

HOW DO PEOPLE make sense of their experiences? How do they understand possibility? How do they limit possibility? These questions are central to all the human sciences. Here, Vincent Crapanzano offers a powerfully creative new way to think about human experience: the notion of imaginative horizons. For Crapanzano, imaginative horizons are the blurry boundaries that separate the here and now from what lies beyond, in time and space. These horizons, he argues, deeply influence both how we experience our lives and how we interpret those experiences, and here sets himself the task of exploring the roles that creativity and imagination play in our experience of the world.

"At last we have an anthropology of the imagination that is not a cultural analysis of imagery, not an essay on imagination as a faculty that varies cross-culturally, but a cultural montage juxtaposing vivid moments in the back country of human experience, the beyond, the elsewhere of passionate existence. Both sensible and sensuous, Crapanzano's discussion is more than encyclopedic: it is prismatic, refracting and evoking multiple dimensions of imaginative experience ranging from the literal horizon of landscape to the figurative horizon of mythic consciousness, from the abjection of chronic pain to the distant glimmering of hope both transcendent and mundane, from the wanderings of the Navajo hero twins to the self-mutilation of initiates in an Islamic brotherhood, from conventions of flirtation and erotic intimacy to apocalyptic visions in Melanesia. The book is a string of intellectual pearls brought forth from the depths of the imagination by a brilliant ethnographer and masterful prose stylist."

—THOMAS J. CSORBA, *Case Western Reserve University*

"This book makes an important contribution to the contemporary remapping of the faculties. Each chapter reads like a meditative journey in which the reader accompanies a well-trained and generous mind as it grapples with the puzzle of human experience. It will appeal to students and scholars of anthropology, literature, philosophy, and cultural studies, and especially to those who are looking for innovation in methodology in these disciplines."

—VLAD GODZICH, *University of California, Santa Cruz*

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Cover painting: detail of *Traveling Next to a Clouded Sea* (1818) by Caspar David Friedrich, © Archivio Leonografico, S.A./Corbis

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writing and reading—of the interpretation of voicing in any genre, including the transgressive.

In the same vein I have, at times, used the word “primitive” to refer to the traditional subjects of ethnographic research—not because I in any way accept either the primitivity of the primitive or his or her inferiority. I have used the term when it reflects a category, nowadays rather more implicit than explicit, masked as it often is by one weasel word or another—“preliterate,” “people of simpler societies,” or the proper name of one or another once-denominated primitive society—which has had a governing effect on anthropological or some other thought. My use of the “primitive” should be taken as an unmasking provocation rather than a derogation.

Through the encounter with the other, one comes to an acknowledgment, a recuperation, in a somewhat different register, of oneself and one’s world. In this sense anthropology is always exploitative of the other, and in much the same way as one discovers and even cultivates aspects of oneself through one’s lover. This recuperative relationship is, I believe, an essential dimension of any significant relationship. It is morally questionable when the relationship precludes reciprocity and particularly distasteful when that preclusion is justified on “scientific” or some other expertise, on racial, class, ethnic, gender, or cultural superiority, or on moral or spiritual authority. Full reciprocity—as every lover, however reluctantly, knows—is an ideal that is rarely, if ever, achieved.

IMAGINATIVE HORIZONS

That flowing water! That flowing water!
 My mind wanders across it.
 That broad water! That flowing water!
 My mind wanders across it.
 That old age water! That flowing water!
 My mind wanders across it.

NAVAJO POEM¹

THIS POEM tells of a young Navajo man who looks back across the San Juan river at his homeland, the *diné bıkéyah*. He is overcome with loneliness and homesickness and sings this poem. It begins with a greeting, *Aháłane*. The *diné bıkéyah* is the object of his longing. It is, for the Navajo, the center of the universe, the point in space, Momaday tells us, from which all concepts of the cosmos proceed. What is strikingly Navajo is the image of the border—frontier here turned back on itself—as flowing water: The mind wanders across it. The mind wanders across what is in motion. There is no stasis—just movement on movement, flowing on flowing, wandering on wandering.

There has been much written in academic circles in recent years about borders, boundaries and frontiers, on their enforcement, supersession, dissolution, and porosity, on crossings and recrossings, on transmigration, all supposedly affected and effected by the Web-netting, transnationalism, and globalization of our stipulated postmodernity. Though I recognize the importance of geopolitical borders, boundaries, and frontiers, the violence they inspire, the entrapment they produce, the painful displacement they cause, and the inhuman policing they effect, I do not treat them in this book. I will not be concerned with the movement—or nonmovement—of peoples across legally constituted lines or into distinctly qualified domains of

culture, language, and polity. Rather, I am interested in frontiers as horizons that extend from the insistent reality of the here and now into that operative space or time—the space-time—of the imaginary. It is this realm that gives us an edge, at times wrenching and painful, at times relieving and pleasurable, on the here and now in all its viscous immediacy. It allows us to escape from the insistent pull of reality, as we are, for example, by odors and tastes, which are not, at least easily, distinguishable from our experience of them. Though being caught up in immediate reality has been associated with primitive cultures and *Naturvölker* in our altogether questionable ethnocentric mythologies, which stress the primacy of their instinctual life and the sublimation, indeed the etherealization, of our civilized condition, we have all, at one time or another, been so consumed by reality as to lose our bearings, our sense of self and boundary. We assume, quite rightly, I believe, that our defining distance arises from our ability to represent symbolically the world including ourselves. We acknowledge the alienating violence of symbolical inscription—the difference, or as Jacques Derrida would prefer, the *différance*, inscription demands and perpetuates.² (Derrida's neologism is to call attention to the temporal dimension—the deferral—of differentiating inscription.) What seems to have escaped attention in this focus on the symbolic is its relationship to imaginative possibility—to hope, to the optative, to moods, like the subjunctive, borne by our grammars. When we reckon with the effects of symbolization and representation, we consider them in terms of desire and have elaborated a crude mechanics of desire which hardly does justice to the range and complexity of human sensibility.

Unlike borders, which can be crossed (unless they are closed) and boundaries, which can be transgressed, frontiers, as I am using the word, cannot be crossed. They mark a change in ontological register.³ They postulate a beyond that is, by its very nature, unreachable in fact and in representation. My concern is with the role of what lies beyond the horizon, with the possibilities it offers us, with the licit and illicit desires it triggers, the plays of power it suggests, the dread it can cause—the uncertainty, the sense of contingency, of chance—the exaltation, the thrill of the unknown, it can provoke. Imagined, dreamt, projected, calculated, prophesied—so constructed, the beyond always turns on our take on it. Our images, dreams, projections, calculations, and prophecies may give form and substance to the beyond, but, as they do, they destroy it; for, as they construct it, they assure its displacement. *And* that displacement rattles our assump-

tions about the reality from which our constructions are made. However foundational, it is not immune to our images of the beyond. I am then particularly concerned with the paradoxical ways in which the irrealty of the imaginary impresses the real on reality and the real of reality compels the irrealty of the imaginary. These ways cannot be separated. They are in dialectical tension. They are like lovers so entangled in each other that any determination of a singular body—or soul—is almost arbitrary.

Although anthropologists have treated the imagination in one manner or another in much of what they have written, they have done so largely by indirection.⁴ In these essays I will look at the imagination through a trope—that of the *arrière-pays*, the hinterland, and its correlatives: the *au-delà* and the *ailleurs*, the beyond and the elsewhere. I use the French *arrière-pays*, *ailleurs*, and *au-delà*, not so much to suggest through foreign words an elsewhere beyond—or at least at the outer limit of—our immediate perception and understanding, but to recall the work of the French poet and art critic Yves Bonnefoy, whose little book *L'Arrière-pays* (1982) is the inspiration for my reflections on an anthropology of the imagination.

