6. *Theorizing Indigenous Media*

BRENDAN HOKOWHITU

> [Māori] are aware of how negatively we are portrayed in television, in film and in newspapers . . . [and] are becoming increasingly aware that at some stage in this media game, we must take control of our own image . . . only when we do that, only when we have some measure of self-determination about how we appear in the media will the truth be told about us. Only when we have control of our image will we be able to put on the screen the very positive images that are ourselves, that are us.
>
> —Merata Mita, "The Value of the Image," cited in Leonie Pihama, "Re-Presenting Maori"

In Arizona in the mid-1960s, Sol Worth and John Adair carried out a unique project, which later led to their 1972 book *Through Navajo Eyes: An Exploration in Film Communication and Anthropology.*[1] The project was revolutionary. First, it veered away from the traditions of Western rationalism and anthropology by acknowledging that the Navajo might see the world differently than Western eyes, signifying a multi-lensed reality. Second, the researchers "put the means of production and representation into the hands of indigenous people . . . teaching filmmaking to young Navajo students without the conventions of western production and editing, to see if their films would reflect a distinctively Navajo film worldview."[2] Worth and Adair's vision is outlined in the opening paragraphs of their book:

> Our object in the summer of 1966 was to determine whether we could teach people with a culture different from ours to make motion pictures depicting their culture and themselves as they saw fit. We assumed that if such people would use motion pictures in their own way, they would use them in a patterned rather than a random fashion, and that the particular patterns they used would reflect their culture and their particular cognitive style.[3]

While the importance of *Through Navajo Eyes* is hardly recognized in New Zealand, many of the underpinning ideas and problematics that the project's unique approach brings to bear can be seen resurfacing as Indigenous people have attempted to define Indigenous media. For instance, central to the above quote is the thesis that if

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Indigenous people control media technology then, in this case, the filmic production will reflect the "patterns" and "cognitive style" of Indigenous epistemic knowledge.

The development of Indigenous-controlled media has largely occurred because Indigenous peoples have witnessed their misrepresentation and nonrecognition by others. In defining "the politics of recognition" in relation to what he refers to as "subaltern groups," Charles Taylor suggests that

> identity is partly shaped by recognition or its absence, often by the *mis*recognition of others, and so a person or group of people can suffer real damage, real distortion, if the people or society around them mirror back a confining or demeaning or contemptible picture of themselves. Nonrecognition or misrecognition can inflict harm, can be a form of oppression, imprisoning someone in a false, distorted, and reduced mode of being.[4]

As the Introduction to this collection points out, in New Zealand, Indigenous claims to distinctive rights have occurred simultaneously with the development of Indigenous media. A significant moment for New Zealand Indigenous media occurred in 2003 when the host of the annual Treaty of Waitangi celebrations, Ngā Puhi (a northern North Island *iwi*), banned mainstream media journalists from attending the annual pre-celebration gatherings because historically public sentiment had been so heavily

Figure 6.1. Keith Hawke, Waka Attewell, and Barry Barclay filming *Tangata Whenua* (Wellington: Pacific Films, 1974) at the Ngāti Porou Marae, Tikitiki, East Cape, April 25, 1974. Image courtesy of photographer Rick Spurway.

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influenced by the news media's misrepresentation of these events. As Sue Abel points out, "Mainstream media had over the years continually overlooked what went on for several days at Waitangi, focusing instead on what was often merely a few moments of conflict."[5] The actions of Ngā Puhi at once recognized their historical misrecognition in mainstream media, while also creating the conditions for a space of self-realization.

Robert Young suggests the oppressive process of colonization in and of itself has initiated a "distinctive postcolonial epistemology and ontology."[6] Here, Young is suggesting that resistance to colonization itself has produced a postcolonial consciousness within Indigenous peoples, which in turn has led to Indigenous claims to distinctive rights. Indigenous media has largely been initiated as this consciousness burgeoned from the late 1960s onwards. Jane Dunbar in her analyses of the quality of critical news journalism in New Zealand finds that Māori news journalists created "parallel institutions to counter the monocultural depiction of their reality in mainstream."[7] Joanne Te Awa likewise finds that " 'bad news,' stereotypical representation, invisibility and poor recruitment strategies [was] partly behind the growth of separate Maori media."[8] Thus, the actions of Māori news media reflect Merata Mita's call to "control our own image."

Yet, can controlling our own image be that straightforward? In *Postcolonial Cultures,* Simon Featherstone lays the groundwork for interpreting popular culture, including media, through some critical problematics that postcolonial theory is attempting to address. For instance, he asks:

> "Can the Subaltern Speak?" . . . Spivak's answer to her own question is a qualified "no." A primary condition of subalternity, she argues, is, in fact, a lack of position of speaking. For subalterns, the condition of being postcolonial is one of being relentlessly constituted in the discourses of power that control their situation and that lie beyond their agency . . . a warning about the limitations of the intellectual endeavour of postcolonialism, and a challenge towards its transformation and the creation of the space for that speaking and self-realisation.[9]

Gayatri Spivak's belief that the subaltern is "relentlessly constituted in the discourses of power" inherently relates to Indigenous politics of recognition and politics of appropriation, which this chapter will explicate. As a focus, this chapter unpacks the question "What is Indigenous media?" and, in doing so, locates Indigenous media within some of the key debates currently occurring in Indigenous studies.

