The Indigene and the Cybersurfer
J. Hillis Miller

> L'inavouable de la communauté, c'est aussi une sou-
> veraineté qui ne peut que se poser et s'imposer en si-
> lence, dans le non-dit.
>
> [The unavowable of the community, it is also a sover-
> eignty which cannot help posing itself and imposing
> itself in silence, by way of the unsaid.]
>
> (Jacques Derrida, *Voyous*; my trans.)

In a call for papers for a special issue of *ARIEL* on "Globalization and Indigenous Cultures," Fengzhen Wang and Shaobo Xie define our present world-wide situation in apocalyptic terms. We are, they say, experiencing the rapid destruction of indigenous cultures by three corrosive forces working together. These are global capitalism, Western (primarily American) popular culture, and new communication technologies. New ubiquitous forms of telecommunication fuel the irresistible hegemony of capitalism and American popular culture. Technology, capitalism, and American popular culture cooperate to uproot and destroy every autochthonous culture around the whole world. "The processes of globalization," say Wang and Xie,

> are irresistibly sucking every nation and community into their
> hegemonic orbit. . . . The desire of global capitalism challenges
> and undermines all traditional forms of human interaction and
> representation. Multinational capital with its hegemonic ide-
> ology and technology seems to be globally erasing difference,
> imposing sameness and standardization on consciousness, feel-
> ing, imagination, motivation, desire, and taste. In exchange for
> multinational capital investment and for access to American
> lifestyles, fashions, values, and conveniences glorified and ro-

manticized by Hollywood films, the underdeveloped and pre-modernized of the earth are unabashedly and unhesitantly sur-rendering their landscapes, resources, traditions, and cultural heritages to cultural capitalism. (Wang and Xie 1)

The image of the "hegemonic orbit" into which indigenous cultures are being "sucked" is particularly forceful. Western cultural capitalism is a kind of black hole into which everything around it swirls and then disappears, never again to be seen.

Since I want to challenge to some degree the paradigm so cogently expressed by Wang and Xie, let me begin by saying that I agree, for the most part, with the dismal picture they present of the destructive effects of global capitalism and Western popular culture. I would add to their picture the present terrifying mutation, in the United States govern-ment, of global capitalism and the ideologies of Western popular cul-ture into a straightforward push toward global military conquest. This means a transformation of United States civil society into a permanent "state of emergency," a permanent "state of exception," a permanent "state of war." This goes along with a state of unrelieved and unreliev-able terror that justifies the suspension of civil liberties and of consti-tutional rights. If the goal of the so-called terrorists is to strike terror into the hearts of American citizens, they have certainly succeeded in that, with the eager cooperation of the American government and the American mass media. Examples of the mediatic generation of terror are the endlessly repeated television shots of the Twin Towers falling down on 9/11 and the endless repetition of the phrases "the war or terror" and "weapons of mass destruction." The threat to national security posed by the "terrorists" is used to justify repression at home, in the name of "homeland security." It also justifies aggression abroad, again in the name of "homeland security."

The slogan of imperialism used to be: "Trade follows the flag." Often, in nineteenth-century Western imperialism, the missionaries were there first, attempting to convert the "heathen savages" to Christianity. When the missionaries got in trouble, an occupying army had to be sent in to protect them. "Trade," that is, economic exploitation, followed soon

after. Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* is the classic, though problematic, representation in a Western fictional work of this historical process. Nowadays a better slogan would be "the flag follows trade," with the supposed justification of "making the world a safer place for democracy," that is, United States capitalism. Global capitalism invades first. Military invasion follows to secure that. Total domination by capital can only be secured, in the end, by actual military occupation. An example is the invasion and occupation of Iraq, which "liberates" Iraqi oil for Western exploitation. The new and unprecedented American foreign policy of "pre-emptive strikes" can justify the bombing and invasion of more or less any country President Bush and his advisers define as "evil-doers." Who will be next? Iran? Saudi Arabia? Syria? North Korea? Libya? Defiance of the United Nations and the refusal to sign important international agreements or treaties, for example the Kyoto Protocol on global warming or the agreement to set up an international court authorized to try perpetrators of war crimes, means that the United States has become the chief rogue state. We operate in defiance of international law and global opinion. That is precisely the definition of a rogue state. (Derrida has written brilliantly about the political resonances of the word "rogue" in *Voyous.*) The United States is armed to the teeth with the "weapons of mass destruction" that we deny other countries the right to have. The Bush administration, so we are told, is quietly increasing the United States nuclear arsenal.