L'Arrière-pays evokes in a poetic manner what we can translate only poorly as the hinterland. "Hinterland" is a heavy word, one that connotes backwardness, provinciality, isolation, and may have, as it does in German, disagreeable political connotations. In French, it is lighter, less weighted with political significance, yet suggestive of backwardness. *Arrière* refers to the back, the rear in the ordinary and military senses of the word. *Arrière* means "backward" and is used to describe regions as well as people: the retarded, the feebleminded. It also means out-of-date, overdue, in arrears. *Pays*, country, land, or village, is a rather homey word, evocative of origin and roots, as when the French speak of their "*pays*"—their village of origin, that of their ancestors. *Arrière-pays* calls to mind others words, such as *arrière-plan*, background, and by extension its synonym, *fond*, as in the background of a painting. It suggests very concretely a land, a place, an intimate one, more primitive, simpler, out-of-date perhaps, which lies elsewhere, *ailleurs*, beyond where one is and yet intimately related to it. It is in an owing relation, a reciprocal one, with the here-and-now from which it is declared a hinterland.

Bonnefoy takes us on a poetic voyage that can barely be contained even within his Mallarmean prose. It is a personal, romantic voyage through places (Italy, Greece, Rajasthan), through pictures (those of Piero, Poussin, Degas, and Mondrian), through narratives (a long-forgotten children's

story), words, and Latin syntax into that hinterland, which resists entry and requires of him, as of every voyager, return.⁵ Bonnefoy's relation to the hinterland, which continually points to the unreal in our concrete certainties, appears to me to be one of temptation and seduction. The hinterland is, to use the title of arguably his best poem, *dans le labyrinthe du seuil*—in the lure, the snare, the delusion even of the threshold (Bonnefoy 1975). He is drawn into unreality, the imaginary, only to discover its disappearance, or its banal concreteness, as it is displaced by his presence, his description, his terrestrial commitment. He often figures what he takes to be the nurturing relationship between the *arrière-pays*—that oneiric “plain of pride, but also dissatisfaction, hope, credulity, departure, and fever for the ever next”—and the here and now as marriage.⁶ He asks whether one only desires the elsewhere where the here is affirmed.⁷

For Bonnefoy, the hinterland evokes those dimensions of experience that lie beyond the immediate perception of an object, a landscape. These include the anxiety he feels at a crossroad: “‘Here, two steps from the path I did not take and from which I am already distanced, yes, it’s there that a land of higher essence opens, where I could have gone to live and which I have since then lost.’”⁸ It is a land of pure possibility, of desire, and fear. Though imagined as real, as realistically, as the earth in its full, material presence, to which Bonnefoy claims a special attachment, this other land takes violent possession of him and deprives him of the happiness the earth offers him. “For the more I am convinced that it is a phrase or rather a music—at once sign and substance—the more cruelly I feel that a key among those which allow us to hear it is missing. We are disunited in that unity, and action can neither sustain nor resolve that which presses on our intuition.”⁹

This is not the place to pursue Bonnefoy’s worry over the status of the word—the poetic word—which he takes to be of the material world. Nor is it the place to ask, as Bonnefoy does, why we cannot dominate what is, like the edge of a terrace. Why we can’t exist, “but differently than at the surface of things, at the bend in roads, in randomness.” He notes—to our purpose—that some works of art, such as Poussin’s *Bacchanale à la jouaïse de Luth*, give us an idea of this impossible virtuality. The blue in Poussin’s painting, he says, has “the tempestuous immediacy, the nonconceptual clairvoyance that is necessary to our consciousness as a whole.”

The beyond is like shadows—the *ombres* to which Bonnefoy frequently refers: it cannot be contained. It slips away—to appear again just when we have thought, in relief or in despair, that we have finally done away with it.

Bonnefoy insists that the *arrière-pays* is inaccessible, nonexistent—the way any object of the imagination (as Jean-Paul Sartre [1940] argued in his phenomenological studies of the imagination) is absent, nonexistent, a negation, nonbeing. And yet, as Bonnefoy reminds us, the hinterland can be situated up to a point, that is, if one abandons the laws of contiguity of ordinary geography and the law of the excluded middle. “In other words, the summit has a shadow, which hides it, but this shadow does not cover the entire surface of the earth,” he images.¹⁰ Perhaps.

What makes the inaccessibility of the hinterland terrifying is less its inaccessibility than its determining role in our perception of that which we take naively to be accessible: that which we actually perceive, experience, touch, and feel. Imagined—or, better still, imaginable—it remains elusive. As the philosopher Edward Casey notes: “In fact, we do not, strictly speaking, *observe* what we imagine at all, for we are not in a position to subject imagined objects and events to the kind of scrutinizing that may be directed toward what we perceive” (1976, 7). It is this elusiveness, this determining absence of the accessible, which is terrifying: for that which we perceive is always determined—up to a point, I’m compelled to say—by that absence, that imagined presence. It is more than contingency that frightens us. It is the artifice of factuality, of our empiricism, our realism, to which we blind ourselves—often through absurdist methodologies of truth and naively positivist philosophies. With these we are all familiar.

Oddly, Bonnefoy shares the empiricist’s terror. Despite his fascination with the hinterland, he appears more comfortable in the concrete here-and-now. His ambivalence, however artfully displayed and rhetorically manipulated, runs through his text. He knows the limits of the real as he knows those of the imaginary. He knows their entanglement and the disquiet that that entanglement, its necessity, calls forth. We have, however, to ask whether there is any reason why we should be terrified by the hinterland, by the imaginative possibility it offers and denies, by (the impossibility of) crossing over? Can we not take pleasure in its irreality, in its possibility, the play it facilitates? Are we culturally and historically bonded to fear and anxiety before imaginative possibility? Before the absence—the nonbeing—that we attribute to the imaginary? Are we victims of a puritanical epistemology of presence? Or are these fears, this anguish, an essential component of the human condition? I do not know. But I can imagine and do indeed know the pleasure that that possibility furnishes, the release, the escape it affords. What troubles me is the banality, the repetitiveness, of our artiau-

lations of the hinterland. What solace I take is in its continual displacement: the mastery it refuses.

And I taste at the root of the tongue the unreal of what is real.

