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メタデータ	言語: English
	出版者:
	公開日: 2009-04-28
	キーワード (Ja):
	キーワード (En):
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	メールアドレス:
	所属:
URL	https://doi.org/10.15021/00002689

SENRI ETHNOLOGICAL STUDIES 66: 109-126 ©2004
Circumpolar Ethnicity and Identity
Edited by Takashi Irimoto and Takako Yamada

Contested Identities of "Indians" and "Whitemen" at James Bay, or the Power of Reason, Hybridity and Agency

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Native Americans were not mistaken when they accused the Whites of speaking with forked tongues. By separating the relations of political power from the relations of scientific reasoning while continuing to shore up power with reason and reason with power, the moderns have always had two irons in the fire. They have become invincible.

You think that thunder is divinity? The modern critique will show you it is generated by mere physical mechanisms that have no influence over the progress of human affairs. You are stuck in a traditional economy? The modern critique will show you that physical mechanisms can upset the progress of human affairs by mobilizing huge productive forces. You think that the spirits of the ancestors hold you forever hostage to their laws? The modern critique will show you that you are hostage to yourselves and that the spiritual world is your own human—too human—construction. You then think that you can do everything and develop your societies as you see fit? The modern critique will show you that the iron laws of society and economics are much more inflexible than those of your ancestors. You are indignant that the world is being mechanized? The modern critique will tell you about the creator God to whom everything belongs and who gave man everything. You are indignant that society is secular? The modern critique will show you that spirituality is thereby liberated, and that a wholly spiritual religion [a personal spirituality] is far superior (Latour 1993:38; brackets added).

Century after century, colonial empire after colonial empire, the poor premodern collectives were accused of making a mishmash of things and humans, of objects and signs, while their accusers finally separated them totally — to remix them at once on a scale unknown until now . . . . As the moderns also extended this Great Divide they felt themselves absolutely free to give up . . . tak[ing] into account the delicate web of relations between things and people (Latour 1993: 39).

INTRODUCTION[1]

In *We Have Never Been Modern* Bruno Latour encourages his readers to explore the connections, separations and the "hybridity" (Latour 1993) of the discourses and practices of modernity. In this paper I examine the discourses about identities and the practical relationships that develop between institutions of a modern national state society and an

Indigenous people, considering them in the light of some of the issues that Latour raises and in the light of questions of agency and morality. I suggest that the modern state/developer and James Bay Cree claims about each other's identities, their efforts to differentiate identities, and their relational practices, implicate them in both explicit and implicit recognition of differences, similarities, hybridity and agency. Yet there are numerous ways that this can happen. These connections between differentiation and similarity often hinge on the implicit and explicit politics of identity practices, and these are closely linked to the way that moralities locate and legitimate the active subject.

It has long been argued that ethnic identities are phenomena of the borders of society and culture (Barth 1969; Cohen 2000). But in the contemporary world in which local and regional populations find themselves encapsulated in nation states that promote national and ethnic identities, and also in transnational relationships that provide alternative connections and visions of the local, the identities of localized groupings are always defined differently by states than they are by "peoples," and they are highly contested (Gupta and Ferguson 1997; Parajuli, 1996).[2]

This paper is based on data about Canadians, Quebecers and James Bay Cree. On the one hand there are European-American-Canadian-Quebecer views of the identities of "Indians" that often serve to promote and legitimate the colonial exploitation of lands and peoples.[3] However, these views of Indians (I reserve the term "Indian" for Euro-Canadian ideas and images of the Native Peoples) are diverse and contradictory, they are closely tied to multiple Euro-Canadian self-identities as well as to Euro-Canadian relations to specific Native Peoples. Cree views of the identities of "Whitemen" explore the complex possibilities of kinship, exploitation, resistance and morality. Whether identities are thus mobilized to comprehend, to justify, and/or to strategically facilitate projects of relating, dominating or reproducing, they often blur the processes by which they are shaped.

Those who speak from a sense of state power and control generally envision the identities of "others," as ethnic, marginal, temporary, withering, inevitably modernizing, and ultimately—since they will eventually be incorporated into the national identity—not fundamentally different from their own. Those who envision themselves from a position of some autonomy from the state increasingly see themselves as a locale among transnational locales, often with distinctive claims and identities as well as strong ties to dynamic histories. They reject both the national identity and the ethnic identities offered to them by the state. Liisa H. Malkki has noted, "identity is always mobile and processual, partly self-construction, partly categorization by others, partly a condition, a status, a label, a weapon, a shield, a fund of memories, and so on" (Malkki 1997: 71).

I begin by examining state discourses and practices in the James Bay region, and indicating some of the diverse ways in which these implicitly deny the Cree claims of substantial autonomy and of the capacity for self-governance, while legitimating state dominance as benevolence. Then I examine some Cree discourses and practices. I show how their conceptions and practices towards Quebecers and Canadians as "Whitemen" assert a moral capacity that they share in common, while for them the problematic "other" is represented as the capacity of both Whitemen and Cree to deny their connectedness to each other and their responsibility for action.