History shows, however, that empire-building eventually over-reaches itself and self-destructs, as happened with the Roman Empire and with the British Empire, on which it used to be said that the sun never sets. Gigantic budget deficits in the United States are perhaps a presage of that ultimate collapse. Or perhaps the destruction of our environment and the inundation of our coastal cities by global warming will bring the end of the United States Empire. Or perhaps it will be massive deaths from an inadequately funded health-care system. Or perhaps the center of global capitalism will shift to other countries, to the European Union or to the People's Republic of China. The latter, so I understand, will soon have the world's largest economy. The largest number of websites by the year 2008 will probably be in Chinese, not in English. The end

of the United States Empire will take a while, however. Meanwhile we United States citizens, and the world, must endure much grief.

As you can see, I think things are even worse than Wang and Xie say. In this truly frightening situation, it is hard to keep one's head or to think clearly. Nevertheless, I want to meditate a little further about the paradigm of global conquest by "cultural capitalism" that Wang and Xie describe, especially as it postulates the ongoing destruction of indigenous communities. The first thing to note is that the discourse of the Wang/Xie statement is a Western cultural product through and through, as is this present essay. Both, by an apparently implacable necessity, perform the thing they deplore, that is the diffusion and hegemony of American cultural creations. "Hegemony" is part of the terminology of Western Marxist cultural studies, as in the work of Ernesto Laclau. The term "post-modernism" is associated with the work of Frederic Jameson. "Globalization," as Jacques Derrida has cogently argued in recent seminars, is a Western Christian concept through and through. That concept is dependent on the theological notion of "the world," as used in the Bible or in St. Augustine. That connection explains why Derrida prefers the French word "mondialisation," "worldifying," to the English "globalization." "Mondialisation" more saliently brings out the theological roots of "globalization" as a concept.

Wang and Xie's paradigm, moreover, also depends on a problematic binary opposition between the indigene and what I am calling the cybersurfer. Wang and Xie more or less take for granted that either sort of person coincides with his or her social and cultural placement, with little or nothing left over or left out. We are what our surrounding culture makes us. When global cultural invades any region, everybody there gradually becomes a cybersurfer, no longer an indigene. This assumption that the individual is saturated by his or her cultural milieu is an important issue, to which I shall return.

The cybersurfer is a quintessential victim of American values and technology. He or she is the "computer nerd" who will soon be found in every country all over "the world," playing computer games that graphically display, and invite participation in, scenes of the utmost violence, listening to pirated MP3 songs by the hundreds that express the essence

of American popular culture, and communicating by way of email, chatrooms, or cellphone with other computer freaks all over the world. A cybersurfer is homeless, rootless, without privacy, exposed in all directions to invasions of his or her home enclosure by various technotele-communication devices. Global cultural capitalism promises that everyone can soon become a computer nerd.

The indigene, however, is as much a Western concept as the cybersurfer is a product of Western cultural capitalism. The notion of the indigene is implicitly associated with the Enlightenment idea of the "noble savage," and with the enthnographical search for what Maurice Blanchot, discussing Claude Lévi-Strauss's *Tristes Tropiques*, calls "man at point zero" (Blanchot, "L'homme au point zero" 87-97; Blanchot, "Man at Point Zero" 73-82). The indigene lives unselfconsciously where he or she was born, as the etymology of the word avers. It means "born within." On the island off the Maine coast where I live most of the year, the distinction is between those "from here," and those "from away." It takes three or four generations of one family born on the island and living out their lives there for the latest generation to become included among those "from here." The indigene is permanently "rooted in one dear particular place," in W. B. Yeats's phrase in "A Prayer for My Daughter" (Yeats 405). He or she remains in the state celebrated so nostalgically and so beautifully by Wallace Stevens in "The Auroras of Autumn." The indigene was in a now-lost state of oneness with his or her milieu and with the others in the community, the "we." Stevens calls it "a time of innocence":

> . . . That we partake thereof,
> Lie down like children, in this holiness,
> As if, awake, we lay in the quiet of sleep,
>
> As if the innocent mother sang in the dark
> Of the room and on an accordion, half-heard,
> Created the time and place in which we breathed . . .
>
> IX
> And of each other thought—in the idiom
> Of the work, in the idiom of the innocent earth,
> Not of the enigma of the guilty dream.

> We were as Danes in Denmark all day long
> And knew each other well, hale-hearted landsmen,
> For whom the outlandish was another day
>
> Of the week, queerer than Sunday. We thought alike
> And that made brothers of us in a home
> In which we fed on being brothers, fed
>
> And fattened as on a decorous honeycomb.
> This drama that we live—We lay sticky with sleep. (Stevens 418-19)