Politics of Appropriation

For the purposes of this chapter, the politics of appropriation refers to the problematics surrounding the uptake of media technologies by Indigenous peoples, specifically in relation to decolonization. As Mita argues,

> I can unite the technical complexity of film with a traditional Māori philosophy that gives me a sense of certainty, an unfragmented view of society, and an orientation towards people

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> rather than institutions. This gives me the passion and intensity . . . it means I'm just not motivated. I'm driven.[10]

Media analyst Jo Smith questions the emancipatory potential for Māori culture when employing media composite of "the very tools (print and audiovisual media) that have contributed to its marginalisation in New Zealand society," asking "what are the transformative potentials of [the Māori Television Service] on air?"[11] Also in relation to the advent of the Māori Television Service (hereafter "Māori Television"), Ian Stuart suggests, "Maori media are acting more like the mainstream media in that they run public debates, reporters challenge and question leaders and hold up some decisions and ideas to public scrutiny."[12] It is possible Stuart is arguing that the practices of Māori Television, as a state-incorporated entity, merely reflects the ideology of their sponsors.

Yet, are Stuart's criticisms merely false expectations based on the presumption that Indigenous media must be antithetical to mainstream media? For Ronald Niezen, "a corollary of this attitude towards aboriginal cultures is suspicion, rejection or misjudgement of their adaptation to conditions of modernity."[13] As Faye Ginsburg notes in relation to the auto-ethnographic filmmaker, "anthropologists have been known to question the so-called authenticity of an indigenous person's identity because he or she was using a camera."[14] Ginsburg goes on to quote Kayapo video-maker Mokuka: "Just because I hold a white man's camera, that doesn't mean I am not a Kayapo. . . . If you were to hold one of our head-dresses, would that make you an Indian?"[15]

Underpinning Mokuka's sarcasm is a critique of the prevalent discourse that suggests "those aboriginal societies that stray too far from the path of Palaeolithic values and technology are unworthy of rights and respect due to distinct societies."[16] The point seems almost as ludicrous as the tourist who arrives in New Zealand expecting Māori to be running around in grass skirts, yet it reflects a serious issue given that Indigenous peoples lose their right to legal claims when they become inauthentic, that is, when their claims to legal distinctiveness are devalued if interpreted to be inauthentic and hybridized. It is important that the discussions surrounding Indigenous media and the politics of appropriation move beyond binary notions of modernity and tradition, however, for clearly there is no credence in the claim that the use of available media technologies by Indigenous groups somehow makes Indigenous peoples less authentic or traditional.

It is also important to dispel the mistaken notion that either Indigenous culture is colonized by media technologies or that media technologies are completely revamped and used for the processes of decolonization. The relationship is significantly more complex then such a binary allows for. A more productive way to conceive of this relationship is through the notions of hybridity and appropriation. The politics of appropriation, in this sense, constitute "the relationship between those who have the

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authority to fix the meaning of a sign and those who seek to appropriate signifiers for their own ends through transforming the signified to create other meanings, alternative identities, and new forums for recognition."[17]

Pertinent here is Michel de Certeau's *The Practice of Everyday Life,* in which the political is reconstituted to include practices of cultural appropriation.[18] For example, the indigenization of media suggests the interaction of Indigenous people with their postcolonial environment produces political instruments out of those previously imperial tools. Cheung Siu-woo argues that "the appropriation of imposed symbolisms by marginalized groups to be unavoidable";[19] in other words, tactics of appropriation "always invoke and transform fields of power."[20] Thus, critical Indigenous media as defined here can contain those instruments of subordination that have been transformed to hold new political resonance and aid integrating Indigenous sovereignty into the social field.

In short, the politics of appropriation in conjunction with notions of hybridity suggest that the appropriation of mediated signs, methods, and even genres by Indigenous communities can enable new Indigenous frames of resistance to arise. Through her notion of "visual sovereignty," for instance, Michelle Raheja suggests that the appropriation of film by Indigenous groups makes possible an alternative reality that contravenes typical filmic methodology. Raheja argues that in *Atanarjuat: The Fast Runner* (2000),[21] for example, a significant alterity occurs through "pacing and attention to landscape"[22] including "slow pans of the landscape, the quotidian actions of the characters as they find and prepare food, and shots of things such as feet crunching through the snow."[23] The approach "take[s] the non-Inuit audience hostage, successfully forcing us to alter our consumption of visual images to an Inuit pace, one that is slower and more attentive to the play of light on a grouping of rocks or the place where the snow meets the ocean."[24]

In New Zealand, Indigenous peoples have also employed similar tactics of appropriation. For instance, *iwi* (peoples) radio brings a definitively Indigenous style to broadcasting that is community-based and particular to *iwi* mores. These include scheduling, pacing, the use of collective address, and the use of *karakia* (spiritual recitations), *waiata* (songs), and *whakataukī* (proverbs). Likewise, while Māori Television employs genres and formats borrowed from mainstream commercial television (e.g., news, sports, lifestyle programs, reality TV, documentaries), the product is a hybrid televisual text, which departs from the discursive regiments that govern mainstream commercial television. The presentation of the weather, for instance, in the typical format following the news, becomes indigenized by using a map that "renames the nation" employing Māori place names. Such "renaming" may be considered tokenistic, yet to literally view "the nation" through Indigenous mapping on a daily basis is epistemic. In many ways, Māori Television's use of media technologies reflects what Lisa Parks in her book, *Cultures in Orbit: Satellites and the Televisual,* refers to as "territorial reclamation and cultural survival."[25]

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Parks's attention to "survival" is important to consider in any theorization regarding Indigenous media. That is, Indigenous communities more than others face socioeconomic hardship that barely figures into "culturalist" accounts of Indigenous media. Here, Featherstone suggests, "the 'real' in this case is the already-existing economic, social, and cultural plight of [Indigenous] people,"[26] their existential material reality that is seldom accounted for in culturalist *re*visioning. As this chapter goes on to explicate below, Indigenous existentialism is an important concept to analyze through Indigenous media because not only does it foreground the "everyday" facticity of the Indigenous condition, it also suggests a movement away from the politics of recognition toward Indigenous responsibility and choice, so that "survival" becomes less about being determined by others, and more about making choices that benefit Indigenous communities.