The differences between their views turn out to hinge on a sense of self that incorporates the "other" as it sets them apart, thereby failing to acknowledge hybridity and condoning domination, versus a sense that acknowledges hybridity, but that also links morality to a capacity for responsible agency.

BACKGROUND

The James Bay Cree people of northern Quebec have been involved for three decades in a series of struggles against the massive hydro-electric and forestry developments being conducted on their lands. In recent years the Cree leaders have achieved some impressive victories. Opposition by nearly all sectors of Cree society, in cooperation with international environmental and indigenous movements, generated a world-wide campaign against the plans for a second group of James Bay hydro-electric projects in the early 1990s, and prevented work on the construction of new developments. This is significant, and construction seems unlikely within the foreseeable future.

The James Bay Cree are a sub-arctic people, numbering some 12,000, living in nine separate communities east and south of James Bay in the province of Quebec in Canada. Since the 1970s they have modern housing and most live in villages with schools and health services. An agreement on the land claims of the James Bay Cree and the Inuit of Quebec, which resulted from the opposition to the initial hydro-electric project, was signed in 1975. As a result, the local and regional Cree-controlled governments have several hundreds of millions of dollars of investments, and manage over C$100 million per year of government funds for schools, health, social benefits, community administration, and income support for full-time hunters.

About a quarter of the adult population hunt full-time, spending an average of seven months in small camps of one to five families, located at sites in the "bush," many without direct road access. About one-third of the population have steady jobs, mostly in the Cree governmental organizations which service the communities. And, the balance are underemployed and generally young (Salisbury 1986). Hunting is participated in on a part-time basis by nearly all workers and unemployed, and is a key to Cree identities and extended domestic relations. Hunting also provides a significant input to family and community diets, health and perceptions of well-being. The cultural meanings and practices of the James Bay Cree people have thus gone through continuing changes and transformations, but they remain distinct from the surrounding culture and society by choice. There are however diverse Cree meanings and practices today (Feit 1995a; 2000b; Scott 1989b; Tanner 1979).

The Cree people were missionized initially in the 17th and 18th centuries, and more effectively and continuously since the turn of the 20th century, and most Cree are Christians today. Many Cree hunters still dream of spirits to learn of where to look for the animals they will catch, and they say that both dreams and Jesus are sources of their power. The Cree elders state that their long-term goals are to protect the land, and to establish an effective voice in the future of their region, thereby creating a new and relatively egalitarian relationship with the governments of Quebec and Canada. The struggles to date have been

based on alliances of hunters and a school-educated Cree leadership. They have taken their messages to centers of political and economic power in Canada, the United States and Europe. The scope, sophistication, persistence, and effects of their campaigns have surprised corporate and government officials (Feit 2001).

IDENTITY CONFLICTS 1 — WORKING FROM DIFFERENCES OF IDENTITY: THE IDENTITY OF DIFFERENCE

In the 1970s and 1980s the Governments of Quebec and Canada insisted that the Cree hunting way of life was dead or dying, and that the Cree Indians were in fact already all but assimilated to the national societies, that their identity was part of the national identities. For three decades the governments and corporations have presented the lack of a continuing distinctive Cree identity as the core of their claims that development projects would have very limited negative impacts on the Cree.

In a Cree initiated court case against the first phase of the hydro-electric project in 1972–73, the government's lawyers portrayed Cree not as hunters but as Quebecers and Canadians, or at least as a hunting people quickly becoming like all other citizens of Quebec and Canada. They asked Cree hunters questions such as: "Isn't it a fact, Chief, that things have changed a lot in the last 15 to 20 years?"; "Is it correct to say, Chief, that there were more hunters in your childhood than there are now?"; "Is it not a fact that most of the trappers for the last few years have used a plane to go to their trapline?"; "[If your children are in school] Does that mean they will not go with you to your trapline next year?"; "Do you eat toast in the morning, like we do?"

These queries question difference. Even the repeated use of "Chief," without reference to a specific name or role, establishes a discursive space in which the title is both acknowledged, but simultaneously reduced to colloquialism without specificity.

The government also called on non-Native witnesses, nurses, taxi-drivers and restaurant owners living in the northern towns or in Cree villages to ask: "How do they dress in Rupert House? ...Like us?"; "You are aware of the Kentucky Fried Chicken restaurant in Chibougamau [a northern town]? ...And have you observed Indians using it?" The testimony solicited here explicitly asserts that those Quebecers and Canadians who have first hand knowledge of the Cree do not find different habits, culture or identities, they find the Cree to be the same as themselves.

As historian Robert J. Berkhofer showed (1979), such images of Indians were linked in complex ways to those of Euro-Americans, for the Indian was cast as the opposite of the Euro-American, and if they were no longer opposites then they were Euro-American. Such views are embedded in popular North American and European images of Indian identity. The positive version of Indians as non-Euro-Americans was that they are ancient, traditional, unchanged, and therefore in balance with nature. The negative version was that they were uncivilized, undomesticated, lacking industriousness, and therefore savage, querulous, and unproductive. But whether they were viewed positively or negatively, Indians were in both instances the opposites of Euro-Americans. Being by definition opposites, they live eternally under the threat that as they change they loose their distinctive identity as

non-Euro-Americans and become civilized and modernized.[4] There is no space for hybrids —no place for true Indians who are modern, nor for traditional Indians who change without becoming modern.

