

Immanence and Immanent Truth

John H. McDowell

The process of the affecting presence is the process of bringing work into the powers of being, of making the hidden visible, the latent manifest, the inaudible audible, the stilled dynamic—of making the intransigent tractable.

(Armstrong 1981:19)

In a recent attempt to account for the cathartic power of traditional expressive speech forms, I introduced the notion of *commemorative* discourse, which is differentiated from its counterpart, *informative* discourse, on the basis of referential, structural, and acoustic properties (McDowell 1992). With regard to spoken discourse, informative utterance typically exhibits irregular (or only slightly regularized) prosodies and its referential capacity takes in the whole sweep of routine experience. Commemorative utterance, in contrast, exhibits more regularized prosodies in the process of asserting or formulating something that I called *immanent truth*, by which I intended approximately the set of ideas, values, and associations that are in some sense constitutive of the collectivity.

In working through this notion I was left a bit uneasy about the privileged referential domain indexed by commemorative discourse. The term *immanent truth* slipped into the argument without first proving its credentials. I had in mind a truth so basic that it could not be challenged without departing from the reigning conceptual order, a truth whose status had come to be accepted as “natural” (see Bourdieu 1977). I initially developed the idea of commemorative discourse with reference to the ballads (*corridos*) of Mexico’s Costa Chica (in the state of Guerrero), in an

attempt to explain the peculiar weight of these narratives within the local mentality. John Foley's notion of "the immanent poetic tradition" (1991:44), that is, the tradition immanent in the poetry, is helpful here, but I am seeking to describe an even deeper resonance, one in which the ethos of the community is somehow immanent in the tradition. Moreover, whereas Foley is primarily concerned with text explication, I am interested in coming to terms with the cultural uses and functions of verbal artifacts. I argue that the ballad protagonists "emerge as larger-than-life figures, prototypical in their stubborn postures of defiance and allegiance" (1992: 409). The *corrido*, as an instance of commemorative utterance, taps into "the well-springs of consensus within the community . . . Sidonio [a ballad hero] and his companions sally forth as incarnations of the Costa Chica everyman, as quasi-mythical figures who portray in vivid detail the destiny that encloses and marks us all" (415).

As I puzzle over these matters I believe that the key to immanent truth, at least with regard to the theory of commemoration, lies in the experience of *immanence* (from the Latin, "dwelling in"), normally defined as a "pervasive presence within something," and in theological terms as "the presence of God throughout the universe" (Garmonsway 1965:s.v.). The term possesses a fascinating history in Western theology and philosophy, where it is often made to stand in contrast to *transcendence*, the notion of an order external to our experience of the world. Benedict de Spinoza, the seventeenth-century Dutch philosopher (of Spanish Judaic extraction) launched the contemporary career of *immanence* in formulating his *idea vera*, a "true idea" or first principle, of a deity immanent in the universe. One rendition of this principle reads as follows: "God is identical with all that is, and is thus the single substance in existence—necessary, self-caused and eternal, encompassing all the aspects and dimensions of reality, including matter and mind, extension and thought, finite and infinite" (Yovel 1989:6).

Spinoza's postulation was revolutionary in the context of the reigning Christian and Cartesian dualism, which presupposed a transcendent God, but we cannot begin to trace here the convoluted debate that has swirled around these issues among Western philosophers nor the important role of the concept of immanence in the development of modern aesthetics (see Mileur 1984; Kramer 1983; Peterfreund 1988). For our purposes, the essence of immanence is *presence*, the experience of actively perceiving, of registering through the senses the tangible qualities of those entities thought to be real. Immanent truth, then, would be a truth backed by *presence*, by the experience of immediacy, and specifically the presence of constitutive elements within the local ethos. This insight helps explain the wild

enthusiasm of Costa Chica audiences when local *corridos* are performed. Their shouts of approval, their strident affirmations of local identity, recognize the presence of indigenous archetypes personified in the ballad protagonists. It would be safe to say (anticipating a point I will develop below) that these *gritos* assert not only recognition of this presence but also identification with it.

What I would like to do in this essay is to pursue the notion of immanence with reference to a set of expressive forms cultivated by the Sibundoy Indians of the Colombian Andes, a site where I have conducted extensive field research. The Sibundoy peoples include several indigenous communities speaking Inga (of the Quechuan family) and Kamsá (a language isolate, the last remnant of archaic Quillasinga). Despite their linguistic differences, the Sibundoy peoples for the most part share a common culture, the result of their long (though not always friendly) coexistence in the Sibundoy Valley. The Sibundoy Valley is a verdant ellipse in the southwestern corner of Colombia, situated just at the northern fringe of Incan influence and transitional between the highlands and lowlands at this latitude of the Andes.

Sibundoy expressive discourse presupposes the Sibundoy account of ethnogenesis, an account that centers around the formative actions and continuing influence of the ancestors, known as *ñugpamandacuna*, “the first people,” a generalized stratum of original humans. These first people are viewed as accomplishing a transition between a primordial time when only the celestial deities were active to the contemporary period marked by appropriate forms of physical and social reproduction. The ancestral period bridging these cosmic states was one of rife spiritual potency that had to be contained and marginalized in order for society to flourish.