WALLACE STEVENS, "Holiday in Reality"¹¹

BY ACKNOWLEDGING imaginative horizons and the hinterland beyond, I want to offer a critique of certain of the empirical presuppositions of our science. I am not dismissing empiricism *per se*, nor science, anthropology or at least ignores an important dimension of human experience—one with which we are all familiar. Though I want to affirm the romantic roots of anthropology, I am not advocating veneration of the irrational, the unreal, the imagination. My aim is much more mundane. Like William James, I want to call attention to that dimension of experience that insofar as it resists articulation, indeed disappears with articulation, has in fact been ignored. In his plea to reinstate "the vague and inarticulate to its proper place in our mental life," James noted that "the definite images of traditional psychology form but the very smallest parts of our minds as they actually live." He writes:

The traditional psychology talks like one who should say a river consists of nothing but painful, spoonful, quartpotsful, barrelful, and other moulded forms of water. Even were the pails and the pots all actually standing in the stream, still between them the free water would flow. It is just the free water of consciousness that psychologists resolutely overlook. Every definite image in the mind is steeped and dyed in the free water that flows around it. With it goes the sense of its relations, near and remote, the dying echo of when it came to us, the dawning sense of whither it is to lead. The significance, the value of the image is all in this halo or penumbra that surrounds and escorts it,—or rather that is fused into one with it and has become bone of its bone and flesh of its flesh. (James 1992, 164–65)

James's rush of metaphors is telling. The halo, the penumbra—I prefer the aura—that surrounds all experience, perception, and understanding can only be evoked. Fuzzy, shadowy, it is a necessary component, I believe, of all thought, perception, and experience. It may be conceived of as a source of creativity, as the Romantics did, and as we find in dreams and the unconscious, but I am reluctant to postulate such creativity, for we know

only that horizons appear as an opening up, an edge, a falling out, away, through . . . I cannot find an appropriate preposition. The association of imaginative auras and horizons with creativity, however compelling it may seem to us, is historically constituted and remains, as we must acknowledge anthropologically, hypothetical. We must not forget that it is during the Enlightenment that the idea of the imagination, as we know it, was born.¹²

Like James, the literary critic Jean Starobinski stresses the determining role of the imagination in the perception—the constitution—of reality. "Insinuated into perception itself, mixed with the operations of memory, opening up around us a horizon of the possible, escorting the project, the hope, the fear, speculations—the imagination is much more than a faculty for evoking images which double the world of our direct perceptions: it is a distancing power thanks to which we represent to ourselves distant objects and we distance ourselves from present realities. Hence, the ambiguity that we discover everywhere: the imagination, because it anticipates and previews, serves action, draws before us the configuration of the realizable before it can be realized" (1970, 173–74). Not only does the imaginative consciousness allow us to transcend (*dépasser*) the immediacy of the present instant in order to grasp a future that is at first indistinct, Starobinski argues, but it enables us to project our "fables" in a direction that does not have to reckon with the "evident universe." It permits fiction, the game, a dream, more or less voluntary error, pure fascination. It lightens our existence by transporting us into the region of the phantasm. In turn it facilitates our "practical domination over the real" or our breaking ties with it. Nothing can, of course, guarantee the success of the anticipatory imagination. It may end up producing only "an empty image of hope" (174).

Bonnafoy's image of the *arrière-pens* stresses the spatial dimension of the beyond, Starobinski, the temporal. His primary concern is with the literary imagination. Bonnafoy does try to capture the temporality of the beyond through narrative movement and metaphors of the river and the voyage, but ultimately, given our inability to convey time as we describe it, he failed. The aura is chimerical. It is in constant, reflexive tension with the flow of articulate experience. It feeds into that experience as it is fed by it. James, who was less concerned with the reflexive relationship than I am, described it in terms of the uneven pace of consciousness. There are "resting places" and "places of flight." The former are usually occupied by "sensorial imaginations," which can be held in consciousness for an indefinite term without changing, while the latter "are filled with thoughts of relations, static or dynamic, that for the most part obtain between the matters concern-

placed in the periods of comparative rest." He decries our inability to capture introspectively the "transitive" parts of consciousness. "The attempt at introspective analysis in these cases is in fact like seizing a spinning top to catch its motion, or trying to turn up the gas quickly enough to see how the darkness looks" (James 1992, 160).

The imaginative aura is anticipatory, independently so, as when one begins a thought, a sentence, a drawing, a musical composition without knowing and yet knowing, indeed with some certainty, how it will end, that it will come to some sort of fruition even if that fruition is a failure. It can be related to what the French novelist Nathalie Sarraute referred to as tropisms, those indefinable, inner movements of consciousness that appear and disappear so rapidly that we barely perceive them, despite the often intense sensations they produce in us. They have direction, like leaves of a plant turning toward light, roots toward water, and are, according to Sarraute, at the source of our gestures—our actions. They can be communicated, she insists, only through images that produce analogous effects in one's reader.¹³ But, it need not have direction. It might equally well be related to reverie, those seemingly purposeless movements of thought and image that appear to be without direction. The French philosopher of the imagination Gaston Bachelard, who insists on the unbridgeable polarity between concept and image—the first he finds masculine, the second feminine—argues that "the image can only be studied through the image, by dreaming images as they gather in reverie" (1969, 53).

Phenomenologists would relate what I am calling the imaginative horizon of perception to the periphery of consciousness, at the outer limits of our attention, as background. They would insist, though, as Husserl does, that the periphery is simply an extension of the perceived—and not the imagined—world. "Every perception has its perceptual background. The thing which is grasped in perception has an *environment* of things which co-appear perceptually."¹⁴ For them the world given us through perception is a "massive, all-inclusive whole" (Casey 1976, 50). Its periphery may lack clarity, that is, until attention is directed to it. Then, it becomes as clear as any perception. Psychologists too would insist on the extension of the perceptual field. They would understand its anticipatory quality, not in terms of imaginative possibility, but as prelinguistic, preverbal, precognitive, pre-perceptive. The "pre-" does not do away, however, with the fact that the horizon itself presupposes language, cognition, and perception. It is, in Jacques Lacan's terms, a precipitate of the symbolic order. Despite our claims to their immediacy, the "pre-" does call attention to a deferral in our

perception, thought, imagination, and experience—a deferral to whatever composes the hinterland. Deferral refers not only to postponement in time but also to an expression of respect. In our rush to the articulate, we have perhaps forgotten this courtesy.

The dream is a second life. I could not penetrate without a shudder its gates of ivory or horn, which separate us from the invisible world.

GÉRARD DE NERVAL, "Aurélia"¹⁵

AS JAMES'S metaphors, Bonnefoy's, and my own suggest, we cannot describe the aura, the hinterland, without somehow losing it. Our constructions of the beyond are always slippery. They are, in a sense, like a dream. We experience it, we recall it, but our telling it leaves us with a sense of betrayal, even if our telling gives us relief from the anxiety that surrounds it. It is not simply that our words do not do justice to what we dreamed; it is that they change experiential register. They create a distance between the experience of the dream and its articulation. The dream loses its immediacy, that sense of immanence, of imposition, of entrapment (so evident in nightmares) that we may perhaps liken, as an analogue, to our sense of destiny, nemesis. The distance may be understood in terms of the gap between word and thing, signifier and signified, symbol and symbolized, which has achieved such theoretical preeminence in recent years, and the metaphorizations, as wound, for example, or castration, it has provoked. Recounted, the dream is circulated and subject to all the hazards of circulation and exchange. Moroccans with whom I worked saw great and potentially dangerous power in the dream. In telling a dream for the first time, they said, the dreamer transferred its power—good or evil—to his or her audience. Bad dreams were first told to a rock to neutralize them, but how could one be sure . . . ? The circulation of dreams anticipates a moral etiquette.¹⁶

I want to stress the role of interlocution in the understanding of dreams. In its first experience, the dream, though singularly personal, is, I believe, the product of complex interlocutory forces. Indeed, I would argue that it is—by the standards of waking life—faulted communication that gives the dream-experience its particular quality. It is neither addressed to a definable interlocutor nor subject to ordinary communicative and linguistic conventions.¹⁷ It consists, as Freud among so many others, has emphasized,

of perceptual—mainly visual—and verbal debris, the residues of the day or days that immediately preceded it, which are conjoined by a “grammar” of desire and taboo. Their organization bears only a tangential relationship to the conventions of everyday narration. (I should note that among the residues are narrative chunks that sometimes give the dream-experience, at least fragments of it, a sense of cohesion: an episodic quality.) Though we are wont to take the narrated dream as the dream itself, we have to recognize a distinction. As Lacan repeatedly pointed out, we do not interpret dreams but dream texts.¹⁸ The dynamics we attribute to its formation—in psychoanalysis, condensation and displacement—are those of language: metaphor and metonymy.¹⁹ And yet we must remember—a point missed by many dream-theorists—that the dream-text, however distorting, is itself evocative of the dream-experience, perhaps even formative of it. It is appellative. It evokes our experience of the dream, and presumably those of our interlocutors. It is what is called forth—the dream—that gives the dream recitation value. It is this appellative function of language, as we understand language, that has sparked so much epistemological trouble about the status of experience and its representations.