All the salient features of the Western concept of the indigene or of what it is like to live in an undisturbed indigenous community are movingly chanted in this passage. Stevens is a United States poet who has expressed as well as any others of our great poets our sense of homeland places, whether it is Hartford, Connecticut, where Stevens lived, or Pennsylvania Dutch country, where Stevens was born, or Florida, where he vacationed, or even Tennessee, as in "Anecdote of the Jar": "I placed a jar in Tennessee . . ." (Stevens 76). One thinks of all the American place names in Stevens's poetry, for example, the magical line, "The wood-doves are singing along the Perkiomen," in "Thinking of a Relation Between the Images of Metaphors," or of "The Idea of Order at Key West," or of a mention of the "thin men of Haddam," in "Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird," or of the line "Damariscota da da doo," in "Variations on a Summer Day" (Stevens 356, 128-30, 93, 235). "Perkiomen" is the name of a small river in Stevens's native Pennsylvania, Haddam is the name of a town in Connecticut. Damariscota is the name of a coastal village in Maine. It is a Native American name. The list could be extended. Stevens's early poem "Sunday Morning" (Stevens 66-70) celebrates the particularities of the United States landscape as determining the life that is lived there. Many other Stevens poems make the same presupposition, as in the line in "The Comedian as the Letter C": "The natives of the rain are rainy men" (Stevens 37).

Just what are those "salient features" of an indigenous community, according to Stevens? I say "indigenous *community*" because Stevens stresses that it is an experience shared by a "we": "We were as Danes in Denmark all day long. . . ." This assumption that the indigene lives in a

community of other indigenes like himself or herself is one main feature of Stevens's indigene ideology. To be an indigene is to be part of a collectivity and to have collective experience. An indigenous community, moreover, is located in a place, a milieu, an environment, that is cut off from the outside world, the "outlandish," the "queer," one might almost say the uncanny, in the sense implied by the German word "unheimlich," literally "unhomelike." Indigenes are "hale-hearted landsmen." They belong to the land, to its rocks, rivers, trees, soil, and ways of living on the land. That gives them healthy hearts. They would feel uprooted if they moved elsewhere. The indigene feels at home in his place, as Danes feel at home in Denmark, or as bees are at home in their honeycomb.

To be an indigene is to be innocent, childlike. The indigenes' innocence is like that of Adam and Eve before the fall. They know not good and evil. They do not suffer the "enigma of the guilty dream" that torments fallen men and women, for example the terrifying Oedipal male dream of having killed one's father and slept with one's mother. Indigenes lack self-consciousness, as though they were sleepwalkers, or asleep while awake. They are "sticky with sleep." "Sticky" here is associated with the decorous honeycomb on which the indigenes feed. Their at-home-ness makes their milieu a kind of sleep-inducing narcotic, as eating the honey they have collected puts bees to sleep, makes them "sticky with sleep."

Not only are the indigenes not aware of themselves, with the painful self-awareness and habit of guilty introspection that is supposed to characterize Western man. The indigenes are also not aware of their environment in the sense of holding it at arm's length and analyzing it. They take their milieu for granted as something that has always been there and always will be, eternally, as Denmark is for the Danes, according to Stevens. The wide-spread resistance to the evidence of global warming may be generated in part by this mythical assumption that our environment is unchangeable, endlessly renewable. Why does Stevens choose Danes as exemplary of an indigenous community? I suppose because they live in a small country, have a more or less homogeneous culture, and speak a "minority" language that cuts them off from others. That fits most people's idea of an indigenous community, including the one presupposed in the Wang/Xie call for papers.

To mention language leads me to note that language plays a crucial role in Stevens's description. An indigenous community is created not just through shared ways of living, building, and farming on a particular homeland soil. It is also created out of language, by way of language, by way of a particular language that belongs to that place. One radical effect of the global hegemony of Western cultural capital is to endanger, if not extinguish, so-called "minority" languages everywhere. The indigenous peoples who inhabited the State of Maine where I live in the United States had dwelled here for as much as twelve thousand years before the white man came. By "here" I mean right here, within a mile or two of where I am writing this. On a nearby shore there is a large shell midden going back at least two thousand years, and a nearby dig off the island under twenty-five feet of water found artifacts going back seven thousand years. We eradicated most of the indigenes and their culture in a couple of centuries. Only a few still speak the "native languages" of the Penobscots or the Micmacs. The goal of some of them now is to run gambling casinos, hardly consonant with maintaining their "native culture." A dozen indigenous languages can disappear forever in California in a single year, as the last "native speaker" of each one of them dies.

Thinking of the vanishing of indigenous languages makes the language theme in Stevens's lines all the more poignant. He sees an indigenous community as generated by language, in an act of maternal and artistic creation that mimes the creation of the world, as described in *Genesis*, out of the primordial darkness: "As if the innocent mother sang in the dark / Of the room and on an accordion, half-heard, / Created the time and place in which we breathed . . . / And of each other thought." Why "on an accordion"? I suppose because it is a "folk instrument." An accordion is suitable for creating the togetherness of a folk. Perhaps also it is because overtones of consonant togetherness in the word "accord" are buried in the word "accordion." The members of an indigenous community are in accord. They are "of one accord." In an assertion that recalls Heidegger's argument in "Bauen Wohnen Denken [Building Dwelling Thinking]" and in his essays on Hölderlin's poems,[1] Stevens says that the time and place of an indigenous community are not there to begin with and then occupied by the people. A native lan-

guage creates the homeland that gives a people breathing room, a place to breathe, and therefore also a place in which they may use breath to speak to one another.