Sibundoy expressive forms reference and rehearse this cosmogonic setting. As we shall observe, they occasion experiences of immanence in the form of ancestral presence. In these expressive arenas the implicit structural principles of Sibundoy cosmology are made tangible to the senses and palpable to the imagination. In some of these genres this ancestral presence is vicarious or virtual; in shamanic singing as in carnival dancing, it becomes at moments almost visceral. We shall see that immanent truth, in this setting at least, is a cultural artifact that is sustained by an extensive network of contrastive and complementary expressive forms.

Sibundoy Carnival

We have entered the house of the alguacil mayor, one of the chief officers of the cabildo, the community organ of self-government. We are a singing, dancing horde, maybe one hundred of us, musician-dancers arrayed in feathered coronas (crowns) and traditional capisayos (ponchos). At every step we are presented tutumas (gourd cups) of chicha (maize beer) by fellow musician-dancers porting larger aluminum containers of the refreshing and intoxicating beverage. On all sides circulate flutists, sporting flutes ranging from barely a foot long to as long as a yard or more, each intoning (but not in unison) the carnival melody. Other dancers beat the steady carnival rhythm on drums or keep the same beat with seed rattles or jars filled with small stones. From time to time one catches the sweet tones of a harmonica drifting nearby, and blasts from the hollowed sugar cane stalks and horn trumpets assault the ears from all directions. Here and there someone sings a verse from the carnival song, and the web of sound is punctuated with the cry: "Klistrinyi, klistrinyi," ("celebrate the day!"). Our motley carnival orchestra has no need of conductor, score, or audience; it is held together by the isochronic rhythm and the plaintive strains of the carnival melody. In the midst of all this fanfare, a remarkable transformation occurs: the ecstatic dancers take on an altered identity as ancestral spirit beings, and we are transported to the cosmic juncture when the first human beings wrested spiritual dominion away from the aucas, the heathen savages of the region. It is carnival time in the Sibundoy Valley and the ancestral spirits once again wander the earth.

This account, constructed from notes that I made during and after one Sibundoy carnival season, is intended to convey some sense of the immediacy of the carnival experience from the standpoint of its central players, the musician-dancers. The key public events of Sibundoy carnival occur in the towns of Santiago (on Monday) and Sibundoy (on Tuesday), when members of the Ingano and Kamsá communities, respectively, arrive in town from the outlying *veredas* or hamlets to celebrate the advent of a new carnival period. Members of the indigenous communities arrayed as musician-dancers circle the plaza of these towns, enter church to receive the counsel and blessing of the priest, and then spill out into the plaza where they commence to celebrate in earnest. After circling the plaza a few times and engaging in a range of ritual games there (see Dover 1995), they filter into the "official" houses of the communities, the *cabildo* and the homes of its chief officers. There they receive ample portions of chicha, and there they consummate the transformation into ancestral spirits. After perhaps an

hour in this state, people drift away towards their own veredas where they continue for two or three days and nights to dance the carnival music as they wander from house to house, receiving fresh chicha at every stop.

I want to highlight here the transition from “normal” reality to the special reality of carnival, accomplished through a combination of effects: the donning of feathered crowns, the imbibing of chicha and sugar-cane alcohol, the pulsating envelope of the carnival music, and the continuous dancing that eventually induces a trance-like state of consciousness. This sensory assault precipitates an entry into the ancestral world, a world that is thoroughly familiar to members of the communities through exposure to mythic narratives, to the healing practices of the native doctors, and to a storehouse of folk religious belief and practice (see McDowell 1989). Sibundoy carnival reactivates a formative moment in cosmic history, the decisive moment that foreshadows the establishment of Sibundoy civilization. The centerpiece in this transformation is the illusion of ancestral *presence*, the perception that the ancestors have returned, or alternatively, that the modern people have become, provisionally, the ancestors.

Carnival in the Sibundoy Valley is thus a time of enhanced spiritual presence, when the implicit, partially concealed spirits that animate the local belief system become tangible presences. The carnival musician-dancers are the primary, but not the exclusive manifestation of this extraordinary cosmic inversion; on the fringe of carnival events one encounters the *sanjuaneros* who solicit gifts for their babies (plastic dolls they carry about) and the menacing straw-cloaked spirits who come at you speaking in high-pitched voices and require a few coins or cigarettes before they will relent. Sibundoy ancestral spirits are believed to be hovering about at all times, but during the carnival interlude they appear as visible and audible presences, in the process (as we shall see) of a re-enactment of the founding of Sibundoy society.

Sayings, Blessings, and Cures

Immanent truth in the Sibundoy Valley revolves around the exemplary doings of these ancestors who are brought to mind during social events both routine and extraordinary. It would not be an exaggeration to state that ancestral spirits accompany the modern people in every step of their mortal journey. The influence of the ancestors is most pervasive in the sayings attributed to them, which guide people through the phases of the life cycle. The sayings of the ancestors are formulaic propositions adducing

the likely implications of specific physical or psychological manifestations. Many of them are essentially benign in their frame of reference:

(Kamsá)

bokoy tkojotjena,

ibsana wabtena jabinynam.

If you dream of chicha [maize beer],
you will see rain at dawn.

But a significant portion of the corpus entails more weighty concerns:

(Quechua)

santo piso huasi ucuma yaucumi tapia,

huahuacuna huañungapa o dañucugmanda.

The centipede enters your house, it is a sign:
the children are to die,
or they will be harming them.

(Quechua)

bailacugta muscuchimi, chica llaquica.

You are made to dream that you are dancing,
that is sadness.