As with the dream, so do our constructions—and our evocations—of that which lies beyond the imaginative frontier translate experience into text. (I use “text” here in a loose way—to include the oral as well as the written, however “oral” and “written” are locally understood.) Our constructions situate it within understanding. They may be interpreted, evaluated, and explained in accordance with current interpretive, evaluative, and explanatory procedures that, in circular fashion, they themselves index. Like the constructions, these procedures may also be studied ethnographically. We can look at the way in which the horizon itself is shaped in descriptions, narratives, and art and how it is manipulated rhetorically for, say, political reasons. We can examine the way in which the beyond—the hinterland—is evoked, described, symbolized, integrated into various understandings (geo-symbolic, psychological, religious, mystical, oneritic), and circulated. (The great French critic of German Romanticism Albert Béguin refers to what we are calling auras as dreams, even more mysterious than the dreams of the night, which accompany one throughout the day, “so close to the surface that they show themselves [*caffleurer*] at the least shock” [Béguin 1939, viii].) We can consider the appropriate languages for describing it—the poetic, for example—and the way these languages give it spatial and temporal shape. We can relate it to prevailing notions of self, innerness, otherness, otherness, and intersubjectivity and to the psychological facul-

ties as they (as well as the notion of faculty itself) are understood. Consider Bonnefoy’s evocation of the hinterland, as an example, his choice of “hinterland” as an appropriate figuration. Consider James’s water metaphors. Or my attempt to describe it—to separate experience from articulation. These are subject to study. Ethnographies are themselves constructions of the hinterland.

There is nothing particularly innovative in what I am suggesting other than the choice of subject matter. In the chapters that follow, as I stated in the introduction, I consider various hinterlands: those of the future and the past, of hope and memory, of ecstasy and world-ending; I am particularly concerned with the way in which their articulations—even those, like the apocalyptic scenarios of Christian Fundamentalism, which press toward finality—produce still new hinterlands. We can attribute the desire for fixity to anxiety before the unknown and the uncertain, but such psychological explanations have to be weighed against the social and cultural milieu in which they are made. We have tended to give priority to anxiety in many of our psychological explanations. Think of Freud. Think of Heidegger and the existentialists. But we might as easily attribute the desire for fixity to the pleasures of invention and (illusory) domination. We have to recognize the way in which language, and our attitudes toward language and narration, facilitate fixity. There are other languages and linguistic understandings, as we shall see, like the Navajo, which would seem less conducive to such fixations. We have, though, to be as wary of language explanations as of psychological ones. Not only do these explanations arise out of particular cultural and social preoccupations but they feed back on—confirm, enrich—these preoccupations. They are conducive to complacency.²⁰ Of course, just as we desire fixity, so we desire openness. We fear closure; we delight in possibility. Obviously each community has its own tolerance for openness and closure, fixity and looseness. But whether cultural—or individual—emphasis is given to the one or the other, the fact remains that once the hinterland, once possibility, is articulated, it is somehow fixed and constraining, determining further possibilities: the newly displaced hinterland.

Our understanding of the imagination is dominated by the visual. But can we not “imagine” the beyond in musical terms? In tactile or even gustatory and olfactory ones? In proprioceptive ones? In varying combinations of these—and perhaps even other—senses? The imagination may simply refer to an organizing principle or faculty: one which conjoins the logically and conventionally disparate. The linking of imagination and picture is, I believe, culturally and historically specific. It relates to the hegemony of the

visual that has characterized our understanding at least since Plato and is subject nowadays to considerable critical debate (see Levin 1993, particularly his introduction). To be sure, the psychological image and the picture share many features—the absence or nonexistence of their object—but they differ in significant ways. The picture is perceived, framed, perduring, subject to scrutiny from various vantage points: an object that can figure as such in conversational exchanges and be exchanged. It has economic as well as symbolic value. It is usually someone else's creation or, if it should happen to be one's own, it has independence, history, a past. One can learn from it. It has an archival existence. The psychological image is, on the other hand, imperceptible, fleeting, spontaneous, and can be viewed in only one way—the way it is presented. It changes, often dramatically, with every shift in consciousness. In itself it has no exchange value, and what symbolic value it may have is entirely personal. It suffers from what Sartre has called, an "essential poverty": it has no relationship with the rest of the world, and the elements that compose it are few and minimally related. One can learn nothing from the psychological image that one does not already know, Sartre insists (1940, 20–21).

The picture plays an important role in Bonnefoy's evocation of the hinterland. We give it evidential priority. We understand space in its terms rather than in those of sound or touch, as is perhaps done in other societies.²¹ Pictures, even within a single artistic tradition like that of the West, evoke the hinterland in different ways. We may call the two most important, for lack of better terms, the vertical and the horizontal. In the vertical mode, an object—a figure in a Byzantine icon, for example—has a symbolic referent and a constellation of associations with that referent. This mode is essentially denotative and ideational. It calls forth through a conventional code, one edging on the arbitrary, a world of meaning that transcends and is independent of what is depicted. Where this mode predominates, there is often little or no background, just a figure—God, Christ, the Virgin Mary—against an empty background. The horizontal mode is connotative. It depends on background—that, at any rate, which cannot be immediately reduced to denotation. Unlike the denotative pole, whose referent, as the art critic Norman Bryson notes, is simply recognized, the connoted is broader in scope, extending beyond any single denotative meaning, ambiguous, giving often enough the illusion of reality, demanding interpretation. It creates horizons, opens up possibilities, imaginative ones, that in turn enrich the depicted reality, if not the depiction itself.²²

Think of a mountain landscape by Caspar David Friedrich. Often, as in

his painting of the Riesengebirge in the Hermitage, our eyes are driven from the foreground to the horizon, in this case by the snow-capped mountains and bright, luminescent sky. Even in his more intimate mountain-scapes, what we see in the foreground is perceived in terms of what lies beyond the mountains: other mountains, a valley, a village, a farmer tilling the soil, a harvest celebration, a funeral procession. We do not know. We can only imagine. When we look at the foreground of the picture, however, we do not usually imagine in any concrete way what lies beyond the mountains, but our perception is, as it were, infused by imaginative possibilities. As numerous as these possibilities appear to be, they are not infinite in number. Unless I am engaging in, say, a self-conscious postmodern parody, imagining a world of honking cars, peasants staring into computers, or factories spewing forth noxious fumes—which would preclude any appreciation of the mountain-scapes in its own terms—our imaginative constructs, as diffuse as they are, are limited by Friedrich's romantic assumption, his idealization of nature, the sublime his mountains evoke. The relationship between foreground and hinterland is, however, reciprocal. Were we, in fact, to articulate the hinterland as some sort of postmodernist phantasmagoria, we would certainly see Friedrich's landscape differently.