Stevens's sentence cited above ends with the phrase "And of each other thought." The language that creates the time and place of an indigenous community is also the medium in which the "natives" or "autochthons" think of one another. Each indigene can penetrate the minds of his or her fellows because they all speak the same language, the same "idiom," that is, a dialect peculiar to a specific group. It is the "idiom of the work," that is, I take it, an idiom special to the work the innocent mother plays on the accordion. The reader may also hear an overtone of "work" as the collective creation of an indigenous community through language and through the physical transformation of the environment. This would be akin to the Marxist notion of work or to Heidegger's notion of "Bauen," building.

The mother's accordion work is also in "the idiom of an innocent earth." The earth is innocent because it too has not yet fallen with Adam and Eve's fall. The language spoken by indigenes is, as they are, born of the earth and remains rooted in it. Language, for Stevens here, is the embodiment of thought. Each native knows what his or her fellow is thinking because, as we say, "they speak the same language." The result is that "we knew each other well," because, in Stevens's sexist formulation, "we thought alike / And that made brothers of us in a home / In which we fed on being brothers." I shall return to this exclusion of women in the invocation of "brotherhood," blood brotherhood.

This at-home-ness, finally, means that the place and the community dwelling within it are sacred. These happy autochthons "lie down like children in this holiness." The creation of a community, through an idiomatic language and a collective living together, speaking together, and thinking together, creates a sacred place, makes the whole place sacred.

Wonderful! Hooray! Or, as Stevens puts this exuberance a few lines later in "The Auroras of Autumn": "A happy people in a happy world— / Buffo! A ball, an opera, a bar" (Stevens 420). Only two problems shadow this celebration. One is that the notion of an indigenous community is a myth, or, in Stevens's terminology, an "idea." One could

say that all Stevens's work goes to demonstrate that this is the case. The homogeneous community of indigenes is always a matter of something that hypothetically once existed and no longer exists. "We <u>were</u> as Danes in Denmark," but that is no longer the case. As Stevens puts this, a few lines earlier:

> There may always be a time of innocence.
> There is never a place. Or if there is no time,
> If it is not a thing of time, nor of place,
>
> Existing in the idea of it, alone,
> In the sense against calamity, it is not
> Less real. (Stevens 418)

An indigenous community is real enough, but it has the reality of something that exists only in the idea of it, before or after time, and outside of all place.

The other menace that shadows this idea is that even the mythical innocent community was always darkened by the terror of invasion. It exists as "the sense against calamity," but that calamity is always imminent. The always about to happen calamity appears suddenly as a stark fear or terror just a few lines beyond the long passage I have been discussing:

> Shall we be found hanging in the trees next spring?
> Of what disaster is this the imminence?
> Bare limbs, bare trees and a wind as sharp as salt? (Stevens 419)

The poem, after all, is called "The Auroras of Autumn." Its chief figure is terrifying autumnal displays of Aurora Borealis or northern lights, as they presage winter. Simply to name all the features of an indigenous community, even in a lyric poem so celebratory of the idea of it as is Stevens's, is to destroy it by bringing it self-consciously into the light. To name it is to call up its specular image: the terror of its destruction. This obverse is generated out of its very security, as a sense of disaster's imminence. "A happy people in a happy world" sounds, and is, too good to

be true. To imagine having it is to be terrified of losing it. The imagination of being at home, in a homeland or "Heimat," instantly raises the fearful ghost of the "unheimlich," the uncanny, the terrorist at the door, threshold, or frontier, or most likely already secretly resident somewhere inside the homeland.

Jennifer Bajorek, in a brilliant unpublished essay entitled "The Offices of Homeland Security, or, Hölderlin's Terrorism," has shown the way the rhetoric of the Bush administration, in a sinister way, has echoed the mystified appeal of Fascist states, for example the Nazi one, to the notion of a "homeland" mingling "Blut und Erd," that is, racial purity and rootedness in one dear particular place. Our newly created "Office of Homeland Security," now renamed as the "Department of Homeland Security" and elevated to Cabinet rank, presupposes that we are a homogeneous homeland, an indigenous people whose security is endangered by terrorists from the outside, racially and ethnically strangers, who are probably also already inside, unheimlich presences within the homeland. As Bajorek recalls, Bush said in a speech of September 20, 2001, "either you are with us or you are with the terrorists" (Bush 2001). It is easy to see what is fraudulent about this use of the terms "homeland" and "security." I do not deny the "terrorist threat." Lots of people hate the United States. The twin towers were really destroyed. Nevertheless, the United States is not and never was a "homeland" in the sense the word implies. Relatively few United States citizens stay in the place they were born. We are nomads, even if we were born here. I was born in the state of Virginia, but my family left when I was a few months old, and I have never been resident there since. I have lived all over the place in the United States, as many of our citizens have. Huge numbers of our citizens, moreover, are immigrants, many quite recent immigrants. Almost all of us are descended from immigrants who occupied an alien land. In my case, in part at least, my male ancestors were late eighteenth-century German unwilling immigrants, remnants of mercenary soldiers in the British army who were captured by the Americans, allowed to settle, and then became known as the "Pennsylvania Dutch." Only the tiny number of Native Americans can truly call themselves indigenes. Of course their ancestors too were once newcomers, invaders from Asia of