Whether addressing naturalistic observation or dream images, this portion of the corpus conveys highly significant revelations of spirit machinations operating upon human destinies. Especially foreboding premonitions will cause people to take preventive measures, often with the assistance of a native doctor.

It is believed that the sayings were coined by the ancestors and passed along in an unbroken chain of oral tradition from their time to ours where they persist as an important resource for interpreting experience and shaping responses to it. They are called (in Inga) *ñugpamandacuna imasa rimascacuna*, literally “what the first people were accustomed to say.” When bringing a particular saying into the framework of a conversation, people sometimes use the expression *ñugpamandacuna nincuna: chi tapiami ca* (“The first people would say: ‘That is an omen’”). Collectively, the sayings propose forms of behavior that are in keeping with the example and wisdom of the elders; they are a kind of practical guide to everyday problems. But their import extends to the crucial business of detecting and combating spiritual sickness, a dreaded condition that leaves the person and his or her family vulnerable to all forms of misfortune.

The sayings of the ancestors permeate every arena of daily life in the valley, so that people are constantly reminded of the cosmological matrix; indeed, this matrix can be said to condition their experience of the world at all times. The ancestors are invoked less casually in a number of speech forms associated with the discharge of community business. Elsewhere I have explored the combined impact of *blessing* and *cure* as elements in an indigenous survival plan (McDowell 1990). Each of these remedies involves forms of appropriate discourse and each draws its legitimacy from the example of the ancestors. The blessing is a social instrument performed through the use of ceremonial speech. Such speech is an oratory that graces all moments of public gathering and can even intrude into informal conversation when one speaker seeks to honor or acquire leverage over another. It is composed of chanted phrases lauding the example of the ancestors and imploring their benevolent intervention.

Ceremonial speeches recognize the present occasion by assimilating it to an eternal charter established by the ancestors. Because this speech form emerged in the context of the colonial system, it reveals layering of the traditional respect for the ancestors with a litany of Catholicism. In this syncretism, an equivalence is established between Jesus Christ and Our Father the Sun, and the traditional ancestors are implicitly connected to Catholic prophets and saints. These speeches are very structured in terms of phonetic output, evincing an aural texture reminiscent of the chanting tonalities of Catholic prayer. The Sibundoy invest this speaking style with the capacity to reach the ears of the ancestors.

Consider, as an instance, a series of speeches that are associated with the Sibundoy carnival. I draw here from Kamsá texts provided by my host and research partner, don Justo Jacanamijoy of the vereda San Felix. As part of the round of activities associated with carnival season in the Sibundoy Valley, persons of lower sociopolitical standing solicit a blessing from their superiors. As Justo puts it: “The blessing is solicited from an elder relative, or from anyone you hold in respect.” Formerly, any Kamsá individual might solicit the blessing from the *cacique* or traditional chief. Nowadays, here are some of the dyads customarily involved in the blessing encounter:

son, daughter :: father, mother, father-in-law,

mother-in-law

nephew :: uncle (on mother’s side)

younger brother :: older brother

godchild :: godfather

compadre :: compadre

any adult :: any member of the *cabildo* (tribal council)

The sequence begins as the younger person approaches the elder and requests the blessing. These texts are derived from a simulated performance by Justo Jacanamijoy:

THE CARNIVAL BLESSING
(Kamsá)

i) solicitation

a dios ndoka remedio taita chká xmutsepasentsia
By the grace of God so be it Father, please forgive me

mnté chkaté tojabinyana oboyejwaite klistrinyi
Today this day of carnival festivity has dawned

mntxá tsuwustona ndoka remedio
Thus I come following the carnival spirit so be it

taitabe botamán palabra razona lastema karidad xkatobemañe
Please be so kind as to give me father's beautiful word of advice

At this point the solicitor kneels before the elder, and removes his carnival crown; the elder then delivers the blessing:

ii) the blessing

apaye ndoka remedio basabe barie 5
That's very kind of you so be it for my son-in-law's part

chká tkojajwabo ngnatena oboyejwaite tojabinyana
Thus you have taken a mind as this day of festivity has dawned

ntxamo mas remedio muchaisebema ndoka remedio
We have no other choice so be it

bngabe taitana respeto kwamojiitseperdena
Without losing respect for Our Father surely we must proceed

mntxá kwamojiitsashekwestona ndoka remidio

Thus we are following in the footsteps of the ancestors so be it

tempska yayanga besawelanga tmetsekostumbra palabrena

10

From the old days our grandparents and great-grandparents
have kept this custom

ndaye remidiona nye testigona kaba kema palabrena kwanetsekedana

So it has come to pass that only a part of this custom remains

kwamenetsebojanya ndoka remidiona

We are surely conserving it so be it

oboyejwaite yomenana komntxasa

There used to be this day of festivity among our people

muchuftsenserperdenga

We must proceed without losing respect

disomanda por diosa kwedadoka kortisia respetoka

15

For the sake of God be careful, courteous, respectful

mntxá basabe barina kochoboyejwaye kem utate o kem ungate

Thus for my son-in-law's part, you will make merry these two days
or three days

chká yowetsakostumbrana kausna

Because such is the custom we have always kept

i taitabe derecho karidadna kwedadoka mntxá trabajo

And the Father's will provides thus with care His work

impadna tekochjatxataye pamilliangabe barina

In measure you will enjoy yourself in behalf of the community

ndoka remidio basabe barina botamán palabra botamán kortisio

20

So be it on my son-in-law's behalf, a beautiful word, a beautiful courtesy

lastema karidado kwaxkotsolastimañe

Without harm a kindness you bestow on me

ndone kwachandopodia mntxá stutxoye jenokedanas
I cannot thus cast you aside

ndoka remidio selokana bngabe btsá
So be it from heaven Our Father

ntxamo respeto itsjiitseperdenkana chaxopasentsia
Thus without losing respect I will proceed, may He forgive me

i chentxa despuesna basabe barina chka xmojaisepasentsia
And then later on my son-in-law's behalf, please forgive me

