

**Blackened Faces and Ticker-Tape Parades:
Situating the Leviathan in Lakota and
Euroamerican Conceptions of War**

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YCISS Occasional Paper Number 54
October 1998

On 10 June 1991, as many as one million New Yorkers set aside jobs, school, and whatever else would have occupied them on an ordinary Monday, and crowded into Manhattan to line a twenty-block stretch of lower Broadway's so-called 'Canyon of Heroes.' Tens of thousands more took up positions in windows and on rooftops, while millions tuned in on televisions across the United States. This impressive audience had assembled to watch a parade. They had been promised no garden-variety cavalcade, but a New York City 'ticker-tape parade' of the sort previously held in reverence of Charles Lindbergh, the Apollo astronauts, and Nelson Mandela. This time the honour was to be bestowed upon the legions which, only a few months earlier, had routed Saddam Hussein's forces, driving them out of Kuwait and pursuing them deep inside the borders of Iraq itself. The parade's three Grand Marshals — US Secretary of Defense Dick Cheney and Generals Colin Powell and Norman Schwarzkopf — were followed by a column of more than 20,000 marchers. The mammoth procession, which took fully five and one half hours to pass, was composed primarily of American veterans of the Gulf and other wars, but also included small representative detachments from seventeen Coalition countries.

For some weeks prior, New York Mayor David Dinkins had, without hyperbole, described the event as "the mother of all parades."¹ By the appointed day, the city's post-war effort, dubbed "Operation Welcome Home," had actually been underway for a period nearly twice the duration of the war itself, preparations having exceeded the time taken to prosecute the 43-day war by some 41 days. Still, given the daunting logistics involved in the organization and performance of a parade of this magnitude, such a lengthy preparation and deployment period was by no means unreasonable. Just over two months was needed for eight antique stock tickers, working around the clock, to spit out the more than 200 miles of ticker-tape which was dropped on marchers and spectators amidst 12,000 pounds of falling confetti.² Decoration of the parade route took a full week and, with five days to go and leaving nothing to chance, a final systems check was made with a test drop of confetti from the seventeenth floor of the already flag-draped Woolworth Building.³ Time was also needed to plan and choreograph the 30-minute fireworks display which capped off the day's festivities. In all, the New York fête cost \$4.7 million — money which was raised, in part, by selling space for corporate logo advertising on the decorative banners which lined the parade route.

¹"In Blizzard of Ticker Tape, New York Hails Gulf Troops," *New York Times*, 11 June 1991.

²"A Lot of Stuff, A Little of It Ticker Tape," *New York Times*, 11 June 1991.

³Mark Sussman, "Celebrating the New World Order: Festival and War in New York," *TDR*, 39:2 (Summer 1995), p.153.

The New York parade most assuredly was not a trifling affair. Nor was it entirely unique. Even as the procession got underway from Battery Park, municipal politicians in Washington were calling on the federal government to pay compensation for damage done to city streets by the treads of tanks which had taken part in a military parade held in the capital two days earlier.⁴ Similar, albeit less extravagant, events were held in other cities and towns across the United States as local heroes returned home from the Gulf. And expressions of American triumphalism were not confined to the pomp and pageantry of grand marches past reviewing stands: commemorative items of all sorts were widely available in stores and figured prominently among the wares of large direct marketing firms as readily as among those of a proliferation of street vendors. The selection of regalia was extensive, ranging from T-shirts, baseball caps, and bumper stickers to glossy-covered picture books and professionally edited videotapes pitching the glory and rightness of the war with an artful conceit that Madison Avenue could hardly have bested. Epitomizing the savvy co-optation of elements of Americana to serve as vehicles for the official narrative of the war, Gulf War trading cards were offered for sale in corner stores across the country.