Aside from the play between foreground and hinterland, there is also the play between the vertical and horizontal, the denotative and connotative poles of the painting that enrich its imaginative possibility. Their reciprocity is well-illustrated in Friedrich's *Cross on the Mountain*. For the first time in Western art, so at least it has been maintained, the artist places a Christian altar in a mountain landscape. Here conventional and personal symbolism merge. A cathedral rising in the background gives the painting a spiritually transcendent aura. The mountain suggests, conventionally, immovable faith, the fir tree, hope; and the rays of the evening sun, according to Friedrich himself, the setting of the pre-Christian world. We are pulled at once toward a symbolically evoked transcendent world and a beyond that is simply an extension of the realistically depicted forest and mountains. Already in Cimabue we feel a similar tension, as minimal as it is, between the iconicity of the Christ figure, the one in the Louvre, for example, and his expression, revealing character, biography, a particular suffering, an understanding if not an interpretation. These features enhance its iconic force, but carried too far, they may have the opposite effect, as I believe they do in any one of Georges Rouault's Christs. His heavy, black borders out-frame Christ. Though they may refer to Medieval stained glass windows—Rouault restored them as a young man—they end up becoming, as does his

thick, heavy palate, the hallmark of his work. Indeed, his palate draws attention to his technique, to the paint itself. We are weighed down by its materiality, and that materiality permits only the crudest of allegorical referents: one that simply announces his particular spirituality. It precludes the delicate if conventional transcendence of a Cimabue or even a Byzantine icon. The interplay is much more subtle in Giotto, where the minimal landscape is iconic in its own right, announcing a story or at least a site that is at once this- and other-worldly—real and imaginative. The worldly horizon does not yet figure in our appreciation, however. That comes later.

When, from behind that craggy steep till then
The horizon's bound, a huge peak, black and huge,
As if with voluntary power instinct
Upreared its head. I struck and struck again,
And growing still in stature the grim shape
Towered up between me and the stars, and still,
For so it seemed, with purpose of its own
And measured motion like a living thing,
Strode after me. . . .

but after I had seen
That spectacle, for many days, my brain
Worked with dim and undetermined sense
Of unknown modes of being; o'er my thoughts
There hung a darkness, call it solitude
Or blank desertion. No familiar shapes
Remained, no pleasant images of trees,
Of sea or sky, no colours of green fields;
But huge and mighty forms, that do not live
Like living men, moved slowly through the mind
By day, and were a trouble to my dreams.

WORDSWORTH, *The Prelude*²³

THE IMAGINATIVE horizon is by no means restricted to the pictorial arts. It figures in accordance with prevailing genres of communication in everyday discourse and in oral and written literature. It plays a particularly important rhetorical role in romanticism. In one of his earliest poems, *L'Isolément*, Alphonse de Lamartine describes the poet at sunset seated on a mountain in the shadow of an old oak tree.²⁴ He looks down at a river snaking its way into the "obscure distance." The moon—*le char vaporueux*

de la reine des ombres—climbs and whitens the horizon's edge. But the poet, lost in solitude, is indifferent to the landscape. He finds no happiness, no charm in it, expects nothing from it, is not carried away by it. He dreams of being transported beyond the limits of the earth (*au delà des bornes de sa sphère*) to the source he aspires to, where he will find hope and love, the ideal he desires with all his soul, which has no earthly name (*qui n'a pas de nom au terrestre séjour*). We need not follow Lamartine's melancholic reverie further. We need not consider its inspiration—the loss of someone he loved, perhaps—nor the nature of the being toward whom he is thrust—the loved one, God—in the beyond he imagines. We note simply, as abstract as they are in Lamartine's poetry, the collapse of spirit into nature, nature into spirit.

Wordsworth too merges soul and nature. In the lines quoted above from the 1850 version of the *Prelude* he suffers from "solitude" and "blank desertion." The cause we can only surmise. A boy, he rows out into a lake at night in a little boat he discovered "tied to a willow tree within a rocky cave, its usual home." He recognizes his act as one "of stealth and troubled pleasure." His boat moves on, but not "without the voice of mountain echoes." Do they echo his conscience? His fear as he rows all alone into night? Determined to move "with an unswerving line," he fixes his view

upon the summit of a craggy ridge
The horizon's utmost boundary; for above
Was nothing but the stars and grey sky.

As his boat "heaves through the water like a swan," he suddenly sees the "black and huge" peak looming up before him from behind the "craggy steep" that had been his horizon and landmark. He personifies: "upreared its head." He attributes to it power, and willfulness. ("Instinct" means here "imbued"—imbued with "voluntary power.") Its grim shape seems to block out any further horizon. It towers up between him and the stars (which were *beyond* the nearer "craggy ridge") and seems "with purpose of its own and measured motion like a living thing" to pursue him. Trembling with fear, he rows the boat back to its mooring place and "in grave and serious mood" returns home. For many days, he is troubled by a "dim and undetermined sense of unknown modes of being," thoughts hung in darkness, a "solitude of blank desertion" in which the familiar and pleasant images of nature—trees, sea, sky, green fields—give way to the ominous. "Huge and mighty forms, that do not live like living men" move slowly through his mind by day and in his dreams. Whatever guilt (if indeed it was guilt), whatever fear (if indeed it was fear) inspired his perception of the

"huge cliff"—it can probably be identified as Black Crag, west of Ullswater—it deprived him of a horizon, the imaginative projection that horizon afforded him, and the release it gave him from the "huge and mighty forms" that lay deep within him. Without an outer horizon and the beyond it evokes, he can only turn in on himself to the "huge and mighty forms that do not live like men" which lumber through his waking and dream life. They are the stuff of that other, internalized beyond—the unconscious—that our psychologies have so naturalized that only with difficulty can we acknowledge its romantic, its historical artifice. True to their shadowy existence, Wordsworth can only evoke them—and return them, through his word, to their "natural" environment, neither in nature nor in soul.

It is through richly described landscapes that Wordsworth and Lamarine create, quite literally, horizons and a sense of the beyond. Like Friedrich, they exploit what Bryson refers to as the connotative (and I, as the horizontal) mode of representation, including (a point missed by Bryson) the connoting of symbolic significance itself, whatever that significance is. In other words, particularly in romanticism and its psychoanalytic progeny, it is often less the meaning of the symbol that counts than the intimation of symbolic significance—the demand for interpretation. In the *Prelude* Wordsworth teases us with symbolic significance, but that "tease" often fails, in my view, because it is reduced, often crudely, to the personal. It is in this sense that romanticism paves the way to the unconscious.

It is almost unbelievable to those who are unacquainted with it, yet the jungle is an irrational fact, enslaving those who go into it—a whirlwind of savage passions conquering the civilized person possessed with too much self-confidence. The jungle is a degeneration of the human spirit in a swoon of improbable but real circumstances. The rational civilized man loses self-respect and respect for home. He throws his heritage into the mire from where who knows when it will be retrieved. One's heart becomes morbid, filling with the sentiment of savagery, insensible to the pure and great things of humanity. Even cultivated spirits, finely formed and well-educated, have succumbed.

FRANCISCO DE VILANOVA, a Capuchin missionary writing in the 1920s of the Colombian jungle²⁵

WE UNDERSTAND the hinterland in terms of the image and associate it with pictures, though this need not be so. In describing the Piro, an Amazonian people who inhabit the thick jungles along the Baja Urubamba

River in Peru, the British anthropologist Peter Gow (1995) stresses their workaday relationship to their environment. Their landscape is one of implication. It is mediated not by representations but by social processes. Through the cultivation of fields, for example, or the building of houses, it is experienced in terms of kinship, understood not in abstract, genealogical terms but concretely as the reiterative activity of kin. Kinship is perceived directly in the land because it is there. "It is there because kinship is created out of human landscape agency" (56).