an unpeopled land who crossed by the Bering land bridge just after the last ice age. The United States is made up of an enormous diversity of different races and ethnic groups speaking many different languages.

The Department of Homeland Security in its surveillance activities has made many citizens or residents of the United States markedly less secure, certainly far less able to maintain the privacy of their homes, or of their email, or of information about the books they read, just as the invasion of Iraq in the name of national security has arguably made our "homeland" far less secure. It has done this by multiplying many times over the terrorist threat and by leading a country like North Korea to conclude that its only possible safety lies in developing deterrent nuclear weapons as fast as possible. To be "secure," as Bajorek observes, means to be "without care," and, as I have shown, the myth of the indigenous community generates the terror of losing it. It generates the insecurity it would protect us against.

Bajorek's paper, in a subtle, balanced, and careful analysis, shows that the notions of homeland security and of an indigenous German community ascribed by Heidegger to Hölderlin is a mystified misreading. Hölderlin rather, in his poems about rivers and valleys and mountains, for example in "Heimkunft / An die Verwandten [Homecoming / To the Related Ones]," read in admirable detail by Bajorek, presents the homeland as a place lacking ground, an "Abgrund." It is a place of unhealed fissures and unfathomable abysses, rather than as a place where an indigenous community in the sense I have identified it, with Wallace Stevens's help, could dwell. "[I]f for Hölderlin 'home,'" says Bajorek,

> can only be a place to which one returns, and even to which one is *always* returning, this is not simply because the home that man makes on this earth is not a dwelling place, nor is it because it isn't, in any rigorous sense, a place at all. It is because, for Hölderlin, being-there is always a being-elsewhere, and first takes place by way of a departure. (Bajorek 24-5)

I conclude at this point that the concept of indigenous communities, as invoked by Wang and Xie, is perhaps somewhat suspect. It depends on a Rousseauistic and perhaps to some degree Marxist myth of "man

at point zero." It would be prudent to doubt such a thing ever existed in reality or exists in reality anywhere in the world today. I say "Marxist myth" because, as Blanchot shows in "Man at Point Zero," Lévi-Strauss's disappointed search for an ideal innocent indigenous community among the Nambikwara of South America was motivated in part by dubious Marxist millennial or utopian notions of post-capitalist communities of happy proletarians, at the end of history, enjoying their collective dictatorship, in a repetition of the happy savage communities at the beginning of human history.

Another Western notion of community, of much more recent origin, has been developed by twentieth-century theorists. Without denying the cogency of Wang and Xie's argument for the truly deplorable effects of global cultural capitalism, I want now to identify that alternative notion of community and to think what it might mean for a possible resistance to the hegemony of global cultural capitalism. This notion of an "unworked" or "unavowable" or "secret" community, the "community of those who have nothing in common," is developed in the work of Georges Bataille, Maurice Blanchot, Giorgio Agamben, Alphonso Lingis, Jacques Derrida, and Jean-Luc Nancy (see list of "Works Cited or Mentioned.") Blanchot's *La communauté inavouable* focuses on the investigation of community as it appears throughout Bataille's work. Nancy makes references to Bataille that are essential to his argument. These six writers are by no means singing the same tune or preaching the same doctrine, however. They do not make a community of the Same, as of Danes in Denmark, any more than American popular culture is a monolithic, monolingual, univocal ideology. The writers I have listed propose an alternative notion of community. This is the "community," as Bataille puts it, in a sentence used by Blanchot as the epigraph for *The Unavowable Community*, "of those who do not have a community [La communauté de ceux qui n'ont pas de communauté]" (Blanchot, *The Unavowable Community* 1; Blanchot, *La communauté inavouable* 9). The thinking of these theorists, however, is heterogeneous. They contest one another, however implicitly. Each of these six writers, moreover, is himself to some degree heterogeneous in what he says about community, as Blanchot makes a point of affirming about

Bataille. An immense trajectory would be necessary to track the thought about community of all six. Oversimplifying radically, I shall focus most on Nancy's *La communauté désoeuvree* (*The Unworked Community*), and on just one paragraph of that. (The English translation calls the book *The Inoperative Community*, but I prefer "Unworked," because of its economic or Marxist overtones, in spite of its being a neologism.) Nancy's thought about community is subtle, complex, and not all that easy to grasp. I have space, however, to look closely at only one passage.