On either count Cree are unable to claim that they have rights that could be recognized in a court of law, over and above citizen's rights. Previously they lacked civilized essentials, now they are the same as other citizens. Therefore they cannot claim that development could adversely affect them in any profound way. This dually disempowering view is expressed repeatedly. Officials of Hydro-Quebec, the government-owned electricity utility that built the dams, emphasized the contrast and the incompatibility of "old fashioned" or "traditional" Indian hunting with a modern present: "I don't want to live like my great grandfather lived in farmlands somewhere in Quebec. I need television, radio, electricity. I don't believe Native people want to live in the Stone Age," Jacques Guevremont, then Vice-President of Hydro-Quebec.[5] Traditional economy must give way to progress and productive forces.

Nevertheless, the arguments that the Cree and Inuit of today are fundamentally the same as other citizens of Quebec and Canada rapidly implicates recognition that they are or were Indians, and therefore were at one time fundamentally different from Euro-Canadians. Thus the claim that common identities now prevail acknowledges historical and/or contemporary differences in its midst.

IDENTITY CONFLICTS 2 — THE LAWS OF SOCIETY, AND THE HYBRIDITY OF AGENCY

Seeking explanations of the transformations that Cree, and that their relationships to Euro-Canadians, have undergone has engaged social scientists as well as judges, and corporate and government spokespersons. Applied anthropologist Paul Bertrand was hired by the Quebec development corporations, and testified as an expert witness at their request during the court cases. He testified about the transformations that the Cree had been through, but also (and interestingly in a court setting bound by strict rules of evidence) he was invited to engage in extensive discussions of the changes the Cree would go through in the future.[6] Questioned by a lawyer for the development corporations Bertrand set out his vision of the Cree future and present, in this translation of his testimony from French:

> LE BEL: As an anthropologist, Mr. Bertrand, what is your judgment as to the future of Cree civilization? . . .
> BERTRAND: I would say seven years . . . .
> LE BEL: For what?
> BERTRAND: Not for the disappearance of the Cree culture, but for a crisis to occur in the Cree culture. I cannot see how the culture can overcome it with the governmental umbrella that it has now, unless something new happens. I would say seven years, because now in most of the villages, the younger generation, up to 19, is studying. Their theoretical and practical background will certainly not be the same as that of their parents, and that could produce dissension, which I believe most anthropologists have visualized.

> LE BEL: Could you quantify the different impacts — institutional, educational, governmental and so on — and say what has been their consequence on the Cree culture?
> BERTRAND: I can give you a professional opinion based on my experiences in other groups and also in the north. Naturally, a culture is a dynamic thing, . . . Each culture evolves in a given direction, or in another direction, and then there are cultural cul-de-sacs, cultures which, at a given moment, block, for one reason or another. In my opinion Cree culture is heading towards a blockage . . . because . . . to occupy the different posts in government, the structures already in place in their villages, would take them 20 or 30 years, and I do not think that the Cree culture is capable of accelerating the process. The impacts they have received to date have not produced what a bigger impact would have produced. That is, a sort of collective renewal, a sensation of becoming, a wish to do something to improve, but an active wish, something felt. What produces this interior disintegration and prevents collective action, I believe, is a slow invasion, and not something brusque . . . .
> LE BEL: Do you consider that the hydro-electric and other projects on the territory of James Bay will constitute an impact on the culture and way of life of the Cree Indians?
> BERTRAND: It's obvious, an immense impact.
> LE BEL: . . . . On what do you base that?
> BERTRAND: You have 6,000 Crees in a region, then, suddenly, brusquely, immediately perhaps 16,000 or 20,000 newcomers alongside them. As I said before, for a white man you almost have to build a hospital . . . . in bringing up 16,000 whites you bring up in a global fashion the whole society, the shock is going to be brutal. Perhaps it is the only way to make a culture react, and then really begin to participate, to take its own development in hand. I can't see how you could interpret it in any other way (quoted from Richardson 1975: 247–8).

Bertrand here expresses a professional opinion about why the Cree cannot develop their society as they "see fit," given the "iron laws of society and economics" (Latour 1993: 38). Bertrand gives an account of how, and maybe more importantly why, one culture must be transformed to become like another. He puts the process of cultural and identity transformation the hands of "others." Cree culture is "heading towards a blockage," it is "disintegrating," and it is not capable of "accelerating the process," nor of appropriate "collective action," nor of responding effectively to the presence of governments, development and a massive construction work force. As a result, Cree are passive as a slow intrusion undermines their capacity for social agency. Their only hope for "renewal," for "becoming," for improvement, for having wishes and agency, is for the intrusions to become more immense, more "brutal." The expected crisis in Cree culture and society is not its inability to change itself, but its supposed inability to respond to the changes being wrought by others. Their only hope for their culture and some control of their lives lies with the continued agency of others.