25

polvo jaftsekeda bwakwatxekena respeto kwachenoperdey
With this hand that will return to dust I will proceed

(the sign of the cross is made over the kneeling
person's head)

la bendición del padre, del hijo, del espíritu santo
the blessing of the Father, of the Son, of the Holy Ghost

oboyejwaite tojabinyana ndoka remidio
A day of festivity has dawned so be it

nye ratotema xmaisebiajwa
Just for a while let us be merry

The younger person now rises and addresses the elder:

iii) thanks

ndoka remidio taita chká xmojatspasentsia
So be it Father thus please forgive me

30

oboyejwaite tojabinyana kausna respeto kwatsabayenoperdena
As it has dawned a day of festivity I am proceeding with respect

ndoka remidio tonday delikadokasna

So be it since there is no problem between us

nye nyantena mntxa bominye temochjaisejajon

If only for another year thus our vision will continue

ndoñesna nye mora nyetxa bominya kwatsjaiisekukjna

If not then only to this point surely my vision has guided me

ndoka remidio taitabe botamán lisentsiakna

So be it with father's beautiful blessing

35

ndoka remidio mntxá xkwaisoboyejwa

So be it thus I will rejoice

At this point the younger person takes a flower and sheds its petals over the older person's head, removing the elder's carnival crown and saying:

lisentsia taita klistrinyi klistrinyi taita

By your leave, Father, celebrate, celebrate the day, Father

We are dealing here with a ritual dialogue whose focal point is the conferring of the blessing, which is reciprocated in the shedding of the flowers by the newly blessed person. This event opens with a brief solicitation as the younger person takes note of the occasion ("Today this day of carnival festivity has dawned") and then requests "Father's beautiful word of advice." The older player then launches into the principal speech of the event. The first section of his speech recognizes the carnival occasion and even brings in a charged political note: "From the old days our grandparents and great-grandparents have kept this custom; so it has come to pass that only a part of this custom remains." In fact, the Capuchin priests successfully extinguished much of the festive life of the Sibundoy peoples during the first half of the present century (see Bonilla 1972).

The speaker initiates his counsel to the petitioner starting around line 15: "For the sake of God be careful, courteous, respectful." The blessing segment begins with line 20: "So be it on my son-in-law's behalf, a beautiful word, a beautiful courtesy." The climactic blessing sequence occurs with the recitation of the Catholic formula *la bendición del padre, del hijo, del espíritu santo* in line 27. Here the elder stands in as surrogate

priest and in this guise releases the petitioner to enjoy the carnival celebration. The petitioner then brings closure to the event by uttering the spirited words, *klistrinyi*, *klistrinyi*, as he or she sheds the petals of a flower over the elder's head.

Although these speeches foreground the Christian connection, the indigenous ancestors reside within them as a kind of unspoken counterpoint. Our Father, *bngabe taita*, is a composite figure, containing the Christian Jesus Christ as well as the indigenous solar deity, *shinye* (see McDowell 1994). This complex religious orientation surfaces in the following ritual language formula (line 9):

mntxá kwamojiitsashekwastona ndoka remidio

The pivotal verb here can be parsed as follows:

- (1) *kwa-* mood of certainty
- (2) *-mo-* plural subject
- (3) *-jii-* verbal marker of respect
- (4) *-ts-* progressive aspect
- (5) *-a-* preverb, indicates collective action
- (6) the root *shekwastona*, "to follow in their footsteps"

Kamsá ritual language is laden with heavy, complex verbal structures like these, to a far greater extent than other modes of Kamsá speech. The sense of this construction is something like, "We are surely following in their footsteps." The verbal root, *shekwastona*, carries a strong connotation of dedication to the Sibundoy ethos as established by ancestral example.

The ceremonial speeches occasion a provisional sense of ancestral presence rather than a full-fledged experience of immanence. With the ancestors as eavesdroppers, ceremonial speeches bring people into the beneficent fold of ancestral example. The strongly rhythmic acoustics move people towards an experience of the ineffable, reinforced by the religious import of its chanted phrases.

If the blessing operates to smooth over social interaction within the community, the cure reaches out to encompass relations with the spirit beings. One key component of Sibundoy curing is the "singing to the spirits" performed by native doctors who have mastered the language of the spirits, a language replete with singing and chanting, humming, whistling, and ritual blowing, all to accompaniment of a rhythmic shaking of the medicine branches. Sibundoy native doctors are widely respected throughout the region, by indigenous people and mestizos alike. They trace their lineage to the lowland *médicos*, with whom they customarily serve an apprenticeship, and to the *tigre* (jaguar) who is closely associated with

lowland medicine. In their singing, the native doctors announce their pedigree and call upon the spirit helpers required for spiritual curing and fortification.