Nancy sees persons not as individualities but as "singularities." Persons are agents each fundamentally different from all the others. Each harbors a secret alterity that can by no means be communicated to any other singularity. These singularities are essentially marked by their finitude or mortality. Each is from moment to moment, from the beginning, defined by the fact that it will die. Here is Nancy's expression of this, in a passage that is cited in part by Blanchot, in *La communauté inavouable*. Blanchot says it is the essential affirmation in Nancy's *La communauté désoeuvrée*:

> That which is not a subject opens up onto a community whose conception, in turn, exceeds the resources of a metaphysics of the subject. Community does not weave a superior, immortal, or transmortal life between subjects (no more than it is itself woven of the inferior bonds of a consubstantiality of blood or of an association of needs), but it is constitutively, to the extent that it is a matter of a "constitution" here, calibrated on [ordonnée à] the death of those whom we call, perhaps wrongly, its "members" (inasmuch as it is not a question of an organism). But it does not make a work of this calibration. Community no more makes a work out of death than it is itself a work. The death upon which community is calibrated [s'ordonne] does not *operate* the dead being's passage into some communal intimacy, nor does community, for its part, *operate* the transfiguration of its dead into some substance or subject—be these homeland [patrie], native soil or blood, nation, a delivered or fulfilled humanity, absolute phalanstery [phalanstère absolu:

the word "phalanstery" means "a community of the followers of Charles Fourier," from *phalanx* ("any close-knit or compact body of people") plus *monastère*, monastery.], family, or mystical body. Community is calibrated on death as on that of which it is precisely impossible to *make a work* (other than a work of death, as soon as one tries to make a work of it). Community occurs in order to acknowledge this impossibility, or more exactly—for there is neither function nor finality here—the impossibility of making a work out of death is inscribed and acknowledged as "community."

Community is revealed in the death of others; hence it is always revealed to others. [La communauté est révélée dans la mort d'autrui: elle est ainsi toujours révélée à autrui.] Community is what takes place always through others and for others. It is not the space of the *egos* [des '*moi*']—subjects and substances that are at bottom immortal—but of the *I*'s [des *je*], who are always *others* [des *autrui*] (or else are nothing). If community is revealed in the death of others, it is because death itself is the true community of *I*'s that are not *egos*. It is not a communion that fuses the *egos* into an *Ego* or a higher *We*. It is the community of *others*. [C'est la communauté des *autrui*.] The genuine community of mortal beings, or death as community, establishes their impossible communion. Community therefore occupies a singular place: it assumes the impossibility of its own immanence [l'impossibilité de sa proper immanence], the impossibility of a communitarian being in the form of a subject. In a certain sense community acknowledges and inscribes—this is its peculiar gesture—the impossibility of community. [La communauté assume et inscrit—c'est son geste et son tracé propres—en quelque sorte l'impossibilité de la communauté.] (Nancy, *The Inoperative Community* 14-15; Nancy, *La communauté désoeuvrée* 41-2).

The reader will see that Nancy's model of community puts in question, point by point, all the features of Stevens's model of an indigenous com-

munity, the happy state of Danes in Denmark. Each person is a "singularity," that is, wholly other to all the others. Each singularity, in Nancy's model of community, is not a self-enclosed subjectivity such as the other model assumes. Each singularity is exposed, at its limit, to a limitless or abyssal outside that it shares with the other singularities, from the beginning, by way of their common mortality. Their community is defined by the ubiquity of death. This death we experience not in our own death, since that cannot be "experienced," but in the death of another, the death of a friend, a neighbor, a relative. The passage culminates in the resounding contradiction asserting that community inscribes, as what is most proper to it, most its own, the impossibility of community.

The language defining Nancy's model of community is, necessarily, figurative, catachrestic, since no literal language exists for it. Even conceptual words are used "anasemically," that is, against the grain of their dictionary or normal semantic meanings. They are also used with an implicit or explicit play on their metaphorical roots. Examples of such words in Nancy's book are "singularité" itself, or "désoeuvrée," or "partagé," or "com-parution," or "limite," or "exposition," or "interruption," or "littérature," as in his phrase "literary communism." Blanchot's complex use of the word "désastre" in *L'écriture du désastre* (Blanchot, *L'écriture du désastre* 1995) is another example of this way with words. I give the words primarily in the original French, because their nuances are not easily translated.