The source of the crisis is confused and obscured in this account. In the process, the possibilities for responding are restricted. The source of the crisis, and its solution, lie outside

of Cree society, but the problem is defined as a uniquely Cree crisis. This obscures the fact that the problem, in this account, is the result of the massive outside interventions. As a result, the possibility of responding to the crisis caused by the hydro-electric projects by stopping or altering the projects is never considered. Thus, precisely what the Crees argued for before the courts, that the projects should be stopped until Cree and governments and developers could agree on whether and how they should be built, is excluded from view, from consideration, and from the realm of possibility.

As a result, the only choice open to the Cree when they take development "into their own hands," is to "participate." The remedy for the crisis is more intrusions that will force the Cree to actively take up their incorporation into the national society. All other futures disappear. In helping the Cree, the course of hydro-electric development, as well as the wider Euro-Quebecois civilization, is legitimated as both inevitable and beneficient.

Euro-Canadian beneficience, as well as the scientific expert's, are functions of their exclusive and superior knowledge. The Cree incapacity for adequate "collective action" and agency rests on the ultimate frailty of the Cree culture and knowledge that are blocked and that cannot develop quickly enough. It is their failing that limits them, not the political-economic context of development decision-making which politically excludes the Cree and prevents them from effectively acting on their knowledge and plans for the future. In contrast, it is the ultimate strength of the Euro-Canadian knowledge to know the laws of society, to be able to foresee the future, and to be able to present this knowledge as a science of cultural change that is at the root of how this knowledge serves potitical power.

Bertrand spoke sincerely as a person and as a professional, and I believe that he was not trying to speak with a "forked tongue" but to help the Cree. But the unreflective separation of the Cree "other" from agency and knowledge and the separation of reason from power created opportunities for continuing and expanding forms of Euro-Canadian domination. Thus he ignored that it was Cree initiative that started the court case and created the context for these expert evaluations, and that later brought governments and developers to the negotiating table. This very significant form of "collective renewal" (see Feit, 2001), and "wish to do something to improve," was ignored in the testimonies and not part of the analyses of the experts. It was Cree agency that created the legal arena in which the issues were debated and in which different futures than those envisaged by state and corporate planners were forged. It was Euro-Canadian ways of knowing and controlling that ignored this hybrid agency, based in both Cree culture and the modern Canadian legal system.

IDENTITY CONFLICTS 3 — SEPARATING POWER AND REASON, ONLY TO REMIX THEM

After a Cree victory in the lower court, the Quebec Court of Appeal ruled against the Cree. But before its ruling a two-year-long negotiated out-of-court settlement was reached. This settlement allowed a modified project to be built, it opened the region to future developments and it recognized some Cree forms of self-governance. Thus, when the Quebec Court of Appeal gave its opinion on the hydro-electric project's impact on the Cree in 1974, after the settlement, it took the opportunity to explain why Cree opposition had to be set aside

and why development projects had to go ahead:

> In fact the James Bay project represents for Indian culture its main cohesive tool, and the salutary shock that will permit it to rediscover its identity and its personality. . . . The development of the James Bay territory, then, from the cultural point of view, has a doubly positive aspect: on the one hand it will create a . . . shock to the autochtones which will allow them to take cognizance again of their originality and stop the slow and continual withering that their culture has suffered since generations; and on the other hand, it will bring with it men and knowledge that can help in the elaboration of the necessary policies of transformation. These aspects, which are essential for the future of the Indians, should have been noticed by the judge [of the lower court], who stopped at the notion of conflicts without trying to see in the proof all that these conflicts could bring of a positive nature (quoted from Richardson 1991: 314).

The court both codifies the idea of the ongoing and inevitable transformation of the Cree into citizens like all others, and links it to the idea that it is only natural that the Cree and their lands be governed by those who have already become modern. It not only denies the Cree a distinctive culture, identity and agency, it legitimates the taking of land and resources by the state, and the control of Cree institutions by the state. It is also an implicit reassertion that Cree culture and identity will only survive as an ethnic variety of a wider national culture and polity. It legitimates the whole colonial relationship as benevolence.

The court also transforms the view that non-Natives and the hydro-electric development could save the Cree from a scientific assertion into a statement of fact. Any qualifications of the statements not only disappear, the Court declares them to have been in error, saying they arise from the failure to address the less politically palatable features of "reality." The judge writing the majority opinion for the Court of Appeals indicates this shift when he notes that his confrere at the lower court had stopped short of addressing the value of "conflicts," which he let interfere with a full accounting of the reality. In another part of his text the Court of Appeals Justice noted that he was determined to be frank and he explicitly dismissed other views as less realistic: "These facts are reality, and I apologize for displeasing those who take pleasure in speaking of the question . . . . with emotion and romanticism" (quoted from Richardson 1991: 313).

Reason is to rule by denying that emotion, values, morality and politics are involved. But "double speak" remains. On one hand, while the court declares that reason is not political or moral, it nevertheless uses reason to legitimate developments that are not the results of the laws of society but of specific political-economic decisions (which we must assume it also knows quite well from its other rulings about contracts and property laws). Reason thus serves political ends. On the other hand, the court begins the passage quoted above with a very political and moral concern for the future of the Cree identity, namely that the hydro-electric project will save them, a concern that legitimates Euro-Canadian intervention as beneficial. Yet, as we have seen the Court also declares that such concerns obscure what is "real." Here reason, morality, realism and politics become mixed up, just as it is asserted that they must be separated.