The Piro's is a deeply temporalized landscape—narrated through stories that are passed down by *kshnikanu*—those who remember, think about, and care—to the young who are willing to learn. It is punctuated by places of avoidance where *senenchi*, the souls of the dead—Gow refers to them as "images of memory"—hover, evoking "lethal nostalgia in the living, causing them to sicken and die if they succumb to it." They disappear as their memory does. Unlike the souls of the dead, the lecherous, cannibalistic *ginachtri*, the bone or corpse demons, are not associated with particular dead and specific places. Their desires, Gow argues, reflect the role of human desire in the creation of kinship and the modification of landscape. They may even relate to the falling back of once-used places into the undifferentiated forest. As such, they are the "agents" of forest regeneration and are associated with plants that "do not know how to die."

Among these plants is the "corpse vine" (*ayahuasca*), which produces the curative hallucinations of the shaman who, in his spiritual voyages, envisages the investiture of kinship in the forest, as when he sees a forest tree as full of people. His soul travels beyond the confines of the living and the dead into the generalized and depersonalized worlds of the forest and the river, which have been created and are maintained by "owners" variously described as mothers, anacondas, and beautiful tall white foreigners. Though the owners are usually indifferent to humans, they do inflict sickness and death on those who must inevitably invade their domains to survive—to hunt, fish, and farm. It is the shaman who must intervene, paradoxically, by means of the very plant, *ayahuasca*, whose source of power lies with the owners. He comes to see, as the spirits do, human settlements in the depth of the river and the center of the forest. By sharing the spirits' food and listening to their powerful songs, he mediates between them and the Piro. Whether in the depth of the forest, by shamanistic means, or at the settlement's edge, through cultivation, the Piro's landscape is actively mediated rather than abstractly imaged.²⁶

Although Gow contrasts the Piro's landscape with the way it is con-

ceived by the representatives of the state—as a map, frozen in time—he fails to consider the effect of those stater representatives, of the whites more generally, of the colonizers, however short-lived their relationship with the Piro was, on that mediation. Writing of another region of the Amazon basin, along the Putumayo river in Colombia, in another century, during the great rubber boom, the anthropologist Michael Taussig stresses the effect of the colonial encounter in all of its exploitative violence on the way that landscape was imaged by the colonizers and the effect that image had on the Indians themselves. He goes so far as to see the shaman as configured by—and mediating—that encounter.

For the colonizers, the jungle was a terrifying space filled with dangerous beasts—a living hell into which they were inexorably drawn, not by any sense of adventure, as they sometimes claimed, but by sheer greed. The Colombian traveler Joachim Rocha wrote at the turn of the twentieth century of “growing tigers” (which, the Indians claimed, are particularly dangerous when they are possessed of the soul of a witch), the “swarming of infinite vipers and venomous insects,” and the “plague” of vampire bats “treacherously sucking in the hours of dreams the blood of men and animals” (Taussig 1987, 76–77). Not immune to the lurid imagery of the authors he cites, Taussig stresses the contagion of the forest (for so it was depicted), the cruelty it inspires, the “miasmic subspecies of terror” it produces, “a pressing in of somethingness in the nothingness.” The Indians—whose presence was often felt most menacingly in their absence, marked by the silent traces they left (an abandoned village, for example)—were thought of in this “murky, epistemic space” as at once innocent, perhaps not so innocent, adult children and cruel, cannibalistic savages, possessed of evil powers and uncanny access, through *yagé* and other hallucinogens, to unknown and therefore terrifying realities.

Adrift in this insistent no-man’s land, the rubber brokers, some of them at least, treated their captive laborers with such cruelty that it puts into question our assumption of humanity itself. John Brown, a Barbadian rubber plantation worker, told Roger Casement, the famed Irish revolutionary who had visited the Putumayo on a fact-finding mission for the British government in the first decade of the nineteenth century, that he had seen hundreds of Indians killed.²⁷ Brown had been commissioned by the plantation to capture Indian workers. Those who resisted were shot and beheaded by armed Indians, also working for the plantation. He had seen a woman, nursing a baby, decapitated and the baby killed and cut to pieces. Another witness—there were many—told Casement about a station master, Ramón

Sanchez, who used to hunt Indians for the sake of the kill: “They were tied up and chains put around their necks,” Casement reported; “and they were hung up, and he, Sanchez, would take a ‘sword,’ or machete, and stick it through them. He saw Ramón Sanchez do this to plenty of Indians—men, not women. One day Sanchez killed twenty-five men—he shot some, others he cut their heads off—and some he hanged slowly with a chain around their necks till their tongues came out, and they died like that. Altogether he saw Sanchez kill with his own hands some thirty Indians, and this in two months.”

The gratuitousness of Sanchez’s acts, and that of countless other rubber traders, compels me to ask whether the epistemic and moral certainties that civilization offers are not themselves founded on acts of extreme cruelty, torture, and sadism. Adrift, greed-driven, confronted with the opacity of the jungle, the traders projected their personal underworlds onto that jungle and the beasts and Indians that inhabited it, as, I believe, they rejected those projections as too personal and without firm foundation. Unlike the Piro, who, if we can accept Gow’s description of them, have an intimately mediated workaday relationship with the forest, the colonizers found themselves isolated in an alien danger zone that required their active mark—a negating gesture of humanity. We may speak of this mastery as negating negation. We have, at any rate, to recognize the effect of opacity on imaginative possibility—a possibility that is never immune to the intercession of the other even if that other is of a phantasmic order.

Let me tell you . . . I’m trying to capture the fourth dimension of the now-instant, which is so fleeting it no longer is because it has already become a new now-instant, which also is no longer. Each thing has an instant in which it is. I want to take possession of the thing’s *à*. Those instants that elapse in the air I breathe; in fireworks exploding silently in space. I want to possess the atoms of time. And I want to capture the present which, by its very nature, is forbidden me: the present flees me, the moment escapes me, the present is myself forever in the now.

CLARICE LISPECTOR, *The Stream of Life*²⁸

RATHER THAN contrast the metaphorically borne pathetic fallacy of romanticism with, say, the dried, metonymously extended objectivism of realism or the lived or deadened allegories of an earlier period, I want to turn back to the Navajo—to their rich epic tradition.²⁹ Here, I believe,

we see more contained horizons but not those frozen by the opaque forest of the Amazon and the enforced limitation of human imagination. The Navajo horizons fascinate me because their containment operates from within a language that is grammatically processual and dynamic. They are characterized by movement: mythical beings, men, women, and animals are constantly in motion. The world through which the protagonists move is not the richly described landscape of the Romantics. It is minimal, displaced, situated, when it is, by the name of a place or a striking feature of the terrain. It is at once a local—provincial, I am tempted to say—space and highly abstract. The events described could occur anywhere, and yet they occur in specific places. (One wonders how this localism came about for a people who have been on the move for centuries, that is, until they were “contained” on reservations.) For the Navajo, as for so many American Indians, history is conceptually rooted in space. “For Indian men and women,” the anthropologist Keith Basso writes, “the past lies embedded in features of the earth—in canyons and lakes, mountains and arroyos, rocks and vacant fields—which together endow their lands with multiple forms of significance that reach into their lives and shape the ways they think.”³⁰ Gladys Reichard, one of Franz Boas’s students, who wrote on Navajo religion, noted the Navajo’s “extraordinary interest” in geography. “They love to travel, yet feel a deep attachment to their present habitat” (Reichard 1950, 19). And the linguist Harry Hoijer observed: “Even the most minute occurrences are described by the Navajos in close conjunction with their physical setting, suggesting that unless narrated events are spatially anchored their significance is somehow reduced and cannot be properly assessed” (quoted in Basso 1996, 45). As Reichard reminds us, though, place-names need not refer to the “physical” world but may also refer to the underground world from which, the Navajo myths tell us, primordial people emerged.

