounter is Ian Buchanan’s reading of Deleuze as a “dialectician” and Jameson as a utopian thinker whose conception of utopia resembles Deleuze’s vision of perpetual becoming. See especially his *Deleuzism* 143-74 and note 12 below. In a similar vein, Bruno Bosteels argues that Guattari’s work, as well as his collaborations with Deleuze, “assembles the basic scaffolding for a formal and political theory of cartography” that may be seen as a

development of Jameson's plea for cognitive mapping that "link[s] the psychic and the social" (150).

⁴ Jameson's justification for the superiority of form over content is confused and unconvincing, even on its own terms. He insists, on the one hand, that the "archaic distinction" between form and content is "indispensable" to cognitive mapping ("Cognitive" 348). But his own analyses often suggest a substantial overlap between formal aesthetic structures and thematic contents. One suspects that the priority given to form in the articulation of cognitive mapping is not unrelated to Jameson's (Marxist?) penchant for structural abstraction—the "mechanistic formalism," particularly evident in his "well-nigh Hegelian obsession for ternary schema," of which he is sometimes accused (Homer 124).

⁵ Although the grail-seeking sundog as a sort of cyberpunk *knight errant* does not seem to coincide directly with the less teleological vision of nomadic becoming, he nonetheless makes an ideal model for representations of nomadism which figure the transition from dystopian visions of the present to utopian futures because these futures constitute the "telos" of the sundog's quest, even though the telos itself is, paradoxically anti-teleological—nomadic in the Deleuzo-Guattarian sense.

⁶ Kelleghan develops an analysis of the prison motif that is quite different from my own. She suggests that prisons are valuable as "the site of psychological catalysis" in Bester's fiction and that Bester "is primarily interested in how the deprivation of physical liberty can lead to spiritual freedom" (351, 362)

⁷ Echoes of Toynbee's notion of the nomad as a centaur or "man horse" constitute another component of Bester's grab-bag nomadism—an association that also resonates powerfully with the discourse of knighthood. For instance, Part II of *Stars* begins with an epigraph attributed to Tom-a-Bedlam that, like much grab-bag nomadism, implies the interchangeability of the nomad and the knight errant:

*With a heart of furious fancies
Whereof I am commander,
With a burning spear and a horse of air,
To the wilderness I wander. (121)*

⁸ For a discussion of Foyle's Romantic Prometheanism and its relation to Blake, see McCarthy.

⁹ In this regard, Bester's molarized freaks—whose difference has been harnessed by the entertainment industry for which they are in fact produced—anticipate Deleuze and Guattari's account of the State as an "apparatus of capture." As Massumi suggests, "When supermolecularity succeeds, the forces of molarity must accommodate or kill it. Accommodating a supermolecule means adapting the grid of molar identities to it. A new category is added to the recognized list, and procedures are established to ensure that the integration of the new kind of body into the shared environment does not upset the

general equilibrium. A life-space opens, but it is no sooner surveyed than institutionalized, or captured: molarity is an apparatus of capture of energies that escape it" (101).

¹⁰ Intriguingly, Deleuze and Guattari also discern a correlation between nomadism and numbers when they argue that mathematics is "not a science, it's a monster slang, it's nomadic" (*ATP* 24). This correlation is premised on a vision of the nomadic "war machine" as a "pack" whose membership is fluctuating and highly flexible. (T. E. Lawrence also described the Bedouin armies in precisely this way in *Seven Pillars*.)

¹¹ Foyle makes two journeys through space-time at the end of *Stars*. The first is to escape the fire at St. Pat's; the second occurs shortly thereafter, following Foyle's delivery of PyrE and his "gospel" to the world. Since the aesthetics of these two figurations of the time-space continuum are essentially consistent, I conflate them here for the sake of convenience.

¹² As Buchanan argues, in his brilliant comparison of these thinkers, Deleuze and Guattari are not as "anti-dialectical" as they profess, nor is Jameson as conventionally dialectical as he appears. Deleuze and Guattari's model of schizophrenia as "pure, fully detached creative energy oscillating between a breakthrough to a new mode of existence and a breakdown into an already exhausted and spent mode" is only anti-dialectical in the sense that "any raising-up is also a tying down: the breakthrough is the road to the breakdown"—in other words, they are opposed to the freezing of any becoming into a new orthodoxy. "Yet," Buchanan continues,

in that it proposes a dualism as a suppression of the dialectic it remains dialectical in spirit, as it were, albeit as a failed dialectic. Despite their suspicion of Utopia, and corresponding reticence to use it as a critical term, schizophrenia inasmuch as it oscillates between breakthrough and breakdown...is precisely utopian. (164)

Buchanan finds a similar sort of utopianism in Jameson's paradoxical claim that "utopian thought succeeds by failure"—a claim vested in Jameson's use of "the various futures art has so far been able to imagine to diagnose and indict (in precisely the clinical/critical sense that Deleuze gives these terms) what is tempting to call the existential health of the present" (164). Thus, "for Jameson Utopia is not a place, a mythical island in an unknown sea, but a *process*," and in this regard "is analogous to schizophrenia, also a process" (164-65).

¹³ Kelleghan notes that "it is always in confinement that [Foyle] discovers the awesome powers of his subconscious" (358)—the paradigmatic instance of this being his initial captivity within the "womb-like" storage locker aboard the *Nomad*.

¹⁴ One must look very hard to find any hint of a subversion of gender-identity in Bester's nomadic utopia since the text's return to the primitive entails a seemingly indelible inscription of gender in the very act of naming as N♂MAD, J♂seph, and M♀ira attest. In this regard, at least, Bester's primitivism anticipates Deleuze and Guattari's account of

the savage socius as a regime of violent inscription and coding. Bester's text merits a fuller exploration of gender than I am able to provide here.

