

Determination, Determinations, and Dissemination

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READING THE ENGAGEMENTS, sometimes direct and sometimes oblique, with my exhortation to “Always Indigenize!” has brought home to me both the inescapable deficiencies and limited impact of academic writing, and the need to continue to do it. At a time when significant but selective re-investment in Canada’s universities threatens to make them more neocolonial than postcolonial, the need to make our universities and colleges the object of inquiry as well as its locus has rarely been more urgent. And what happens in Canada must also be seen in international perspective in order that we gain a clearer sense of where we need to be directing our current critical and communicative efforts, and who might join us from away in robustly academic multilateralism.

There is a double infinity to any text: an infinity internal to its exegesis, and an infinity of contexts which will inflect or direct interpretation ever differently. The essays that follow here demonstrate this in provocative and inspiring ways. Paulomi Chakraborty shows how a universalizing term like “Always” implicates the problem of universals as such, and their specific Enlightenment and Euro-imperialist histories. She reframes Indigenizing outside the settler-colony frame in realities that show the limits to settlement in India while testing the notion of Indigenosity.

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against the exclusions suffered by “Adivasi/tribal” peoples and the limit case of the Dalit. Lynn Mario T. Menezes de Sousa, who gave a wonderful plenary address at the Congress in Winnipeg in 2004, lays out some of his most striking arguments here. He explains the situation of Indigenous peoples and languages in Brazil where the linguistic nation has endeavoured to accommodate the diversity of literacies active within it. Educational policy is well intentioned but distorting and assimilative, and its limits can be mapped in the scene of “writing” from a “third space” beyond both academic and indigenous vantages yet representing both metropolitan centrality and Third World marginality. A socially-based visual perceptivism reveals just how wrong Ong and his many disciples were about aboriginal orality, while reminding readers that academic work and personal interaction look very different when the seer is always also seen. While authenticity remains in the eye of the dominant beholder, hybridity will be seen and resisted as contamination and corruption rather than the necessary self-transformations of indigenous peoples. Ignorance and arrogance converge to ensure the Other stays pure.

The contribution by Rosemary Hennessy, an American scholar, offers further, strongly contrasting variations on the theme of indigenizing as a decolonizing practice. She grounds her essay firmly in the directive contexts of NAFTA and north-south relations in Mexico today. She understands indigenizing at this geopolitical moment as critical memory, local knowing, resistant mobilization, and the modelling of alternatives to hegemonic social and economic formations. As maquiladoras migrate southwards in Mexico and indigenous peoples northwards, the potential for exploitation intensifies, but so does the ability to find alternatives and to share those with others who will adapt them to their own needs. This is where the Coalition for Justice in the Maquiladoras comes in, and where Hennessy and her collaborators from Canada, the United States, and Mexico are indigenizing, leading from below as the Zapatistas would say, by collecting testimony for organization and publication from those who have had to survive where capital meets—and depletes or displaces—campesina and caracol.

Like the essays in the first part of this forum, the three published here evince a diversity that Cheryl Suzack joins Victor Li and Edward Said in welcoming as cautionary and productive “untidiness.” I accept the basic impetus behind and effect of this term. But I feel the need to add two caveats. First, untidiness can be a euphemism for irresponsibility and injustice of the most heinous sort, as in Secretary Rumsfeld’s appeal to the fogginess of war and “untid[iness] of freedom” (cited in Conlogue

and Mackinnon). Untidiness is not immune from analysis and judgement. Moreover, tidiness can be an intellectual and political virtue, consistent with its derivation from German *zeitig*, meaning “timely, seasonable, opportune.” Tidiness as a temporal concept needs to be pushed back against its currently dominant, visually descriptive role, in an insistence that we be as clear and comprehensive as possible in our articulations, even strategically universalist and/or holistic at times. Accordingly, and *pace* Brutus (*Julius Caesar* 4.3.212–223), “There is a tid[iness] in the affairs of men,” and women and children, which leads not to “fortune” but to less rapacious, more sustainable local and planetary “ventures.” We can and must perform community beyond conscription and across difference. Otherwise, we forbid ourselves from ever claiming and acting as if “Our legions are brim full, our cause is ripe.”

Works Cited

- Conlogue, Ray and Mark MacKinnon. “Fighting over the spoils.” *Globe and Mail* April 19, 2003. R1,4.
- Shakespeare, William. *Julius Caesar. The Complete Works of Shakespeare*. Ed. David Bevington. New York: HarperCollins, 1992.