Edward Said notes that “high technology and clever public relations were used to make the war seem exciting, clean, and virtuous.”⁵ He further suggests, with Chomsky, that, in general, the media perform a vital function in the “manufacturing of consent”⁶ — that is, in generating the requisite sense of both natural necessity and moral imperative by which extreme measures are legitimized. Still, the importance of less sophisticated technologies — like parades and trading cards — should not be underestimated. Just as the former may propose and provide, ready for consumption and internalization, packages of what it may be deemed necessary to think, believe, and ‘know’ about the war and its context, the latter furnish the appropriate and complementary feelings and sentiments. Mark Sussman argues that the post-Gulf War festivities in New York, having been staged in an age when ticker-tape was already long obsolete, forged an unambiguous sentimental link between the Gulf War and past deeds which are almost universally regarded as just and heroic inasmuch as it “awakened nostalgia for the welcoming-home gestures following World War II.”⁷

⁴“War Parade Left Its Marks On the Streets of Washington,” *New York Times*, 11 June 1991.

⁵Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1993), p. 131.

⁶*Ibid.*, p. 286.

⁷Sussman, *op. cit.*, p. 158.

By way of contrast with the extravagant fanfare which attended the end of the Gulf War, the revered Lakota holy man, Nicholas Black Elk, in interviews conducted between 1931 and 1947, described as rather more subdued the observances which followed upon wars in which his people had been involved. These remembrances are corroborated by accounts from other Lakota sources, such as those of Luther Standing Bear, who, like Black Elk, had lived into early adulthood in the era of Lakota suzerainty *vis-à-vis* the US Army and before the traditional lifeways of the Plains peoples were forcibly suppressed by the United States in the latter part of the nineteenth century. The pre-reservation Lakota, the Teton division of the Dakota people, were the real-life embodiment and quintessence of the archetypal Plains Indian, distorted images of which have long been a staple of Euroamerican popular culture.⁸ That the customs and folkways of the Lakota should have so strongly influenced the homogenized popular image of the ‘Indian’ in general is likely the result of having been among the last of the indigenous nations embedded in the territory claimed by the United States to be ‘subdued.’ The infamous 1890 massacre at Wounded Knee Creek, in which nearly 300 Lakotas of Spotted Elk’s band were killed by the US Army’s 7th Cavalry, is generally regarded as having marked the final episode in the ‘taming’ of the American West.⁹ At any rate, the Lakota had already figured prominently in the collective imagination of Euroamerican society at least since the defeat of General George Armstrong Custer’s attacking 7th Cavalry at the Greasy Grass — better known as the Little Big Horn — in June of 1876.

Standing Bear’s description of the dances which were held upon the return home of a Lakota war party gives us a glimpse into a highly ritualized event wherein the roles and even the costumes of the participants were determined according to their individual fortunes in combat and the manner in which the battle had been played out.¹⁰ And although there was certainly an element of celebration involved, one does not get a sense of anything approaching the triumphalism of a ticker-tape parade. Of course, it is to be expected that the scale of the Lakota and Euroamerican observances would be very different if only because the scale of the societies

⁸The Lakota may be better known by the name ‘Sioux,’ usually understood to comprise the aggregate of all Dakota peoples. The origin of the name Sioux is likely a French short-form of the Algonquian *nadoueissiw*, or snakes — a derogatory appellation given by adversaries to the east.

⁹On the Wounded Knee massacre, see Robert M. Utley, *The Last Days of the Sioux Nation* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1963); challenging Utley’s account of the sources of the massacre, see Jeffrey Ostler, “Conquest and the State: Why the United States Employed Massive Military Force to Suppress the Lakota Ghost Dance,” *Pacific Historical Review*, 65:2 (May 1996).

¹⁰Luther Standing Bear, *My People the Sioux* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1975), p. 57.

and of the wars under consideration is so different. But the *function* of the post-war events also differs greatly from one society to the other, and this requires explanation. Ultimately, as we shall see, the difference is founded in divergent worldviews arising from radically different cosmological commitments.