Moreover, while academics (myself included)[27] criticize the infiltration of non-Indigenous media into Indigenous communities, at times there are significant socioeconomic benefits for those Indigenous communities involved. In commenting on the 1922 film *Nanook of the North,* Raheja is "hesitant to disregard the complicated collaborative nature of the film's production,"[28] specifically, community involvement "as technicians, camera operators, film developers, and production consultants."[29] Likewise, Ginsburg makes clear the socioeconomic benefits of Indigenous-owned media companies. For instance, the 75 percent Inuit-owned Igloolik Isuma Productions, Inc. is "Canada's first Inuit independent production company"[30] and provides "more than 100 Igloolik Inuit, from the young to the elderly" with employment "as actors, hairdressers, and technicians, as well as costume makers, language experts, and hunters who provided food, bringing more than $1.5 million into a local economy that suffers from a 60 percent unemployment rate."[31] Essentially then, the facticity of Indigenous communities must be a pivotal concern when analyzing the merits of media.

To conclude this section, I refer to Kimber Charles Pearce's work, which defines "generic appropriation" as "the making over and setting apart as one's own the substantive stylistic, and situational characteristics of a recurrent rhetorical form."[32] She discusses generic appropriation in relation to how late 1960s radical feminists mimicked the manifestos of patriarchal groups. Pearce argues that

> radical feminists appropriated the generic elements of the manifesto as a form of historicism that challenged the authority of male history and guided feminist action in response to that history. . . . The radical feminists' appropriation of the manifesto form demonstrates how rhetors may transform a genre into one of a different symbolic action with a new rhetorical purpose. However, in some ways, generic appropriation constrained radical feminists' rhetoric to the prior discourse of the patriarchy to which they were opposed.[33]

At the heart of Pearce's perception is what Siu-woo calls the "the Janus faced quality of appropriation,"[34] which also lies at the center of Spivak's question above. For Indigenous media the tension reverberates around the question, "How can Indigenous people produce media that does not merely answer the call of imperial rationalism?"

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That is, represent the Indigenous Other within frames understandable to Western cognition. This line of questioning leads to the broader analyses of the politics of recognition, a core problematic within current Indigenous Studies, and one I suggest should underpin Indigenous Media Studies.

Politics of Recognition

In relation to this chapter, the politics of recognition resemble the politics of appropriation because their central problematic asks, "What is at stake in locating Indigenous epistemes within Western frames, whether those frames be Western media technology in terms of appropriation, or the rhetoric of colonial compensation in terms of recognition?" For the purposes of this chapter, the politics of recognition refers to the systemic problematics surrounding the production of Indigenous media via state-funded "Indigenous media" entities. Specifically, this means the way that Indigenous groups are afforded recognition via the state's accommodation of Indigenous media practices and the subsequent discursive appropriation of Indigenous culture. The advent of Māori Television in 2004 provides an example for discussion because it represents an Indigenous media outlet driven by a Māori desire to be provided with state funding, originally contested through the Treaty of Waitangi via the language of compensation for historical wrongs and, in particular, the denigration of Māori culture and language. Accordingly, the manifesto produced specifies Māori Television's role in the revival of culture and language.

In the quote below, Dene scholar Glen Coulthard neatly outlines the language of recognition that has become central to the interface between Indigenous groups and various postcolonial states.

> Over the last 30 years, the self-determination efforts and objectives of Indigenous peoples . . . have increasingly been cast in the language of "recognition"—recognition of cultural distinctiveness, recognition of an inherent right to self-government, recognition of state treaty obligations, and so on . . . [a process that] promises to reproduce the very configurations of colonial power that Indigenous demands for recognition have historically sought to transcend.[35]

The language of recognition reveals "the condition of being postcolonial," "of being relentlessly constituted in the discourses of power." In New Zealand, the creation of Māori as a "Treaty Partner," for instance, reflects the operationalization of a liberal pluralism underpinned by the delegation of resources to a select few Indigenous "brokers" who are supposed to and, to varying degrees do, represent discrete Indigenous groups. In turn, Māori and Māori culture are accommodated, recognized, imagined, and, partially at least, institutionalized within the nation-state.

The institutionalization, or what Will Kymlicka refers to as the "incorporation,"[36] of Māori Television within the state-funded national broadcaster calls into question

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Figure 6.2. Advertisement for Māori Television, *Mana Magazine,* no. 100 (June–July 2011): back cover. Reproduced with permission of Māori Television.

what is at stake for both sides within a mutually dependent Indigenous–state relationship. That is, what are the conscious and unconscious conditions of the pact? Spivak would argue that the voice Māori Television produces will ultimately be reconstituted to resemble a "re-orientalized" Indigenous identity, particularly because it is an entity funded by the state and thus by definition demands both discursive and nondiscursive synthesis of indigeneity within Western forms of knowing. In other words, state

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compensation for historical wrongs is repaid in kind by the biopolitical production of a recognizable Treaty Partner. The state, whether tacitly or otherwise, fundamentally expects their "sovereign governance" over all their subjects to remain intact and thus the terms of recognition produced means the "foundation of the colonial relationship remains relatively undisturbed."[37] Indigenous media with radical intent, that is, Indigenous media that desires Indigenous sovereignty or the disruption of state governance cannot, I suggest, exist within this relationship of mutual recognition. Accordingly, central to one definition of Indigenous media is independence of will, the freedom and responsibility to represent oneself. The cost of such a definition would undoubtedly be, as things stand in New Zealand at least, nonrecognition and, therefore, a lack or loss of state funding.