IDENTITY CONFLICTS 4 — DIFFERENT REASONING: GRANT EQUALITY, BUT DENY RELATIONS

If the court's rhetorical and practical strategies ignore any possibility of equality between Cree and moderns, other strategies identify equalities, only to exclude moral judgements and differences. For example, Hydro-Quebec spokespersons often take up the discrepancy between their own representations of Cree and the identities actively presented by the Cree of themselves. They do this by characterizing the Cree as a population whose leaders and spokespersons cling to a romantic image of the Indian hunter in order to increase the monetary compensations they hope to receive. Richard Drouin, the then President of Hydro-Quebec, responded to a journalist's question about what he thought the Crees wanted: "When they say that it is not a question of material compensation, I do not believe them" (translated from *L'Actualité*, 15 October 1991: 18). In this brief text, the implication is that Cree are already so much like other Quebecers and Canadians that they construct their identities out of the same self-interested values as other Euro-Canadians.

Here the relationship between common identities, authority and "reality" is radically different than in the Court of Appeal ruling. These Hydro-Quebec and government discourses create an equality—by arguing that Cree are really economically self-interested, and thus like "us." Here Euro-Quebecers and Cree cultures and identities cannot be differentiated because moral equivalency underlies their commonality. Moral standing is equated by subjecting everyone's claims to "realism," and claims to differences are thus shown to be false. This rhetorical strategy works by explicitly denying both the moral superiority of the Indian, and implicitly by denying any moral superiority of the Euro-Canadian, because both are economically self-interested. A claimed realism is again asserted over different values and morality, but in an apparently egalitarian form, both are narrowly self-interested and neither is "romanticized."

However, what makes this an empowering strategy for the Euro-Canadian developers and the public, and makes it disempowering for the Cree, is that it depends on equating the moral failings of developers and those who suffer from development. The absence of morality thus becomes a condition for inaction. It is the distancing, the placing of the subject in the position of solely being a knowing observer rather than active agent, that allows subjects to recognize the failings of the world from a superior position, without a corresponding sense of loss of agency. That is, the letting go of moral agency creates a superior position as knower, one who can see and appreciate the failings of the world, but who has no obligation to change the world, or responsibility to change their own action.

Whereas the Court spoke as an agent of reality, Hydro-Quebec representatives speak as ironic observers of a world. The irony of their statement, and its power, are that their agency massively transforms the land and people, yet the amorality they envisage denies they have responsibility. Hydro-electric development does upset "the progress of human affairs," unlike in the Court ruling where this same development is offered a means of salvation for the Cree, but now no one is responsible. Responsibility for action has dissolved with the breaking of all relationships.

These practices explain away any moral difference or connection between developers and those who suffer their actions.

IDENTITY CONFLICTS 5 — WORKING FROM THE HYBRIDITY OF IDENTITIES: KIN AND CANNIBALS

In the early 1970s many Cree hunters themselves sought ways to communicate their opposition to the hydro-electric project, their views of hunting and the land, and their shock over the effects of the construction they saw (Feit 2001). They were also concerned with the changes in Cree relations to Euro-Canadians in recent decades. They saw that Quebecers and Canadians had virtually no need of any Cree products or labor, and that they were taking more and more control of the land, without any effective acknowledgement of the Cree presence and uses. The rhetoric of identity constructed by Hydro-Quebec officials creates a dominant claim that Euro-Canadians and Cree are morally the same. Cree elders were concerned that these relations between Cree and non-Natives were changing in the era of industrial resource development. For them, the centuries old fur trade was a socially structured barter between partners from two cultural and economic systems (Francis and Morantz 1983; Salisbury 1976). Hydro-electric, mining and forestry developments signaled a new era of industrial market exploitation (Feit 1995a; 1995b). Cree elders asserted their views of these relationships both by enhancing their claims to be Cree and different, and by exploring how Cree and Euro-Canadians were related. I begin with the latter.

The "Whitemen" are a creation of the Cree, just as the "Indian" is a creation of Europeans and North Americans. Cree images of "Whitemen" have been discussed by Cree in a variety of settings, and Colin Scott has synthesized material from a range of such exchanges (1989a). Cree images of Whitemen—"Wemistigouchou" in Cree—are also closely tied to Cree self-identities, as well as to complex and pluralistic identities of "others."

Let me introduce the "Whiteman" identities with a personal account. When I was first welcomed into a Cree community in 1968 I was quickly addressed as "my friend," and in effect I was welcomed into a household, given a place to stay adjacent to that family's cabin, and given a place in the social and kinship system. In this sense, Cree social relations are inclusive, and those with whom one shares one's labor and goods become socially linked as friends or kin. Thus when I traveled to other villages I was given things to bring to relatives of those I was staying with in the previous village, and by this exchange of help and gifts, albeit gifts from others, I was incorporated into households in the new villages. This sociality recognizes and actively develops the friendship/kinship between Cree and Whitemen others.