The first model of community is easy to understand because it is the one most of "us" take for granted. Nancy's model is more difficult to understand or to think. Moreover, one resists thinking it or taking it seriously because it is devastating, a disaster, for the other model. Nancy's systematic dismantling of that other model's assumptions confirms that. No subjectivities, no intersubjective communication, no social "bonds," no collective consciousness, exist in Nancy's "unworked community."

One word cognate with "community," "communion," leads to Christian communion and to Freud's theories of the primal horde. Here a challenge to Nancy by Jacques Derrida will help me to refine further the two notions of community. Derrida's target is not Nancy's *La communauté désoeuvré* but his *L'experience de la liberté*. In fairness to Nancy,

it must be said that what Derrida objects to in *L'expérience de la liberté* (1988) (trans. as *The Experience of Freedom* [1993]), that is, the emphasis on "brotherhood," is lacking in *La communauté désoeuvrée* (1986). The members of a community, says Nancy in *The Experience of Freedom*, are in communion with one another by way of what they share. What they share is that they have killed the father and have shared, sheered out (partagé), his body and eaten it. This makes them "brothers," "semblables" ("mon frère, mon semblable," says Bauldelaire in an apostrophe to his reader). They are the same. They share a guilt. They are all like one another. Hence they are transparent to one another, like the brothers in Stevens's poem. The French revolutionary motto, "liberty, equality, fraternity," links freedom to fraternity. That freedom needed to be asserted in a violent act against monarchal sovereignty. The French revolutionaries shared the guilt of killing the king. Modern English democracy has the beheading of King Charles I on its conscience.

A fraternal community is united in its opposition to those who are not semblables, who are different, who do not take communion, who do not act in the name of Christ's words to his disciples at the Last Supper, a brotherhood if there ever was one: "This do in remembrance of me." Such a community is a community of intolerance, often of unspeakable cruelty to those outside the community, as the Christians expelled Arabs and Jews from Spain. Such a community depends for its solidarity on exclusion. You are either with us or against us. If you are against us you are "evil-doers," as George W. Bush called Iraq, North Korea, Iran, etc., in the end every other nation but the United States, and then only a small group there, the rest being sympathizers, "focus groups," peaceniks, communists, subversives, hidden terrorists, friends of terrorism, in short, evil-doers. This happens by an implacable and frightening suicidal logic that is built into democracy defined as a brotherhood of "semblables." Ultimately only Bush and his cronies are left among the good people, and then they will start bumping one another off, as one or another of them "falls on his (or her) sword." The latter phrase has been used recently to describe the way the head of the CIA, George Tenet, has taken responsibility for the lie in George W. Bush's State of the Union address of 2003 about Iraq seeking uranium from Niger.

Where by the way are the women in this paradigm, sisters, mothers, wives, lovers? Are they not non-semblables, unlike the men? Maurice Blanchot thinks so, as did Marguerite Duras. In "The Community of Lovers," a chapter in *The Unavowable Community*, Blanchot proposes, on the basis of a reading of Duras's récit, *The Malady of Death*, with reference to Levinas and to the story of Tristan and Isolde, another version of the "unavowable community" he has delineated in the first part of his book. This one is the impossible "community of two" made up of two lovers.

Derrida, in *Voyous*, is closer to Blanchot or to Nancy in *La communauté désoeuvrée* than to Nancy's notion of a brotherhood of free men in *The Experience of Freedom*. Against Nancy, he poses a community of dissimilars, non-semblables. This community is made up of neighbors who are defined by their absolute difference from on another:

> . . . l'éthique pure, s'il y en a, commence à la dignité respectable de l'autre comme l'absolu *dissemblable*, reconnu comme non reconaissable, voire comme méconnaissable, au-delà de tout savoir, de toute connaissance et de toute reconnaissance: loin d'être son commencement, le prochain comme semblable ou resssemblant nomme la fin ou la ruine de l'éthique pure, s'il y en a. [. . . pure ethics, if there is such a thing, begins with the dignity of the other that commands respect as the dissimilar absolute, recognized as not recognizable, or rather as unrecognizable, beyond all knowing, all knowledge, and all recognition: far from being its beginning, the neighbor as like or as resembling names the end or the ruin of pure ethics, if there is such a thing.] (Derrida 90; my trans.).

I end by asking: Suppose one were to take seriously Nancy's notion of a community of singularities, or, in Lingis's phrase, the community of those who have nothing in common? How would this lead one to think differently from Wang and Xie about the effects of globalization? The first thing to say is that Nancy's conception of community and the tradition to which it belongs are as much Western inventions as any other product of cultural capitalism. Nancy's community of singularities is

Western through and through. This is evidence that "Western ideology" is not some monolithic thing. Nevertheless, Nancy's concept of community is, like other such products, asserted with apodictic universality. It is not just Western men and women who are singularities, in Nancy's formulations, but all men and women everywhere at all times. Nevertheless, Nancy's ideas are a Western product, perhaps even a product of the resources of the French language. I do not see any way out of this aporia. Any idea of community will be idiomatic, product of a given language. It will, however, tend to express itself as universal. Even so, it would be plausible to argue that each community should have its own singular idea of community, appropriate only for that community alone. That would raise questions about this essay, not to speak of Nancy's universalizing. How can I speak except from within my own tradition?