To illustrate the importance of setting, let me cite a passage from the origin legend of the Navajo Enemy Way. It is one of their great epics. It was told to Father Berard Haile by the singer—the ceremonial director and curer—Slim Curley, in the winter of 1930. The epic undergirds one of the Navajo’s most important curing ceremonies, Enemy Way, which is designed to cure those who suffer the ills of enemy contact. It tells of the birth and adventures of two great hero twins, Monster Slayer and Born-for-Water, who rid the world of all kinds of destructive monsters. Here Monster Slayer is pursuing Tracking Bear.

From the “rock ledge extension” out across to the “winged rock” there were quite old tracks of “tracking bear” coming from the east. A little this side again, along the west of a place called “sitting Mexican,” its tracks seemed to be not so very old. Again this way, at the lower end of “white clay ridge,” its tracks somewhat fresher, came along the east. At a place called “clay’s black crotch” recently made tracks came along. From there he went up the slope, and when he looked back, he saw it coming on a run in his rear.

He went to the base of “beautiful mountain,” looked back again, and saw it running along very close by. He stood at the base of “black rock,” and again looked back. He saw it close by, just as it was about to overtake him. That must be what is called “tracking bear,” he thought. He scaled the rock. In his left hand he grabbed a slim yucca fruit, in his right he grabbed hardwood; the rattling sound of these was heard. He reached the peak of the rock. Just then it squatted on its haunches, at the base of the rock, and there he immediately shot it, killing it with the zigzag lightning arrow. He cut off its finger claws and took out its large side teeth. (Haile 1938, 125–26)

In the origin legend, text is indexically so implicated in context and context in text that the two cannot be separated from each other. The legend assumes the audience’s familiarity with local geography. It is the place-names, often descriptive of locale—“rock ledge extension,” “white clay ridge”—that situate the events. They call forth the places, which, I suspect, are, in circular fashion, themselves evocative of the events. The reciprocal referentiality, if I may so call this circularity, creates a closed space. Internal resonance substitutes for horizons opening out. (Is this a characteristic of traditional societies?) Or, putting it another way, horizons are contained within a known, demarcated, and narrated landscape. Monster Slayer does look back from “beautiful mountain,” from “black rock.” It would seem, on first reading, that horizons, contained or not, are evoked in a denotative fashion by place-names (as well as by deictic indices—“this way,” “from there,” “this side again”—that seem to those unfamiliar with the setting to be without specific reference) rather than connotatively, but, as we shall see, this is probably to misconstrue the role of the name.³¹

I used “space” in this discussion with caution, for it is not clear that the Navajo share the Euro-American chronotope.³² Space and time are, I believe, differently articulated. The folklorist Barre Toelken puts it crudely, but his description at least reveals the Western response to the Navajo chronotope: “The Navajo concept of time is most similar to European concepts of space; insofar as the Navajos talk about anything like time at all, it

is not seen as a pathway along which one moves but a context in which things come to pass. The flowering of a plant, the birth of a horse, the maturation of a tree, the building of a home, all have their own time surrounding them and are not measured off against each other on a single scale" (1979, 237; see also 277). Others, like Rudy Griffin-Pierce, stress the cyclical quality of Navajo time. She quotes Toelken's description of a Navajo weaver who "instead of standing on a straight ribbon of time leading from the past to some future point, stands in the middle of a vortex of forces' from which 'she negotiates,' looking 'to the past for patterning, for advice and wisdom. . . . Time surrounds her.'"³³ The linguist Rik Pinxten also notes that time, its passage at least, is not independent of the individual. He argues that time in Navajo myths is pulsating (that is, expanding and contracting), circular, and finite. He claims that the Navajo conceive of the life course in zigzag, if not linear, terms (1983, 17).

What is clear is that the traditional Navajo does not share our chronological sense of a somehow abstractable and measurable time. Time seems to be embedded in activities, which are not coordinated in a single temporal continuum. It is spatialized. Often in legend and story, the passage of time between dramatic activities is marked by people moving about. When Sol Worth and John Adair (1972) asked Navajos to make films of whatever interested them, the Navajo filmmakers, who were not taught the standard film conventions for marking the passage of time (fade-ins and fade-outs, for example), indicated its passage through the activities they were depicting or by showing people walking.

Not only do Navajo place-names refer to (if the two can be separated) real and mythical locales and the events associated with them, but they call forth a palimpsestic picture of the world. The universe is seen as an immense hogan. Indeed, each time the Navajo build a hogan, they are, in a sense, replicating the creation of the universe. Their world is bound by four sacred mountains. Below this world are, by most counts, four subterranean ones, each characterized by a particular color—red, blue, yellow, and all colors—and chaotic conditions. These underground worlds are sometimes called "first language," "second language," and so on (Witherspoon 1977, 33–34). It is through these worlds that primordial people passed to emerge in the present one. There are also worlds above, sky and land-beyond-the-sky, which is inhabited by powerful storm elements: Winter, Pink Thunder, Spotted Thunder, Big Winds, and Whirlwinds. The earth itself is called "our mother" (or, perhaps more accurately, "life sustainer," so identified are mothers and the idea of sustaining life) and the sun "our father" (91). In

certain depictions of the universe, they lie on each other as though copulating (Pinxten 1983, 11). The sacred mountains are also called mother and father. "We came from them; we depend upon them. Between the large mountains are small ones which we made ourselves," Alexander M. Stephen was told in the first decades of the last century (quoted in Reichard 1963, 20). "Each mountain is a person. The water courses are their veins and arteries. The water in them is to their life as our blood is to our bodies" (19–20).

It has been frequently observed that the Navajo stress the notion of the whole, of preserving harmony within that whole. Many of their curing ceremonies, like Enemy Way, are designed to restore harmony—*hózhó*—that has been lost for one reason or another. The patient's illness is a symptom of disharmony.³⁴ The Navajo notion of the whole should not be confused, however, with our notion of totality. Their conception of the whole is founded on a different ontology. It stresses processes and events rather than things and facts. Unlike our notion of the total, their notion of the whole is founded on connection, relationship, and reciprocity. The world is divided into a male principle, associated with stasis and thought, and a female one, associated with action and speech. They are in complementary rather than oppositional relationship. We move from the part to the whole, which is the sum of its parts.³⁵ The Navajo move, as the anthropologist Gary Witherspoon observes, from the whole to the processes and events that "compose" it.³⁶ There is a holistic conception, which focuses on synthesis; ours is an atomistic one that lends itself to dissection and analysis. Their world is always in motion. After "things" had been "placed" on the earth, First Man and First Women, those descriptively elusive first human beings, plucked a feather from a bald eagle and blew on it, saying, "From now on everything is on the move. Nothing will be still, not even the water, not even the rock" (Pinxten 1983, 16).