But another image associated with "others" and with Whitemen also exists. Whitemen can be like Atuush, also known in the literature also as Windigo, the cannibal monsters or "wild men" that live in the bush. Atuush are beings known from the myths, and from a few encounters some Cree have had with them. They are not Cree or Whitemen *per se*, they are not human beings, although they may have been at one time. They live in isolation, and they attack people to capture them as slaves for their labor, or to eat them as food. Atuush treat humans as objects, and use them solely for their own interests, without acknowledging their value as persons. Atuush are said to have hearts of ice. And they can be killed only on rare

occasions, usually by pouring boiling liquids down their throats, or by burning them until only the finest ash remains, thereby destroying them with the fire of the commensal hearth. Atuush are beings beyond the boundaries of social and moral life (Scott 1989a). For the older Cree hunters, Whitemen are not coincident with Atuush, but Whitemen like Cree are capable of being or becoming Atuush. In certain contexts, Atuush seem to be used as metaphors of the commodification of human relations in industrial market societies.

The multiple possibilities inherent in these views of Whitemen have been amply confirmed by Cree history. Fur traders brought goods that increased security in the bush and lightened Cree workloads, and some built enduring social relations with Cree. But when fur traders denied Cree advances and goods because of unpaid bills they created hardship, and as recently as the 1930s several Cree families starved in the bush when denied credit and food by traders during a period of game shortages. Industrial development in the north has made travel easier and brought improvements to village life and health care, but the same development is destroying the productivity of extensive sections of the land, and endangering health by reducing bush food harvests and increasing high risk pollutants.

Views of the asocial capacities of non-Natives are thus as deeply grounded in everyday experience as are those of the possibilities of reciprocity with them, and these views are systematically enculturated in children. In the late 1960s I was constantly reminded by Cree adults to carry candies with me in the village to give to kids. I was therefore encouraged to be a generous and responsible Whiteman. Children responded warmly and remembered this generosity. In the mid-1980s I was given a prime cut of a moose meat by a young man in his twenties who came and left it on the table of the house in which I was staying at the time. On the way out the door he asked if I knew why he had brought it, and in response to my puzzled look he told me it was for all the candies I had given him, nearly 20 years earlier.

Yet, in 1968, on the first day I was welcomed into a household of a Cree family, I noticed a child of 3 or 4 years old looking at me cautiously from a distance. The family noticed too, and teased her. They pushed her unwillingly toward the big bearded stranger, until she was crying and lying flat on the floor to better resist being pushed any closer. All the while her grand-parents were laughing gently and saying firmly, "Atuush! Atuush!"

Cree hunters thus use multiple images to structure their active responses to Whitemen. They simultaneously emphasize differences of identity, as they also recognize that the other is their potential kinsman. Thus Cree stories talk about how human beings can become cannibal monsters by isolating themselves, but they also include rich advice on how to save people one suspects of moving towards isolation and asociality. To talk about Atuush is often a way to warn others of where they are heading, and to encourage them to change their ways. Cree can therefore seek opportunities to express caring and to collaborate with those who would become solely self-interested and exploitative, by calling on their shared social and moral capacities and experiences. This is both a multi-facted and potentially flexible model for understanding the social possibilities and "real" imperfections of the world, and a model that provides a variety of ways to actively participate in trying to create the kind of relations that are highly valued and that are considered most effective.

Such a set of connected identities well positions users to recognize domination as an ever present threat and challenge, as well as encouraging an emergent caring and

responsibility in relationships. Pedagogy, resistance and withdrawal are all choices when sociality is denied. Actions can respond to friendship, exploitation and the various practices that combine both, as exemplified in my own treatment as a friendly but rather inexperienced and unsophisticated participant in Cree social life, who often made unexpected and disturbing *faux pas*. Some Waswanipi Cree hunters say that Atuush are not common in the Cree world anymore, that they were more common at the beginning of the 20th century—at a time in which there was greater conflict within Cree society, and when people sometimes starved in the bush (Feit 1994). But some note that Atuush have been returning in the contemporary world, with the growing conflicts over development projects with Euro-Canadians.

Categories of friends or Atuush can both be used for either Cree and Whitemen, and depending on circumstances one can seek to acknowledge the differences of the other, or to encompass others across boundaries.

IDENTITY CONFLICTS 6 — USES OF HYBRIDITY AND MORALITY

The utility of these hybrid identities was clear in how the Cree hunters responded to the announcement of hydro-electric development in their region in the 1970s. Talking of his responses to seeing a construction site for the hydro-electric project for the first time, the late Job Bearskin of Chisasibi spoke in 1972 of how the land was being changed. He used terms that explicitly alluded to the images with which the Cree refer to the cannibal monster Atuush. Cree stories of past personal encounters with Atuush refer to the terrifying approach and passage of a whirlwind, tornado-like event, which knocks down trees and levels patches of land. In the past powerful elders would try to protect people in these circumstances by going outside of the abode so that their spirit helpers could fight off the Atuush. Job's references to what the construction is doing to the land allude to the tornado-like effects of Atuush, and his references to bears recall for hearers that they are both highly respected but are also rare among animals, for they can eat humans. In response to a question from journalist and film-maker Boyce Richardson Job commented:

> "Okay, I will tell you how I feel about it. It was never like this before they came. It was a beautiful earth. The people really liked to look at this beautiful earth, but now it has been destroyed...."
> "It's just like ripping something apart, it doesn't look good."
> "It looks like people have been fighting, everything is shattered. I have seen it before in the mating season for the bear: they fight, and when they do that, they usually tear up a lot of land. They are killing the roots, and in my opinion nothing will grow here again. This is the way it's going to be. The white man is only thinking of himself. Many people are saying that. The white men are not even thinking about the land they are destroying, they are thinking only of money" (Richardson 1991: 163–4; see also Richardson, 1972, 1995).