If one accepts that state-incorporated Indigenous media has the possibility of biopolitical production, the question becomes, "To what extent can a culture change beyond the juridical construction of 'Indigenous' before it loses its rights to indigeneity?" Critical to the politics of recognition are the notions of tradition and authenticity that haunt discourses of indigeneity, and the degree to which the production of Indigenous culture resembles a pacified version of radical Indigenous alterity. While the reimbursement of language and "culture" has been central to the mutual dependency of the Treaty partners in New Zealand and to the Māori cultural renaissance in general, seldom have Māori academics (and Indigenous academics in general) problematized what they mean by "culture."

The question of culture is central to the politics of recognition, for as Spivak argues, the biopolitical production of postcolonial indigeneity merely reflects a "re-orientalization," while the eventualities of Indigenous resistance movements have in many cases produced unhealthy and prolonged cultural essentializations, which have led to an Indigenous form of necropolitics.[38] Black activist Cornel West argues that "Third World authoritarian bureaucratic elites deploy essentialist rhetorics about 'homogenous national communities' and 'positive images' in order to repress and regiment their diverse and heterogeneous populations."[39] Along similar lines, Homi Bhabha's criticism of Edward Said focuses on his monolithic construction of power in the colonies. Bhabha's criticism of Said in relation to representation is particularly important to Indigenous media and the politics of recognition:

> There is always in Said, the suggestion that colonial power and discourse is possessed entirely by the colonizer, which is a historical and theoretical simplification. The terms in which Said's Orientalism is unified—the intentionality and unidirectionality of colonial power—also unify the subject of colonial enunciation. This is a result of Said's inadequate attention to representation as a concept that articulates the historical and fantasy (as the scene of desire) in the production of the "political" effects of discourse.[40]

Here, Bhabha is signaling that more complex analyses of the subject of colonial enunciation move beyond the colonizer/colonized binary. The definition of Indigenous subjectivity (i.e., what representation of indigeneity is assigned the voice of authenticity)

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and, subsequently, to the rights to postcolonial grieving, treaty claims, and privilege is related to the processes of "ethnic formalization," particularly through the concepts of authenticity, tradition, and culture.

In relation to state-funded Indigenous media, there are very real impacts of the "political effects of discourse," where a handful of Indigenous people are chosen to govern and to determine, for instance, programming. This relationship between state broadcasting and those "Indigenous elites" incorporated with responsibility is important to interrogate. Kevin Bruyneel, for example, is correct in establishing that the "third space of indigenous sovereignty,"[41] as he calls it, exposes the contingencies of colonial rule. One of these contingencies must be how individual Indigenous people negotiate sovereignty on behalf of others. Given a "lobbying divide,"[42] there are merely a few Indigenous elites able to mediate the production of Indigenous knowledge within Western frames, resulting in the production of certain Indigenous subjectivities while others are left to die[43] (see chapter 1), which in some instances must involve complicity to exclude the realities of those Indigenous subjectivities who have been most disenfranchised by colonization. Thus, what role does Māori Television play in the biopolitical reproduction of heterogeneous Indigenous populations? The production of "Māori culture" as a unitary form of Indigenous subjectivity is legitimized by the series of discourses that animate its reality, "like an organism with its own needs, its own internal force and its own capacity for survival."[44] Māori Television as a state-funded broadcaster is merely one chamber of the organism serving to "produce" Māori as a "strategic possibility" that enables disparate statements to be perceived as natural accumulations.

On the flip side of the above arguments is the concern that such theorization hastens Indigenous people to discard those political notions of culture at the forefront of Indigenous rights, "the very identities, narratives and analytical tools that had charged a long history of popular anti-colonial struggles."[45] Spivak's notion of "strategic essentialism" is important in the figuring of any Indigenous media, yet it is more important to ask, "When do such essentialisms stop being strategic and become inhibitive?" For example, when does the notion of "tradition" as framed through Indigenous media serve to rejuvenate and when does it serve to restrain? Here Māori academic Paul Meredith suggests "tradition," within the context of ethnic formalization, "is not only utilised as a normative guide but also to establish and sustain a citizenship which is structured around subordinate/dominant power relations and inclusive/exclusive membership."[46] In sum, what is the cost of recognition? In the act of desiring recognition, what choices do Indigenous peoples lose? Or simply do we lose choices? That is, while Indigenous groups may gain, for instance, short-term economic gains via neocolonial political structures, the cost of such gains is autonomy; the right to construct Indigenous identity as Indigenous peoples deem appropriate. Will choices of political recognition through state bodies especially (which inherently relocate Indigenous groups within the colonizer/colonized binary) actually lead to outcomes of

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self-definition, choice, and responsibility? The remainder of this chapter examines how Indigenous media has been defined thus far in light of these questions.

What Is Indigenous Media?

PAN-INDIGENOUS MEDIA

There has been a tendency to view the production of pan-indigeneity in general and in particular relation to media as a positive stage in the development of Indigenous resistance. Yet, what universal consciousness is being promoted via pan-Indigenous media? How are Indigenous people increasingly being mediated through the generalizing idea of indigeneity, and what are the conceptual adhesives holding such an oxymoronic embryo together? More generally and in relation to the question of Indigenous rights, Niezen asks,

> "who is the subject of rights?" Indigenous peoples have . . . drawn new cultural boundaries, redefined themselves as nations, and, by implication, redefined the foundation of belonging for their individual members not only as kinship or shared culture but also as distinct citizenship, as belonging to a distinct regime of rights, entitlements, and obligations.[47]

With regard to the central problem of determining what Indigenous media is, it is therefore pertinent to locate the problematic within the relatively new discipline of "Indigenous Studies." Media scholars have for some time problematized media through notions of race and postcoloniality, and, consequently, the project of comprehending "Indigenous media" via conventional Cultural Studies methodologies may appear mundane. Yet, as the previous section highlights, when Indigenous media is viewed through those germane problematics current in Indigenous Studies, the inquiry takes on different meaning and provides new analyses.