The native doctors' "singing to the spirits" precipitates a genuine manifestation of the ancestors, for this spiritual idiom effects a dialogue between human medium and his spirit helpers. The singing to the spirits, with its compendium of assorted auditory effects, is considered a communicative medium common to humans and ancestral spirits. Here the ancestors are not merely eavesdropping on a conversation among humans. Instead, they are directly involved as the intended recipients of auditory production. The expressive code for this channel is more musical than verbal, as whistled and whispered melodies are interwoven with chanted verbal components.

Immanence is very real in this setting, and it is further enhanced by the customary ingestion, by doctor and patient alike, of the *huasca*, a hallucinogenic preparation with the active ingredients of LSD (Schultes and Hofmann 1979; McDowell 1989). This medicine, known popularly as *yagé* or *ayahuasca*, is defined in the Sibundoy context as a vehicle for breaking through to the ancestors. In the hallucinogenic state, the singing to the spirits creates a powerful sensation of direct contact with the ancestors. Their presence is experienced as reality, in a setting thought to be more real than experience of the ordinary. These curing sessions activate a kind of vicarious immanence, an encounter with the ancestors mediated through the psychotropic effects of the drug and the acoustic performance of the native doctor.

Mythic Narrative

Sayings of the ancestors are attributed to the first people, and blessing and cure each presuppose the continuing presence of ancestral spirits. But it is in the mythic narratives that speakers rehearse the available information about the ancestors and their actions. These narratives are primarily a corpus of knowledge about the ancestors, but in performance they obtain an important additional status, as verbal art objects creating the illusion of ancestral presence. "The Tale of the Heathens' Walk" sheds light on the scenes enacted and re-enacted during Sibundoy carnival. This performance emerged in a late afternoon session on a June day in 1976. I had been invited into the cabildo in Santiago for a "drop" of chicha and a cup or two of *aguardiente*. Present were Manuel Muyuy, the governor at the time, his wife, and a young fellow who was a junior officer, *alguacil*, in the cabildo.

After some brief conversation, I made a request for performances of traditional narrative. Mr. Muyuy agreed to tell about the heathens' walk, and graciously allowed me to record this performance on tape. He delivered a casual narrative performance, one that tells the tale but also meditates on key elements in the tale, such as the exact nature of the *aucas*, and the significance of seizing the *auca's* feathered headdress. Mr. Muyuy's performance is punctuated by comments from members of the audience, including a couple of admonishments to keep the performance in the Inga language.

I have transcribed this performance in a manner that seeks to capture some of its more salient qualities of phrasing and emphasis. Line breaks indicate the placement of intonational closure and pauses between utterances; larger spaces between consecutive lines indicate boundaries between adjacent episodes. Indentations mark asides as audience members added details or interjections. I supply the original Inga text with a fairly close English translation beneath it.

aucacunapa purepi parlo
The Tale of the Heathens' Walk
 (Quechua)

chi aucacunapa pureypi parlasa
 Of the heathens' walk I will speak

aha
 yes

sug yahuar sutuchisi, sutuchisi parlay
 of a drop of blood spilling, it is said, spilling, speak

aucacunapa pureypi no verá entendey entendey
 the heathens' walk, you see, perhaps to understand, to understand

aha
 yes

auca pureypi entendengapa
 so that you will understand the walk of the heathen

aha
 yes

aucaca casami purencuna
and so the heathen walk about

runa cristianota runata cahuaspa purencunami casa no 5
looking for human beings, for people, they walk about like this,
you see

eso es lo chi aucacuna purenacumi
that's it, those heathens are walking about

yahuar cahuaspa micungapa runata no
looking for blood, in order to eat people, you see

runaca yucami miticunga caymanda cayma yucami miticucungalla
the people will have to flee, from one place to another,
they will just have to flee

nipica sug ricumi buduquerahua
then along comes one with a blow gun

amigo no ya buduquerahua 10
an Ingano, you see, with a blow gun

yuca aucataca flecha cachacungalla no
he will just have to be sending an arrow to the heathen, you see

ya entonces que cuti chica imata ruranga
yes, well then, again, that one, what will he do?

pero imata chasa animal caticuchu
and so like that the rascal might be following him

auca animal claro yucami micungapa
that heathen rascal, sure, he has to eat

chi runata yucami caticunga micungapa no 15
that person he will have to follow in order to eat, you see

y ahora que manima pudi pudi apingapa no
and now what, but no, he cannot, he cannot catch him, you see

y mana pudi apingapa no y nada
and he cannot catch him, you see, not at all

y yucarca paycar vencerca flechahua flechahua vencerca
and he had to defeat him, with the arrow he defeated him

rirca ña catimaca ña miticurca a la playa
he went now, following him, now he fled to the beach

playa suticanca
the beach, as it is called

20

nipica pay nig carcasi sinchi yacha
then around there he was a powerful doctor, it is said

y chipi payca catichirca carajo calpachirca buduquerahua
and there he followed him, damn! he made him run with the blow gun

venenohua pambarca paytaca suma
with poison he buried that one well

se fue miticurca niyca miticurca chi upa aucaca
he left, he fled, as they say, he fled, that mute heathen

upa aucaca miticurca
the mute heathen fled

25

aja pluma pluma tucuy yucarca
yes, feathers, all kinds of feathers he had

calpasi rirca sug chi—may chi yaco patachu chi
he ran, it is said, he went, where, to the edge of that river

amigoca upasi mana carca calpachirca
the Ingano was not mute, it is said, he made him run

auca calpachihuraca maypimi urmagri

when he was chasing the heathen to the place he would go to fall

allí está y chicar chipi apagrirca

there he is, and then he went to take him there

30

chi cahuagrirca

he went to see him there

u carajo chipicar paypa pluma coronaca pluma tucuy tiapusca

and damn! there with his crown of feathers, all those feathers, they were
there for him

chasquigrirca pay tranquilo ya ve

he went to receive them, he was calm, you see

y lo mató

and he killed him

ingapi

In Inga!