A couple of years later in 1974 senior negotiators for Quebec and Hydro-Quebec came to Chisasibi to discuss the hydro-electric project with the community. They came to hear at

first hand the complaints of people, to judge their resolve, and if possible to suggest to the Cree that compromise with the development was a reasonable approach; in short they wanted to say to the Cree that their opposition and actions need not be too determined.

During their visit the provincial and Hydro-Quebec representatives spoke frankly, saying that they could not stop the project, that they had no mandate to do so in the negotiations, and that they could not agree to change any of the dam locations. They were prepared to discuss such smaller modifications to the project which the Cree wanted, and they were prepared to discuss other means of helping the Cree to continue their hunting culture and economy.

Community members replied that they were not interested in money, or only in remedial measures, but in means of assuring the protection of the environment and land and of stopping impacts, impacts which the government did not appear to be taking seriously. One local community counselor pointed out that the government said it would give the Cree some land, but that the Cree had rights to land already. A community member clarified, saying that the Cree did not claim exclusive ownership, and that Cree and Whitemen could share the land, if each acted responsibly:

> God created the earth for all men — Indian and White. The earth was not created for someone to destroy. God controls all life and no one has the right to destroy things that are necessary for life . . . no one has the right to deprive us of what is essential to sustain life.

After Chisasibi hunters spoke about sharing the land, government negotiators asserted an equality of destructiveness, and said that all men destroy the land, even when hunting, and that changes have been going on long before the hydro project was announced, and that other changes would continue to occur.

A Cree elder responded that there was no need for the negotiator to answer further as the previous Cree speaker had "spoken the truth which cannot be distorted." Another Cree, a middle-aged man said: "We know you have no love for our people. That is the way the Whiteman is—he does not love his neighbors. Indians have a lot of love for people..." Another Cree speaker added, "He does not listen to us any ways." The government representatives then began to end the meeting, saying "the message was coming across that you people do not want the James Bay Project," and they would report what had been heard to other government authorities.

Whitemen were initially treated as sociable and responsible people, and they were invited to reciprocally share the land with the Cree despite the extensive destruction they had been causing. But the Cree hunters soon shifted to publicly acknowledging that these Whitemen were unable to participate in full social relationships. They denied the neighborly and reciprocal relationships the Cree suggested when they acknowledged that the land was to be shared. They treated the construction as inevitable. They denied their responsibility for their actions that were destructive of the land, saying the damage they caused was of an everyday kind, and morally the same as everyone else did. They implicitly removed morality and divinity from human consideration, ignoring the sacred references in Cree discourses and

moral consideration of actions.

The Cree responses alluded to the monsters with whom there are no communications, and with whom no relationships are possible. Cree questioned the negotiators' willingness to speak truthfully. Here the attempt at building bonds gave way to signaling that sociality and responsible action were not possible, and a wall of opposition, resistance and withdrawal was put up.

In response to this asocial side of the developers the Cree also offered a vision that emphasizes values of sociality and responsible action. Cree therefore highlight a common sociality that they pedagogically seek to establish with non-Cree. But at the same time, they assert a moral standard of action, by which some actions, and inaction, can be differentiated and can be found to be wanting.

One should not take this as simply a matter of passive moral judgment, it is closely linked to claims for agency. Living in Cree communities a pattern of subtle stories and gossip about the foibles and failings of people constantly assert moral standards, albeit contested standards. As a result, any benevolence or judgments towards one's actions and person are complemented by the pressure to act morally and responsibly, and to do better. One is constantly under indirect "encouragement" through gossip and example to live up to collective but diverse values.

The commentaries and judgments on how people act assume that the social actors share a common moral capacity for agency. "Realism" enters as an awareness of the dangers of isolation and destructiveness that follow from abandonment of the moral and sacred responsibilities. Politics is expressed here, despite the dangers, as a recurrent willingness to share the world and build relationships, wherever socially possible. This occurs even in the presence of domination and exploitation by the "other," because without change the destructive effects of the latter are ongoing. Being connected to others shapes a sense of responsibility, seeing how morality is connected to consequence shapes a will to action.

In response to the rhetoric of separations, moral contradictions, and passivity that Cree encounter in colonial discourses and actions, Cree hunters think and act in a context of connections, hybridities, responsibilities and agency that extend throughout the social universe. Yet these strategies acknowledge that radical separations, amorality, asociality, passivity and therefore exploitation and domination, are ever dangers within that universe.