First and foremost, as Niezen points out, the transnational politicization of "Indigenous" is a fairly recent development that requires redefinition of cultural boundaries. The politics of recognition for Indigenous people are undoubtedly related to what might be generally defined as a pan-Indigenous movement underpinned by decolonization. That is, as a direct result of the conscientization process stemming from the American Civil Rights Movement and the subsequent highly mediated Indigenous rights protest campaigns, settler colonial states have to varying degrees been coerced over the last forty years to recognize the distinctive rights of their Indigenous populations. At the same time, Indigenous scholars and practitioners have turned to methods and practices of "decolonization" that have in turn led to the advent of *decolonial theory*.

Decolonial theory has developed as *re*scholarship where alternative knowledges are *re*inserted into text so that Indigenous people can deconstruct occidental history to produce counter-histories. For instance, in her widely read text, *Decolonizing*

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Methodologies, Māori scholar Linda Smith argues, "Transforming our colonized views of our own history (as written by the West) . . . requires us to revisit, site by site, our history under Western eyes. This in turn requires a theory or approach, which helps us to engage with, understand and then act upon history."[48] Prominent media theorists have likewise often interpreted Indigenous media in terms of *re*interpretation and *re*insertion of Indigenous culture into the fabric of a nation. Ginsburg notes the establishment of a burgeoning global Indigenous media network has opened the possibility for Indigenous communities to

> reenvision their current realities and possible futures, from the revival of local cultural practices, to the insertion of their histories into national imaginaries, to the creation of new transnational arenas that link indigenous makers around the globe in a common effort to make their concerns visible to the world.[49]

Prominent at the interface between Indigenous Studies and Indigenous media, therefore, is the increasing sense of a pan-indigeneity or a globalized Indigenous conscientization underpinned by the notion of *re*interpretation.

While the growing global Indigenous community has its benefits, such as the sharing and development of ideas, and the formation of transnational entities to arbitrate with organizations such as the United Nations, pan-Indigenous media is not unproblematic. Pan-indigeneity demands political recognition of the transnational Indigenous movement, yet at the same time a requirement of "indigeneity" is cultural distinctiveness. Given a pan-Indigenous collective consciousness must operate beyond the local, there is a tendency to gravitate to unifying concepts that in their own way debilitate native alterity. Niezen argues,

> Media representation of a culture, often an adjunct to legal lobbying, calls for the most essential qualities of that culture to be defined and displayed. . . . [Yet] seeking recognition as a distinct community of rights holders paradoxically entails taking up strategies that are globally uniform and, in some ways, corrosive of distinctiveness.[50]

As is the case with Indigenous Studies in general, pan-Indigenous Media Studies is epistemologically limited because of the ontological importance of local contexts, languages, and cultures. Such inattention to the local Indigenous condition inherently devalues the very concept of indigeneity because of its tethering to place.

Here the Internet deserves thorough attention because of the role it plays as the "public sphere" of pan-Indigenous media. The notion of the public sphere is defined via Jürgen Habermas,[51] whereby the development of media technology can in and of itself create a new public consciousness. For Indigenous people, the Internet has in part enabled a universal discourse where a transnational language of anticolonial struggle has come to inform *local* Indigenous self-determination and resistance paths. Here Niezen's message is clear:

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> To address the consequences of displacement and denial, to have a stabilizing effect on selfhood, memory is expressed in the form of the publicly exhibited artefact. . . . The internet's expressions of self as contemporary artefacts, as truths in themselves, without undue concern with their possible corruptions of the science of history . . . the historical artefacts, or "memories" most implicated with new possibilities for fabrication are, at the same time, the best evidence we have of the longings and constructed virtualities of collective selfhood.[52]

In other words, Niezen is suggesting that the Internet has, for some Indigenous peoples, become a site of collective memory, a monument where the ontological violence of colonization constructs a collective Indigenous selfhood that not only reflects the desire for recognition of such historical trauma, but also produces and reproduces such a consciousness.

Pan-Indigenous media advocates are in the unenviable position of finding common ground within the ontological historical violence of colonialism, where colonial oppression becomes "the common denominator."[53] This is no small issue, for as an Indigenous consciousness becomes globalized via Indigenous media, an uber-oppressed/oppressor dialectic must not take center stage, although it is probable that it already has. Such decontextualized conditioning of victimhood through universalizing taxonomies will almost certainly detract from the responsibility of Indigenous communities to find their own cogent paths toward metaphysical and material well-being. Indigenous communities' access to new technologies is relevant to the endemic nature of the "new Indigenous political."

FOURTH MEDIA: MEDIATED INDIGENOUS SOVEREIGNTY

Ella Shohat and Robert Stam in *Unthinking Eurocentrism: Multiculturalism and the Media* developed the concept of Fourth World Media as an analytical device to situate global Indigenous media circuits.[54] The notion of "Fourth World" was coined in appropriation of the emancipatory potential of Third World critique, which stemmed out of neocolonial Asia, Africa, and Latin America. Fourth World Media (hereafter referred to as "Fourth Media") on the other hand has come to refer to media controlled by Indigenous peoples in settler-colonial states, such as New Zealand, Australia, Canada, Taiwan, and the United States.