no pues chica manima pudirca pero huañuchingapa chi indiota

so you see, he just couldn't kill that Indian

35

manima pudirca no

he couldn't do it, you see

auca animal cascaca cucu pues no

the heathen rascal was a spirit, you see

cucu diga cucu es un ser persona indio no

a spirit, let's say, a spirit, it is a being, a person being, Indian, you see

ningapaca yangasina ningapaca auca

so to speak, not like a real person, so to speak, a heathen

micudur runata micudur runata

an eater of people, an eater of people

40

cuna horaca caypi micunshanchi camcunata tucuyta no
 nowadays here we don't eat you people at all, you see

auca chi micumi sutipa ya chica micumi
 the heathen, that was truly his food, that was his food

bien bueno le cogió la pluma y todo bien
 fine, and so he picked up the feathers and all was well

ingapica hermano
 in Inga, brother

y apircasi pluma
 and he seized, it is said, the feathers

45

y plumataca apircasi quinquin tarirca
 and those feathers he seized, it is said, for himself he found them

quidarca sinchi yacha sinchi
 he remained a powerful doctor, powerful

y paysi carica dueñoca tucuy imata de gente de animales
 and he was the owner, it is said, of all kinds of people and animals

no ve sutipa nincuna yacha animal no
 you see, truly they say, quite a doctor, you see

ningapaca ningapaca ningapaca pues tucuy ningapaca
 so to say, so to say, so to say, thus all, so to say

50

tucuy tigre uso tucuy dueño quidagrica
 all jaguars, bears, he went to remain their owner

paypa poderpi quidagringa yacha
 in his power, he went to remain a powerful doctor

chica pero nombreca mana huillarca ima suticagta
that one, but he didn't leave us his name, what he was called

ya ve ni mana yacharcanchi pi nombre cagta
so you see, we don't even know how he was called

yachaca pero yachaca y sinchi tucurca 55
a doctor, but a doctor and a powerful one he became

y yacha animal quien sabe imachar payca
and quite a doctor, who knows what he was?

carca volador carca tigre tucuy hasta este digamos pues huacamahi pajuil
a flyer he was, a jaguar, everything, even this huacamayo, the parrot

digamos esos pajaros no muy sabedor
let's say, those birds, you see, he was very knowing

yapa yacha quedó escrito con el pero sin saber
very wise, that was his destiny, but without knowing it

y chi auca y chi aucataca huañuchirca 60
and that heathen, and he killed that heathen

y payca huañuchirca y lo quitó
and he killed him, and he took it

y aparcami herencia de el herencia herencia claro
and he took it, the inheritance of that one, the inheritance, inheritance,
surely

paypa yuyaytaca apapurca paypa umama
his knowledge he took for himself into his own mind

claro que mas apapurca paypa yuyay umata no
surely more, he took for himself his mind, you see

chica carca yuyayyugca
that one was an owner of knowledge

65

caypica purircami caypica purecurcami
and here he walked about, here he was walking about

uso tucuspa aja tigre tucuspa
becoming a bear, yes, becoming a jaguar

manchachinacurayami oveja ima yucascata
he would be frightening the sheep or whatever they had

y micurca caypimi purica chi oso no
and he ate, walking about here, that bear, you see

runa animalmi puricurca
that man was walking about

70

runa runa purimi
that man, that man, he walked about

mana carcachu imata animal
he was not an animal

sino payca como asi mustrami puricurca
but he was walking about like this, naked

payca carcami como así
he was like this

yapa yacha yapa yacha
quite a doctor, quite a doctor

75

allí está
there it is

The story is etiological in that the encounter between the *auca* and the *amigo* accounts for beliefs and practices associated with the Sibundoy

native doctors; it is allegorical in that it represents the emergence of Sibundoy civilization. The *auca* is a heathen, cannibalistic savage, not exactly a person but rather a spirit being. The *aucas* are portrayed as a substrate population in Andean ethnohistory (see Guaman Poma de Ayala 1615), a bellicose contingent that had to be removed to make way for civil society. Our narrator devotes considerable effort to defining this primordial creature who walks about hunting the early people who are his food supply. Mr. Muyuy's ambivalence is evident in the halting characterization he provides in lines 37-40:

auca animal cascaca cucu pues no
the heathen rascal was a spirit, you see

cucu diga cucu es un ser persona indio no
a spirit, let's say, a spirit, it is a being, a person being, Indian, you see

ningapaca yangasina ningapaca auca
so to speak, not like a real person, so to speak, a heathen

micudur runata micudur runata
an eater of people, an eater of people

The lexicon employed in this passage is interesting. I translate *auca* as "heathen," in an attempt to capture the sense of otherness central to the term. The word *cucu*, which I translate as "spirit," came to signify "demon" or "devil" under the influence of the Catholic priests, though it is clear that its original semantic frame was more neutral. The narrator is at a loss to pin down this amorphous and anomalous figure, who is like a person but not a person, an *indio* but not like the modern Indians.