The second thing to say is that if we take Nancy's model of community seriously, it disqualifies, to some degree at least, Wang and Xie's opposition between the happy indigene and the cybersurfer, the former at home in his or her particular culture, the latter penetrated through and through by global capitalism, corrupted by it, deprived of his or her specificity and made the same as everyone else. You will remember how Wang and Xie put this: "Multinational capital with its hegemonic ideology and technology seems to be globally erasing difference, imposing sameness and standardization on consciousness, feeling, imagination, motivation, desire, and taste." According to Nancy's model of community, the singularity of neither indigene nor cybersurfer is touched either by the interpellations of indigenous culture, for the former, or by leveling American popular culture, for the latter. Beneath their superficial cultural garments both indigene and cybersurfer remain singular, wholly other to one another, even though they may be living together as indigenes or communicating via email or AOL Instant Messenger as cybersurfers. To put this in Heidegger's terms used in *Sein und Zeit*, the loneliness of Dasein, fundamentally characterized by its "Sein zum Tode (being towards death)," remains intact beneath the alienating superficialities of Das Man, the "they" (Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit* 235-267; Heidegger, *Being and Time* 279-311). It is now as true as ever that each man or woman dies his or her own death.

Nevertheless, it is plausible to argue that dwelling within the uniqueness of a so-called indigenous culture, that is, a local way of living untouched by globalization, if such a thing remains, is a better way to live the otherness of singularities to one another than the global homogenizing culture that is rapidly becoming the most widely experienced way to be human today. Diversity of cultures, languages, idioms, I agree, is a good in itself, just as is a diversity of plant and animal species. Moreover, certain local cultures, it may be, are closer to recognizing the ubiquity of death in their religious and cultural expressions than is Western popular culture's bland avoidance of death through its banal spectacular presentation in cinema and television. Global capitalism has to be resisted by each local culture as best it can. One way, as Nancy suggests, is through what he calls "literary communism," that is, literature, including philosophy and critical theory, as well as poems, novels, cinema, and television shows, that confronts our solidarity in singularity, even though it cannot ever, he argues, be "confronted." Blanchot's "récits" might be taken as models of such literature. Alas, precious little of that is being written or produced for the new media today.

Finally, I do not think much is gained by vilifying telecommunication technology as such. For one thing, these technologies are here to stay. Moreover, cinema, television, cell phones, and computers are relatively neutral, in spite of the way their importation radically transforms any "indigenous" culture. The cultural force of these prosthetic devices, however, depends on the uses that are made of them. They can be used to reinforce and preserve local languages and local ways of life, however difficult it may be to do that. A recent essay in *Scientific American*, "Demystifying the Digital Divide" (Warschauer 42-7), distinguishes sharply between projects that simply set up computers in "underdeveloped countries," in which case they are likely to be used primarily to play computer games, and those projects that use computer installations to help support and maintain a local culture. Warschauer's prime example is the Gyandoot ("purveyor of knowledge") project in an impoverished region of India, Madhya Pradesh. This project circulates through an intranet information about crop prices, medical treatment, and so on that is intended to help maintain and improve the "indigenous culture,"

not destroy it, though one might still argue that the presence of computers is in itself the beginning of the end for that local culture.

The leveling effects of global cultural capitalism are enormously powerful, but small-scale local ways can be found to resist those forces in the name of the idiomatic and the singular. Though Western critical theory and literature are concomitants of global cultural capitalism, they can be used to support resistance to globalization, just as the telecommunication products of capitalism can be mobilized against capitalism. It is a matter of deliberate choice, not necessarily a matter of passive submission to an inevitable Juggernaut. Or rather, the resistance to global capitalism is a matter of certain anomalous forms of speech acts performed within "indigenous communities," now seen as gatherings of singularities. These speech acts perform local transformations of the global situation that might just possibly help maintain local communities of singularities. Somewhat paradoxically, another Western product, literature, may offer models for this. Examples are Wallace Stevens's poems and those Victorian novels that often, in the end, assert the unknowable singularity and solitude of their characters in the crucial decisions they make. Demonstrating that persuasively, however, would be another story.

Notes

1 See Heidegger, Martin. "Heimkunft / An Die Verwandten", ". . . dichterisch wohnet der Mensch . . .", Vorträge und Aufsätze, ". . . Poetically Man Dwells . . . .", and "Homecoming/To Kindred Ones."

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