The idea of sovereignty is important to the developing definition of Fourth Media. Mediated Indigenous sovereignty is defined here as the determination of Indigenous peoples to represent and perceive their epistemic knowledge through the media as they deem appropriate, meaningful, relevant, and valid. Bruyneel's conceptualization of a "third space" of Indigenous sovereignty is helpful here in drawing a distinction between Third Media and Fourth Media,[55] where the former relates most prominently with neocolonialism[56] and the latter with postcolonialism. In quoting Spivak's definition of postcoloniality as "the failure of decolonization," Bruyneel suggests "the clear

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dividing line between self-other, us-them, and indigenous-American is the exact sort of boundary imposition postcolonial indigenous politics works against, because these dualisms serve the constitutive interests of the dominant polity."[57] The emergence of a Fourth Media has occurred alongside broader political Indigenous movements for self-determination and tribal sovereignty, or what Bruyneel calls "postcolonial nationhood":

> The claim to postcolonial nationhood adhered fully to neither a civil rights framework for defining equality nor a third world decolonization framework for defining anti-colonial sovereignty. Instead it located itself across the boundaries and through the gaps of colonial imposition, in the third space.[58]

Definitions of Fourth Media have seldom followed this track however. Indeed, the underpinnings of Fourth Media remain tellingly vague, reflecting the similarly fuzzy notions of "Indigenous Studies." Constant with general theories of decolonization, Fourth Media has tended to focus on those appropriations of the media principally geared in the direction of cultural knowledge production, of *re*writing history from an Indigenous perspective discursively veiled by colonial media. Ginsburg, for instance, in relation to Indigenous filmmaking in Australia, argues the process has been a struggle led by "Indigenous media activists" and that has lasted over two decades. She defines the effort as one of indigenizing the "blank screen": "to reverse that erasure of Aboriginal subjects in public life . . . by making representations about Black lives visible and audible on the film and television screens of Australia and beyond."[59]

Similarly, Māori scholars Jo Smith and Sue Abel argue in relation to Māori Television that Indigenous media offers the opportunity not to color the nation-scape with brown-tinted glasses but "to bring to light hither-to unseen visions of Aotearoa/NZ; to see with 'iwi eyes' the shape and contour of the nation's scape."[60] From an Indigenous urban perspective, a memorable moment in New Zealand cinema occurs in the opening scene of *Once Were Warriors* (1994),[61] where the billboard image of clean, green New Zealand is contrasted against an industrialized urban scene; the reality for the majority of Indigenous New Zealanders:

> The camera movement that begins *Once Were Warriors* is not about the substitution of image for image, of New Zealand for another. Instead, it presents itself as something of an optical illusion and ironic revelation that enacts several binary oppositions: billboard tableau versus moving cinematic image; fabricated primeval nature versus real urban present.[62]

Thus, from the above examples one prominent definition of Fourth Media includes *re*-righting (writing) the erasure of indigeneity from the mediated public sphere and, in doing so, reshaping the vision of the postcolonial nation.

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Another prominent definition of Fourth Media prioritizes genealogy and simultaneously alienates non-Indigenous media as "not of this place." Here the preeminent Māori "Fourth Cinema" theorist, the late Barry Barclay, elaborates: "The First Cinema Camera sits firmly on the deck of the ship. It sits there by definition. The Camera Ashore, the Fourth Cinema Camera, is the one held by the people for whom "ashore" is their ancestral home."[63] Similarly, Raheja defines Fourth Media as having "its roots in specific indigenous aesthetics with their attendant focus on a particular geographical space, discrete cultural practices, social activist texts, notions of temporality that do not delink the past from the present or future, and spiritual traditions."[64] Fourth media, as defined by both Barclay and Raheja, is thus firmly located "ashore" via ancestral and metaphysical connection to place, yet inherently also positioned in an antagonistic dialectic with "First Media."

The Lacanian- and Freudian-influenced work of Laura Mulvey attempts to deconstruct the phallocentrism and patriarchal unconscious inherent to Hollywood film production by suggesting feminist-oriented filmic strategies coalesce to disrupt the voyeuristic and fetishist male gaze. While fundamentally different, Mulvey's "to-be-looked-at-ness"[65] analysis can be appropriated by Indigenous Media Studies because of the elementary power of the "First World" camera to visually code Indigenous people via exoticizing and epidermalizing processes, in the creation of a "tradition of exhibitionism." Thus, another definition of Fourth Media contains strategies to unravel and disrupt the way unconscious colonial structures function to locate Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples within a naturalized binary. Here Raheja's construction of "visual sovereignty" is insightful:

> I explore what it means for indigenous people "to laugh at the camera" as a tactic of what I call "visual sovereignty," to confront the spectator with the often absurd assumptions that circulate around visual representations of Native Americans, while also flagging their involvement and, to some degree, complicity in these often disempowering structures of cinematic dominance and stereotype.[66]

Raheja argues that in the case of *Atanarjuat* the film "forc[es] viewers to reconsider mass-mediated images of the Arctic."[67] The film's opening scenes, which depict "a lone man standing on the snow-packed tundra with his howling dogs,"[68] reflects stereotypical images of Inuit primitivity and isolation in specific reference to *Nanook of the North.*[69] The image is undercut by the next scene, which "takes place inside a spacious qaggiq (large igloo), where a dozen or so adults and children are contemplating a visitor, referred to as an 'up North stranger.' "[70]

In returning to Bruyneel's "Third Space," with Raheja's "visual sovereignty" and the politics of appropriation all in mind, a developing definition of Fourth Media defies classification via "anticolonial" binaries; rather it resides within the colonial state and

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garners its power largely from its indefinability. Fourth Media here is an accomplice with colonial technologies yet resistant to colonial definitions of "nation" and, indeed, underscored by a desire to unravel the unconscious imperialism of colonial media. Here Ginsburg suggests that a "third space" of filmic production has opened up for Indigenous Australians: "these more recent forms of cultural production have offered a different kind of intervention, creating new sites for the recognition of the cultural citizenship of a range of Indigenous Australians, from remote settlements to urban neighbourhoods."[71] Ginsburg makes the distinction between those films "that have focused on land rights, ritual, oral histories, language maintenance, and local sports events."[72] In this "third space" of filmic production,

> These newer films speak to other, multiple legacies of settler colonialism that have shaped Aboriginal lives, but that are less clearly marked in public discourse. These works reject an easy division between remote, traditional people and deracinated urban Aboriginals . . . [offering a filmic space] for a sector whose experience has been rendered largely invisible in the Australian imaginary: mixed race, urban and rural Indigenous subjects, historically removed from contact with their traditional forebears, those for whom history—until quite recently—and the reflective screens of public media have been, so to speak, black.[73]

Ginsburg is effectively referring to an Indigenous media that moves beyond the identity production at the interstitial space of the politics of recognition to signify the importance of shifting the camera away from those biopolitical subjectivities that are recognizable and toward Indigenous subjects "less clearly marked."