The Navajo picture of the universe reflects, as many observers have noted, Navajo grammar.³⁷ Unlike English, in which the noun predominates both grammatically and rhetorically, the verb is the dominant syntactical element in Navajo. Where English stresses the verb "to be," the Navajo stress the verb "to go"—*naagháii*. Witherspoon has calculated that there are over 356,200 distinct conjugations of this particular verb (Witherspoon 1977, 21). *Naagháii* is the singular form of the third person of the continuative imperfective mode, which refers to continually going about and returning. The prefix *naa-* of this verb form stresses repetition, continuation, and revolution. Whether or not Witherspoon's calculation is correct, it does point

to the immense complexity of Navajo. The language distinguishes six modes and a number of aspects; two of these modes and two of these aspects are concerned with repetition, restoration, or continuous recurrence of an event or set of conditions, some of which imply the completion of a cycle or revolution. There are both static and active verbal forms, the majority being active. Indeed, it can be argued that the static forms indicate an object at rest, that is, not in movement. The active verbs report events—as Harry Hoijer preferred, “eventings”—movement, or movings, and action, or actings (1951). These are not reported in relation to tense but in relation to mode and aspect—in terms of completion or incompleteness of movement, of its continuous or discontinuous nature. Eventings are conceived very concretely in terms of the movements of corporeal bodies or of entities metaphorically attached to corporeal bodies.

Let me give a concrete, though somewhat simplistic, illustration. One morning I was talking in English to a Navajo man I had just met. He asked me whether I was learning Navajo. I told him I was, but that I found it to be an extremely difficult language. He looked surprised. “It’s English that’s difficult,” he said. “Take the word for screwdriver.” (He happened to be holding a screwdriver.) “It’s—” He came to a dead halt. He could not find the Navajo equivalent to the English “screwdriver,” not because there was none, but because there was none as such. The Navajo would use one locution for a screwdriver driving in a screw, another for extracting it, and still another, no doubt, for one being held or lying in a man’s hand. The entity designated by screwdriver could not normally be abstracted from the activity in which it was engaged. At least, this is what my Navajo acquaintance and I determined after a lengthy discussion.

Though the articulation of experience reflects the language of articulation, we should not overextend the influence of language on experience. There is always a gap, as I noted in the discussion of dreams, between articulation and experience. We may emphasize this gap, as our Western understanding of reference and representation does, or we may deny it. The Navajo stress the performative, the creative, indeed the compulsive, role of speech. They claim that all things have an “inner form”—*bi’gishin*, literally, an inanimate object that lies within and is separate from outward form. Living things, and by some accounts all things insofar as they are in motion, are inspired by wind (*nilch’i*)—in mythic terms, by Holy Wind—which is related to breath and speech. Speech is the externalization of thought. Knowledge is the inner form of thought. Thought, and thus speech, insofar as they are the internal and external dimensions of the same process, are

creative. The world was thought into existence, but this existence was not consummated until the Holy People—*dlyin dine’é*, the supernaturals, the gods—spoke it in prayer and sang it in chants. This thinking-speaking into creation continues today in ceremonies like Enemy Way. As Witherspoon puts it: “In the Navajo view of the world, language is not the mirror of reality; reality is the mirror of language” (1977, 28ff, 34).

We have to be careful, however, not to draw too radical a contrast between our ontology and that of the Navajo. We must be wary of the derivation of subjective experience from grammar, worldview, and indigenous philosophical observation. They describe experience as they cover over contradictions in its articulation. The Navajo notion of the world stresses a whole as it defies the notion of the whole. There is no word in Navajo for the totality heaven-and-earth (Pinxten 1983, 12). The Navajo fear encirclement. The “guardian circle” that encloses their sandpaintings is usually left open. Weavers, at least traditionally, believed every rug should have a flaw in it. They either ran a thread of contrasting color through the border of the rug or left a gap in it, which they called *ch’indi biin*, “road of bad spirits,” from which any bad condition in the weaver could escape (Toelken 1979, 244). When the Swallows and Spiders could no longer stand the trickster Coyote’s insolence, they wove webs around him, which by enclosing his and the Spiders’ bad wishes, killed him. It is said that the circle precludes the egress of evil and the entrance of good. It certainly suggests completion, entrapment, containment, and totality. And, by that understanding, as Reichard observes, closed circles of meal or pollen sprinkled on the earth, hoops, and rings are frequently encountered in ritual. “They represent a space so narrowed down that it is under control, an area from which evil has been driven and in which power has been concentrated” (1963, 89–90). Both in myth and fact, warriors drew lines, symbolizing zigzag lightning, flash lightning, sunstreamer, and rainbow, over which, they believed, the enemy feared to pass. During Enemy Way, things that occurred abroad were brought under control by remembrance and recapitulation (53–54).

The Navajo focus on the center, according to Pinxten. Although there are words for the center in Navajo, there are none for the periphery except for *biinaa*, “around, surrounding,” and *anii*, “outer, middle, half” (Pinxten 1983, 81). It is from the center that the pulsation of the world moves. It is in the center of a hogan—a replication, as I noted, of the Navajo cosmos—that sandpaintings, which figure in many Navajo ceremonies, are painted. They are started in the center: their designs radiate from that center. Once a sandpainting is completed, the patient is seated on it and “identifies” with

the mythic figures it calls forth. Boundaries tend to be fuzzy, unmarked, expansive, though contained within the "world" circumscribed by the four sacred mountains. It is impossible, Pinxten maintains, to have a wholly external vantage point—to look back, as it were, from a beyond (21–25).

That flowing water! That flowing water!
My mind wanders across it. . . .

IT IS FROM this perspective that the Navajo poem that serves as an epigraph to this chapter has to be understood. The poet speaks from across the San Juan river. His is an external vantage point. His nostalgia, his longing, have, I believe, to be seen from within (I probably exaggerate) the terror of his position. We have to recognize that the frontiers and borders which we take so literally today are always more than the geopolitical lines that arbitrarily cut up our world.³⁸ They are spatial *and* temporal, as "space" and "time" are understood. They are figured from within our ontologies and epistemologies. They reflect our desires for the familiar, the warmth it offers, a nest, a home, which some identify with the womb. They postulate a hinterland, an *arrière-pays*, to which we never quite arrive, for it always slips away. They resonate our fears of a beyond—of the imaginative possibilities it holds—and the hopes those possibilities inspire. We must not forget that our poet walks.

THE BETWEEN

LOUISE: . . . My younger brother . . .

LOLA: It happened at Line Of White Rocks Extends Up
And Out, at this very place!

[Pause of 30–45 seconds.]

EMILY: Yes. It happened at Whiteness Spreads Out
Descending To Water, at this very place!

[Pause of 30–45 seconds.]

LOLA: Truly. It happened at Trail Extends Across A Red
Ridge With Alder Trees, at this very place!

[Louise laughs softly.]

ROBERT: Pleasantness and goodness will be forthcoming.

LOLA: Pleasantness and goodness will be forthcoming.

LOUISE: My younger brother is foolish, isn't he, dog?

KEITH BASSO, *Wisdom Sits in Places*¹

THIS EXCHANGE between four Western Apache adults is reported by the anthropologist Keith Basso in his marvelous essay "Speaking with Names."² The Western Apache live in Arizona and, like the Navajo, speak a southern Athabaskan language. They share many social and cultural features with the Navajo, including a respect for place. Like the Navajo, they carefully situate the events they describe geographically.³ Their constructions of space, Basso notes, "reach deeply into other cultural spheres, including conceptions of wisdom, notions of morality, politeness and tact in forms of spoken discourse, and certain conventional ways of imagining and interpreting the Apache tribal past" (1996, xv). They are a laconic people who prefer to be silent when they find themselves in ambiguous or unpredictable social relationships (Basso 1990, 94).