The *auca*'s adversary, on the other hand, is decidedly a human. He is labelled an *amigo*, a term that refers to Quechua-speaking associates in the adjacent lowland areas. The *amigos* are perceived as branch populations of the Sibundoy indigenous communities, and a key portion of Sibundoy mythology portrays the *amigos* as a kind of ancestral source of the modern Sibundoy peoples (see McDowell 1994). I have translated *amigo* as "Ingano," but perhaps "proto-Ingano" would be more accurate.

The face-off between the *auca* and the *amigo* is thus a collision between the substrate population of the zone and the ancestors of the people who would come to replace them. The *amigo* possesses a *buduquera*, a blow gun, an artifact that gives him a distinct advantage over the *auca*. Blow guns are still familiar among the lowland peoples at the northwestern

fringe of the Amazon basin, and middle-aged Sibundoy consultants remember seeing them in the valley when they were children. With the blow gun in hand, the amigo is able to turn the tables on the auca, and the hunter becomes the hunted. The amigo, with the aid of technology unavailable to the auca, wins the contest and brings his foe down by the edge of a river.

The storyteller places great emphasis on the crown of feathers worn by the auca and appropriated by the amigo: “all those feathers, they were there for him” (line 32). Again the narrator lingers over an important and problematic detail: with the feathers, the amigo takes “the mind” of the auca, his spiritual “inheritance” (line 62). Thus it is made clear that the feather crown of the auca symbolizes or more accurately contains the spiritual knowledge of the auca. The protagonist of the tale, already a *sinchi yacha* (powerful doctor) at the outset, obtains an additional store of spiritual power through the appropriation of the auca’s headdress. He emerges from the encounter *yapa yacha*, very wise, a great doctor, a powerful spiritual operator. In this condition he is able to roam the world as a bear or jaguar, even a flying creature.

Manuel Muyuy, our storyteller, signals the exemplary nature of his story’s content through the curious expression, *quedó escrito con él*, which I translate “that was his destiny” (line 59). Literally, this phrase means, “it was written with him,” but I have seized on its fateful or biblical aura in concocting my translation. The connotation is of a crucial turn in the progression of cosmic history; in this light the expression could be rendered, “that was our destiny through him.” Clearly the narrator is claiming a portentous character for the events he narrates. He remarks as well the oddity that we do not know the name of this important progenitor, since “he didn’t leave us his name” (line 53). The portrait that emerges is of an anonymous but consequential proto-Ingano, of a culture hero who performs tasks essential to the establishment of society.

As etiology and allegory this story provides a backdrop to the spiritual beliefs and practices active among the modern Sibundoy. The contemporary native doctors work within the confines of this historical charter, identifying the Ingano amigo as the original *sinchi*, practitioner of indigenous medicine. We also have a charter for the carnival celebrations, which feature feathered crowns inspired by the encounter between the auca and the amigo and its consequences. Another mythic narrative, *calusturinda taita*, “The Owner of the Carnival” (Sijindioy 1983) traces the origins of Sibundoy carnival to the culture hero who vanquishes the heathens.

Varieties of Immanence

The system I have described is, I believe, pervaded by immanent truth, founded on the premise of the ancestors as founders and protectors of a civilizing impulse. Immanent truth for the Sibundoy peoples can be formulated in a series of propositions about the ancestors and their continuing impact on the modern people. But let us turn our attention to the experience of immanence, which in the particular sense I have outlined here entails for the Sibundoy experiencing the presence of the ancestors. I believe that the presence of the Sibundoy ancestors is particularly fostered by participation in the kinds of expressive performances described above, not only these verbal ones but also artifactual, kinetic, and composite ritual forms.

I envision a scale of Sibundoy immanence organized according to degree, ranging from merely echoic intimations of the ancestors to full-fledged encounters with them, all of this lodged within a deeply evocative referential environment featuring the exemplary character of the Sibundoy first people. Providing much of this ambience are the sayings of the ancestors and the mythic narratives. The sayings and myths keep the memory of the ancestors alive and active, and each genre holds some potential to evoke the ancestors as well. But it is in the more formally organized speech genres, the ceremonial discourse and the singing to the spirits, and in the ecstatic carnival dancing, that ancestral presence becomes immediate and palpable.

The mythic narratives play a vital role in conveying knowledge about the ancestors, but their power to invoke them is somewhat limited by the iconic, representational character of narrative discourse (McDowell 1983). However, as I have shown elsewhere, narrative discourse has the potential to transcend its customary role of *recounting* experience and move towards *recreating* it instead. I have employed the term *narrative epiphany* to identify those moments when stories surmount their narrative vessels. In such moments the performance setting dissolves into the imagined scene of the plot, and the voices of story protagonists merge with the voice of the narrator to create a virtual encounter with the narrative substrate.

Sibundoy mythic narrative performances can precipitate epiphanies, bringing the audience members into *virtual* contact with the ancestors. These effects are stimulated by vocal and gestural devices, as performers seek to dramatize their stories. Gestures of eye, head, and hands are used to imply an identity between the surroundings of the performance event and physical entities mentioned in the tale. Thus the storyteller will gesture to

the eaves of a nearby house when describing the descent of Our Lord to a position just above the plaza on Corpus Christi day.