New Zealand filmmaker Taika Waititi draws attention to such indefinability when he quips, "Let's just say I'm a filmmaker who is Māori. . . . Why can't I just be a guy who writes stories and puts them in a film? Why can't I be a tall filmmaker? Or a black-haired filmmaker?[74] Waititi's dis-logic (i.e., will to frame himself outside "common sense" discourse) presents a postmodern indigeneity that unpacks the naturalness of making the simplistic connection between a Māori who makes film and "a Māori filmmaker." Inherently, Waititi recognizes that the label "Māori filmmaker" is political, and with predecessors such as Mita and Barclay, the association is valid. Waititi thus attempts to move himself beyond the politics of recognition that would like to register him as "Māori" within the Māori/Pākehā (white New Zealander) binary. Mediated Indigenous sovereignty or Fourth Media can, therefore, be defined as a site where a reflexive challenge to representation takes place, where definition of the settler nation is brought into crisis through mediated representation of the conflict (and at times resolution) that signifies the Indigenous/non-Indigenous binary, and where the preeminence and centrality of "place" to Indigenous epistemic knowledge unpacks the naturalized claims to rights discursively and genealogically afforded via imperial conquer.

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Radical Indigenous Media

Read contemporarily, Frantz Fanon makes it clear why Spivak suggests postcolonialism is the failure of decolonization:

> This struggle for freedom does not give back to the national culture its former values and shapes; this struggle which aims at a fundamentally different set of relations between men cannot leave intact either the form or the content of the people's culture. After the conflict there is not only the disappearance of colonialism but also the disappearance of the colonized man.[75]

In this context, those attempting to define "Indigenous media" and Indigenous media practitioners must also contend with Fanon's challenge: How does Indigenous media fundamentally alter national culture? Coulthard argues that the

> dialectical progression to reciprocity in relations of recognition is frequently undermined in the colonial setting by the fact that, unlike the subjugated slave in . . . Hegel's Phenomenology, many colonized societies no longer have to struggle for their freedom and independence. It is often negotiated, achieved through constitutional amendment, or simply "declared" by the settler-state and bestowed upon the Indigenous population in the form of political rights. Whatever the method, in these circumstances the colonized, "steeped in the inessentiality of servitude" are "set free by [the] master."[76]

One emerging criticism of postcolonial Indigenous subjectivities, therefore, is that the forms of indigeneity produced, far from challenging the settler-colonial narrative, have in fact reified it.

Similarly, it could be said that Indigenous media thus far has largely failed to radically challenge the postcolonial system. For instance, far from being the beacon of Indigenous alterity, the state-funded Māori Television may merely resemble being "set free by the master." Certainly then, Indigenous media must be reflective on how it mediates recourses to "rights" and represents claims to recognition via essentialized notions of culture, tradition, and authenticity. *Remembering,* that is, the search and desire for classical Indigenous culture, was necessitated by the cultural insecurity and unprincipled, immoral, unethical, anarchical cultural void left in colonization's wake. Unmistakably then, a sense of loss and a desire for origin was colonization's etch on the Indigenous psyche. The question then becomes to what extent various Indigenous media reify this etch or, conversely, move toward deeply challenging colonization's "relentless constitution" of indigeneity.

Kobena Mercer, in an essay entitled "Diasporic Culture and the Dialogic Imagination," suggests that black British Film, for instance, rather than expressing "some lost origin or some uncontaminated essence in black film-language," should be "a critical 'voice' that promotes consciousness of the collision of cultures and histories that

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constitute our very conditions of existence."[77] Mercer's call mirrors that of West, who argues that

> The main aim now is not simply access to representation in order to produce positive images of homogeneous communities—though broader access remains a practical and political problem. Nor is the primary goal here that of contesting stereotypes though contestation remains a significant though limited venture. Following the model of the Black diaspora traditions of music, athletics, and rhetoric, Black cultural workers must constitute and sustain discursive and institutional networks that deconstruct earlier modern Black strategies for identity formation, demystify power relations that incorporate class, patriarchal, and homophobic biases, and construct more multivalent and multidimensional responses that articulate the complexity and diversity of Black practices in the modern and postmodern world.[78]

Criticism of this approach is offered by Paul Gilroy, who refers to it as "premature pluralism"[79] and "a postmodern evasion of the need to give historical specificity and complexity to the term *black*, seen as linked racial formations, counter histories, and cultures of resistance."[80] Similarly, Arif Dirlik argues that postcolonialism has had a tendency to undermine effective anticolonial praxis by unraveling "the traditional tools of a radical analysis of the postcolonial condition—history, causality, identity—and installing instead concepts that are much more amenable to the forces of global capitalism—the now canonic theoretical repertoire of hybridity, diaspora and anti-essentialism."[81]

In quite a unique way of interpreting the problematic, here is Young's critique of postcolonial theory. He argues, "despite its espousal of subaltern resistance, [postcolonial theory] scarcely values subaltern resistance that does not operate according to its own secular terms."[82] For Indigenous media, this critique involves the politics of appropriation and recognition, as already discussed, in that it asks how Indigenous media does things differently: How does Indigenous media not merely reify a Western episteme through brown-tinted glasses? In particular, how does Indigenous media move beyond the confines of Western rationalism to produce texts that resist synthesis into codes of Othering, and the will to generalize and universalize knowledge? How does it produce texts that value, for instance, Indigenous metaphysicality in its untranslated form, where Indigenous culture "may remain incommensurable"[83] and "without the kinds of explanatory apparatuses that typically accompany ethnographic films"?[84]