¹⁵ Although I agree with Spivak's criticism of Deleuze and Guattari in general, her concerns are anticipated by Deleuze and Guattari themselves, albeit less forcefully, as I argued in Chapter Three. In this regard, it is noteworthy that Spivak's defense of a certain notion of ideology against more radical poststructuralist critiques of identity like Deleuzo-Guattarian anti-humanism cites *Anti-Oedipus* rather than *A Thousand Plateaus*. For the articulation of a more strategic and flexible form of nomadology that does not stress deterritorialization exclusively in the latter volume of *Capitalism and Schizophrenia* bears more than a passing resemblance to Spivak's own recommendation of strategic essentialism.

¹⁶ I hesitate to name them "poststructuralist" and "postcolonialist" since neither of these designations is unitary, nor are they mutually exclusive. As I argued in chapter 4, Deleuze and Guattari's nomadology is not as simplistically postidentitarian as it sometimes seems, and may thus prove to be more of an ally for theorizing postcolonial counter-practice than Spivak would allow. Braidotti's critical adaptation of nomadology for feminist analysis might be seen as a model for such alliances.

¹⁷ Aijaz Ahmad's rebuttle to Jameson's article is well known. See also Robert Young's critique of Jameson in *White Mythologies*, 91-118.

¹⁸ Like a great many of the details of Kip's character, this is a reference to T. E. Lawrence; it is the subtitle of *Seven Pillars of Wisdom*, and, of course, Lawrence also prized motorcycles as a form of escape. Unlike Lawrence, however, Kip is not killed by his motorcycle accident, but goes on to become a doctor. Kip's story, is thus not only a sort of reverse *Kim*, but a postcolonial rewriting of the trajectory of T. E. Lawrence's career as well. Whereas Lawrence ultimately sought to bury himself in obscurity by enlisting in the RAF, Kip gradually frees himself of "the anonymous machine of the army" (195).

¹⁹ The importance of apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic discourse in postmodernity has been traced by David Robson and Teresa Heffernan's studies of Northrop Frye, Jacques Derrida, Thomas Pynchon, Jean Baudrillard, and Don DeLillo, for example. As Dellamora argues, the apocalyptic tone of many accounts of postmodernism is inseparable from the historical experience of World War II as "signify[ing] a moment of rupture that permanently devalues the principles and aspirations associated with Euro-American tradition. The war signifies the end of the grand narratives that have shaped Western civilization for the past two hundred years" (2).

²⁰ On the conjunctions between postmodern and postcolonial questions in the *Mad Max* films, see Delia Falconer's "'We Don't Need to Know the Way Home': The Disappearance of the Road in the *Mad Max* Trilogy."

²¹ As I argue above, this “apocalyptic” representation of nomadism is to some extent counterbalanced by a cartographic critique.

²² It is worth noting that the encounter between nomadism and apocalypse in Chatwin’s *The Songlines* stringently resists homology and eschews the type of revelatory apocalyptic aesthetic that emerges in more explicitly fictional representations of nomadism like Ondaatje’s or Bester’s, despite the fact that Chatwin’s metaphysics of nomadism often recalls (or anticipates) their post-identitarian preoccupations. In *The Songlines*, nomadism exists in conceptual opposition to apocalypse—the “age of the H-bomb” (129)—precisely because the Australian Aborigines live under the threat of real nuclear annihilation thanks to bomb tests in the Western Desert (21, 77-78, 83-84, 213). Unlike Bester, and even Ondaatje, Chatwin does not seem especially confident that his nomads will survive it, despite his conventional notation of their toughness. Nuclear testing, in other words, ominously foreshadows and exposes the implicit logic of more subtle forms of cultural destruction in *The Songlines*, such as government resettlement programs, for example. Chatwin provides his nomads with a romantic death under the “ghost gum” on the novel’s final page, but it is perhaps significant that they perish, ironically, under the preeminent sign of rooted existence. Chatwin’s refusal of a certain postmodern tendency to abstract nuclear apocalypse into a metaphor for post-identitarian transformation or a sublime merging of the self with the universe is salutary, though, of course, the pervasive atmosphere of melancholy produced by his opposition of these concepts produces a different set of problems in its projection of an ethnographic allegory of salvage ethnography. I consider Chatwin’s ethnographic strategies and their relation to imperial nostalgia in more detail in “In a Savage hand: Allegories of Writing in Chatwin and Lévi-Strauss.”

Conclusion

¹ Of course, Lavie herself, as both an anthropologist and an Israeli, is an “outside” audience to the “private” performances of the Mzeina—indeed, she characterizes her study as “fieldwork by an occupier” (7)—a circumstance that raises the possibility that, despite her account of being adopted by the Mzeina so that she may claim a new identity as a “diasporic Mzeina” (31), the performances she witnesses are ultimately for her benefit because her anthropological gaze is not disembodied. While it is certainly true that hollow gestures of ethnographic acceptance or inclusion are as old as Malinowski, and provide no guarantee of invisibility, much less of objectivity, Lavie’s ethnography evinces an impressive and convincing degree of reciprocity with its interlocutors—a reciprocity movingly rendered by the fact that Lavie’s adoptive Mzeini “parents” routinely make the journey to visit her real parents in Tel Aviv (16).

² As the epigraph to the opening chapter from Said’s “Representing the Colonized: Anthropology’s Interlocutors” indicates, Lavie aims “to see Others not as ontologically

given but as historically constituted” and to represent cultures as “zones of control or of abandonment, of recollection and of forgetting, of force or of dependence, of exclusiveness or of sharing, all taking place in the global history that is our element” (1).

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