CONCLUSION: THE HYBRIDITY OF OTHERNESS, AND THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF KNOWLEDGE

Finally, let me return to Latour (1993) and the fragments of his arguments that interest me here. He suggests that amodern peoples understand what he called the "hybrids" that partake of both the order of nature and that of culture/society, and the order of science/reason and politics. He argues that the modern project so radically separates the social from nature, science from politics, that it brackets off and ignores the omnipresence of hybrids in thought, practice and institutions. Yet, moderns nevertheless live in worlds populated with unacknowledged hybrids, "things and processes" that do not conform to the radical separations they make. Thus, he suggests no one has ever "been modern," i.e., lived in a

world so divided, or populated by things and processes that conform to such divisions.

In amodern or non-modern cultures, he suggests, there are active techniques for what I describe as attending to and subverting the illusions implicated in radical attempts at separations. Non-moderns actively work to limit such bracketing and to limit the effects of ignoring hybrids. He argues, amoderns carefully think through the connections between the social and the natural orders and between reason/science and politics in its broadest sense, and avoid thinking that one can be changed without the other, or acting without prudence.

The modern stance also incorporates an illusion of knowing subjects removed from agency, of well-being in passivity, images actively used to obscure the agency of some and encourage the passivity of others.

It is in these senses that I understand Cree identity constructions and Atuush. Atuush is about asocial self-interest, irresponsibility, and exploitation, ie. about what all people can become. It is about asocial beings that are still "us." It is also about the dangerous consequences of radical separations and of passivity. By its self-imposed asociality Atuush puts itself partly outside of, and it becomes destructive of, environments, people, and their active relationships. Atuush are fought by actively going into the forest and re-uniting people and spirits and environment.

Thus, I would suggest that Cree show that one should not just resist, one can seek to cure. Whether Atuush is a rampant person or a development corporation, the ideal aim is to return them to the social fold, for their destructive effects continue until they are transformed. All share the capacities to become Atuush, as well as to actively recreate connections, sociality and responsibility. Recognizing the possibilities of being both kin and cannibal, and seeing them as not just connected but constantly remade, would seem to facilitate this reconciliation through both social connections and collective agency, through practical acts that acknowledge and build sociality and that seek to avoid subordination. Thus if Atuush highlights the dangers of not attending to relationships, and the risks of knowledge that envisages itself as being removed from the moral universe of responsible action, it also highlights the dangers of ignoring the hybridity of the "other," which cannot be encompassed by differentiating identity processes.

NOTES

1) In the course of developing this paper I have drawn insights from discussions with many people, and at the risk of omitting some let me thank: Fatima Amarshi, Philip Awashish, Mario Blaser, Diane Cooper, Brian Craik, Rick Cuciurean, Abraham Dixon, Paul Dixon, Tara Goetze, Samuel Gull, Sr., Jasmin Habib, Dawn Martin-Hill, Ignatius LaRusic, Eva Ottereyes, Matthew Ottereyes, Alan Penn, Richard Preston, Boyce Richardson, Marie Roué, Wendy Russell, Allan Saganash, Jr., Colin Scott, and Bill Simeone. I am indebted especially to Mario Blaser for calling my attention to this work of Bruno Latour. Earlier versions of portions of this paper were given at the Northern Studies Association, Conference on Ethnicity and Identity in the North (Sapporo, October 2000), and as the Keynote Address to the Anthropology Graduate Student Conference, University of Alberta (Edmonton, March 2001). The research on which this paper is based was funded through grants from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRCC), and from

the Arts Research Board of McMaster University. Some portions of this paper draw on material also used in other of my publications, including Feit 1995b, 2000a and 2001.

2) Benedict Anderson's seminal work some twenty years ago in *Imagined Communities*, explored the historical development of nationalism, and linked the literature on the culture of identity with that on the politics of identity. Since then identities have become a major area of study in political economy and post-modern studies, and debates over the nature of the identities of Indigenous societies, and over the transformations they may undergo, have become common topics for anthropologists and social scien tists. Recent work on place and locality is explored by Akhil Gupta and James Ferguson (1997) and Pramod Parajuli (1996).
3) I sometimes differentiate within European-American-Canadian-Quebecer, and sometimes I gloss the whole as Euro-Canadian.
4) Berkhofer's (1979) review of the extensive literature on the use of the image of the Indian in scholarship, in the arts and in policy-making throughout the last five centuries shows that a considerable number of Euro-American policy-makers, government and corporate agents, scholars and artists have found that these images of the Indian could serve their own purposes. Thus the images have proved enduring, undiminished by a massive body of knowledge to the contrary from many specific Indigenous societies, and their rich pre- and post-contact histories.
5) Quoted in Folly of the Century, a tabloid produced by "grassroots activists from Canada and the US," n.d., n.p., cited in Donna Patrick, "Language, Power and Resistance: Discourses on Hydro Electric Development in Great Whale River, Quebec" (Unpublished, [1992]).
6) I was called by the Cree to offer testimony that challenged Bertrand's analysis. My comments at that time, however, did not develop in the direction taken in this paper.

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