Raheja argues in terms of "visual sovereignty" that Indigenous filmmakers in particular through new media technologies can construct meaning in relation to self-determination and self-representation and thus "frame more imaginative renderings of Native American intellectual and cultural paradigms, such as the presentation of the spiritual and dream world, than are often possible in official political contexts."[85] The recently deceased Mita also discusses the possibilities of media in relation to Indigenous metaphysicality. She suggests that nothing holds the kind of power that old footage of *tīpuna* (ancestors) does, "particularly in the tribal areas to which the film material is especially relevant."[86] Mita claims that film provides the opportunity

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for a metaphysical experience "because what the audience sees are *resurrections* taking place, a past life lives again, wisdom is shared and something from the heart and spirit responds to that short but inspiring on-screen journey from darkness to light" (see also chapter 4).[87] To return to Young's point then, the problem with postcolonial critique is that it has thus far failed to imagine how Indigenous peoples might interpret media and appropriate it to the advantage of their own epistemic perspective.

Conclusion

Perhaps a more constructive way to frame this ongoing essentialist/nonessentialist debate that plagues postcolonial theory in general is to reanalyze it through Indigenous sovereignty, where Indigenous sovereignty refers to the way Indigenous peoples choose to represent their worlds. Whether that be through hybrid or essentialist notions of culture, both forms should remain critical to strategic decolonization and fluid epistemologies. Rather than focusing on the detrimental effects of diluting essentialized Indigenous culture versus the necropolitics that occur as Indigenous cultures are produced to be "authentic," the key is to concentrate on the choice and responsibility of Indigenous communities to represent themselves as they see fit, flanked by processes of critical self-reflexivity.

The key, then, for various Indigenous media producers within a frame of choice and responsibility is to find balance between rejecting those forms of representation that pander to Western rationalism's desire to recognize and synthesize, yet do not isolate those Indigenous peoples who are located at the interstitial sites between "Indigenous" and "Western"; to create media that reflects a particular Indigenous epistemology, yet to be wary of the traditionalizing process that seems to inherently occur in postcolonial Indigenous communities, where other forms of indigeneity are discarded as "inauthentic." Finally, they need to recognize that Indigenous media described here may not sit well within the established codes of media practice, for if the partial goal of Indigenous media in general is "decolonization" then this process necessitates uncomfortability, unsettling, and disruption. The balance here is a difficult one to maintain, for it requires Indigenous communities to decipher the politics of recognition that intimately occur at the negotiation space between funders of Indigenous media and Indigenous communities.

While acknowledging that neocultures are an implicit production of colonization, it is imperative that notions of self-critique and responsibility underpin these new cultural spaces, as well as a will to investigate what is being included and thus excluded under the name of "indigeneity"; for typically those excluded are those who have been most displaced by colonial rule. As I see it, any definition of Indigenous sovereignty must be underpinned by the notion of Indigenous existentialism. Primarily, Indigenous existentialism focuses our historical remembrances upon the paths of political resistance and forms of third culture that have been produced so that we understand the production of Indigenous identities as outcomes of the choices Indigenous people

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have made, and Indigenous responsibility. For instance, in New Zealand, both Māori and non-Māori tend to think that Māori Television is the panacea to *mis*representation and self-determined Indigenous representation. In reality, while Māori Television remains a state-funded entity those involved need to be vigilantly self-critical, especially in terms of the biopolitical production of Māori subjectivities and the necropolitics their media affects.

Notes

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43. There are various meanings of sovereignty, but I use the word in a Foucauldian sense: "It is the power to 'make live' and 'let' die" (Michel Foucault, *Society Must be Defended: Lectures at the Collège de France 1975–1976* [New York: Picador], 2003, 241), that is, it is the power to produce authentic Indigenous subjectivities and de-authenticate others. Foucault argues that "From the nineteenth century until the present day, we have . . . a legislation, a discourse, and an organization of public right articulated around the principle of the sovereignty of the social body and the delegation of individual sovereignty to the state; and we also have a tight grid of disciplinary coercions that actually guarantees the cohesion of that social body" (ibid., 37). Essentially, Foucault would suggest here that Indigenous subjectivities have been made to live and allowed to die via the juridification of subjectivity (i.e,. via juridical law formalized by the state) and disciplinary coercions that in a much less direct way function to regulate difference via the idea of normative culture.
44. Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (London: Routledge, 2002), 39.
45. Featherstone, *Postcolonial Cultures,* 18.
46. Paul Meredith, "Urban Maori as 'New Citizens': The Quest for Recognition and Resources," paper presented at the Revisioning Citizenship in New Zealand Conference, February 22–24, 2000, Hamilton, N.Z., 16.
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53. Ibid., 54.
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55. Bruyneel, *Third Space.*
56. Here the distinction is made between neocolonialism and postcolonialism. Neocolonialism specifically refers to those nation-states where the Indigenous population have been reasserted into state leadership, however the residue of colonialism remains nondiscursively powerful. For instance, while a state may be governed by Indigenous leadership, neoliberal multinational companies remain to effectively govern by controlling the nation's capital and resources. Postcolonialism here relates to the framing of both discursive and nondiscursive power structures within settler-colonial states. There are exceptions to these definitions. For instance, much postcolonial literature stems from India.
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58. Ibid., 124.
59. Faye Ginsburg, "Black Screens and Cultural Citizenship," *Visual Anthropology Review* 21, no. 1 (2005): 81.
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