The vocal effects revolve primarily around episodes of reported speech (and reported animal voicings). Sibundoy narrators, especially the best of them, show great skill in evoking the protagonists of their tales by imitating their voices. Manuel Muyuy's performance of "The Tale of the Heathens' Walk" is remarkable for the absence of reported speech; he made no particular effort to dramatize the encounter between heathen and proto-Ingano. But a comment by his wife at the outset of the performance contains one interesting move towards experiential vitality (line 3):

sug yahuar sutuchisi, sutuchisi parlay
of a drop of blood spilling, it is said, spilling, speak

Her repetition of the verbal form, "spilling," recreates through the medium of speech the experience of watching blood drip, a repetitive process captured in the repeated verb.

The sayings of the ancestors, in spite of their expository character, contain elements contributing to an out-of-the-ordinary experience. I am thinking in particular of their symbolic language, which conjoins referents normally held separate from one another. The very inconformity between sign and event, between omen and result, the process of symbolic contamination that brings these two tokens into contact, is a reminder that a peculiar logic is at work in the sayings, what we might call a *spiritual* or *ancestral* logic. This juxtaposition of referents taken from contrastive experiential domains signals the presence of an extra-ordinary consciousness in the corpus of sayings and beckons, I believe, towards an encounter if not with the ancestors then at least with the ancestral mentality.

The ceremonial speeches occasion, as we have seen, a sense of ancestral proximity, but for the experience of true ancestral presence we must turn to the curing chants and songs of the native doctors. In these sessions, under the influence of psychoactive substances and pervasive acoustic rhythms, the Sibundoy people live the presence of their ancestors, as spirit helpers appear at the summons of the native doctor and register direct sensory impressions upon those assembled. Carnival dancing brings about, I suppose, the ultimate degree of immanence, the bodily incorporation of the ancestors, a true "in-dwelling" of the ancestors.

We have surveyed the sliding scale of Sibundoy immanence, ranging from provisional effects to palpable and even somatic ones. It is possible to devise in these materials a typology of immanence that might transfer to expressive systems in other cultural settings, starting with the ambient

referential apparatus that preserves objective knowledge about the cosmological nexus and culminating with the more profound experience of significant presence.

Conclusion

Immanent truth, by this account, both derives from and facilitates profound, very personal experiences of presence, and specifically of a particular sort of presence, one that we might label foundational. This immanence, or pervasive presence, is tied to sources of collective identity—for Sibundoy Indians, to exemplary ancestors both indigenous and Christian. We have seen in one setting how the numerous permutations of immanence, from faint to all-encompassing, support a collective vision of cosmogenesis. There is, in addition, a correlation between expressive means and levels of immanence, such that the more powerful experiences of presence are associated with more stylized discourses. This association of means and effects holds the key, I believe, to the phenomenology of commemoration, and I would like to explore these matters in bringing this essay to a close.

In my discussion of commemorative discourse, I proposed the notion of *speech narcosis*, the capacity of measured and allusive speech to instill an altered state of consciousness. The primary agent in this mood-altering capability is the impact of rhythmic sensory stimuli on the peripheral and central nervous systems. Here I make reference to a growing body of data and theory concerning neurological effects known as *driving* and *entraining* of brain rhythms through the application of a rhythmic external stimulus (Dobkin de Rios 1993). This research indicates that repetitive sensory impressions cause a spill-over effect that I have characterized as “the wholly-engaged brain” (McDowell 1992:419). It has been demonstrated that cerebral driving is associated with the experience of trance-like mental states.

A secondary factor in speech narcosis is the semantic opacity of these messages, which creates an aura of privileged understanding (Kermode 1979). The metaphorical pattern of messages encoding immanent truth, the way they encompass the broad sweep of history, their veiled implications for everyday behavior, all contribute to this promise of revelation. These sensory and conceptual elements work together to foster the impression of presence, since speech that is rhythmic and densely allusive seems to spring from an eternal source, somehow independent of the immediate circumstances of its production. It will be evident that the Sibundoy speech

forms activate these mood-altering features to a variable extent, remotely in the case of the narratives and the sayings, more forcefully in the case of the ceremonial speeches and the singing to the spirits. Most interesting is the carnival dancing, which brings to bear the entire range of transformative properties and thereby effects the most pervasive sensation of immanence. In this setting the drums lead the way in establishing an insistent rhythm, and the literature on altered states of consciousness indicates that the drum sonority, with its large profile of frequencies and heavy representation in the low frequency zone, is especially productive of the sonic driving effect (see Neher 1962).

In the grip of the ecstasy of the moment, the musician-dancers play the carnival melody on their flutes, a melody that is believed to have originated with the bird-people who populate the mythic narratives. The woven belts dangling from the carnival crowns, with their geometric portraits of ancestral figures, complement the sonic rhythms with visual rhythms of their own, and further evoke this formative phase in the rise of Sibundoy society, just as the colorful feathers suspended from the crown index the spiritual inheritance wrested from the aucas. Finally, the carnival song with its celebration of the joy and mystery of the moment ratifies the shared perception of an altered reality. On every front, in every medium, the carnival participants are bombarded with precisely the acoustic, visual, and representational messages that would channel them into a heightened state of awareness. It is in this crucible, where aural and visual rhythms conspire to summon the ancestors, that people experience the ultimate degree of immanence—themselves and their companions as ancestral spirits.

Folklore Institute, Indiana University

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