In a footnote to the published version of his 1947 interviews with Black Elk, Joseph Epes Brown notes that it was customary for Lakota warriors to paint their faces black as a part of the ceremonies held in the aftermath of a battle, and attributes to Black Elk the explanation that the practice was an attempt by these individuals to hide their faces from the higher power that orders the universe and thereby to escape culpability in what they knew were misdeeds.¹¹ Julian Rice, however, offers good reason to suspect that, given its strong overtones of a Christian morality which is fundamentally incompatible with the rudiments of a traditional Lakota worldview and lifeways, this explanation may more plausibly be the product both of Black Elk's striving to "make Lakota culture expressive of the same truths as Christianity" and Brown's efforts to show "Lakota symbolism to be as profound as that of the 'great world religions.'"¹² In Rice's view, this was part of an attempt by Black Elk "to make survival conditions for Lakota consciousness and self esteem favorable in an overwhelmingly Christian world."¹³ Some preliminary support for this position is to be found in the texts of two earlier interviews conducted by John G. Neihardt in 1931 and 1944 respectively. While Black Elk describes the blackening of faces in both of these earlier interviews, he makes no allusion in either instance to an explicit association between warfare and questions of morality.¹⁴ And although Standing Bear makes no specific mention of this particular practice at all, it may at least be read as a telling metaphor for a particular understanding of war, as well as of its proper social function and context, which derives from a distinct Lakota worldview. It will be argued here that the blackening of faces was a symbolic expression of the imperative for the literal transformation of individuals so as to suit their transition from one social context to another.

¹¹According to Brown, Black Elk explained, "By going on the warpath, we know that we have done something bad, and we wish to hide our faces from *Wakan-Tanka*." Joseph Epes Brown, *The Sacred Pipe: Black Elk's Account of the Seven Rites of the Oglala Sioux* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1953), p. 92n.

¹²Julian Rice, *Black Elk's Story: Distinguishing its Lakota Purpose* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1991), p. 6.

¹³*Ibid.*, p. 12.

¹⁴See Raymond J. DeMallie, ed., *The Sixth Grandfather: Black Elk's Teachings Given to John G. Neihardt* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1984), pp. 167, 317, 369-70.

It is in seeking to draw out the essential functional differences between the blackened faces of the Lakota warriors and the ticker-tape parades of the Euroamerican ones that we encounter some important implications for security studies. As R.B.J. Walker has observed, what is at stake for adherents to mainstream theoretical approaches to security studies is, fundamentally, “the constitutive account of the political that has made the prevailing accounts of security seem so plausible.”¹⁵ Imperiled in any contestation of the appropriateness of the state as the referent object of security, then, are deeply-held commitments with regard to the possibilities of political order itself — possibilities which are presumed to begin and end with the state. Thus, Michael C. Williams and Keith Krause propose that this is “perhaps the central reason why the orthodoxy of security studies has been so resistant to taking account of current transformative trends (usually by denying their relevance) that seem to challenge its analytical assumptions.”¹⁶ If what is most jealously guarded in traditional conceptions of security is, as Williams and Krause put it, “not simply a claim about the historical centrality of the state” but “a particular understanding about how the state resolves the problem of political order itself,”¹⁷ then an array of traditional Native North American knowledges and lifeways are doubly at odds with the orthodoxy of security studies: not only do they (re)present alternative — that is, non-state — possibilities of political order, but the denials of such possibilities which persist in mainstream constructions of their collective identity have been essential to state-building in the Western Hemisphere. Moreover, many of the same assumptions which underpin the orthodoxy of security studies and its more fundamental political commitments may be found at the root of traditional anthropological and historiographical claims about Native North Americans which cast their pre-Columbian condition in terms of a Hobbesian state of nature. It is therefore instructive to consider some of these accounts and to assess both the integrity of the evidence upon which they rest and the extent to which they can or cannot be reconciled with the traditional worldviews and lifeways of the peoples to which they refer. Finally, the insights garnered from this exercise will be brought to bear in support of the proposition that the mainstream theoretical approaches to security studies are themselves implicated in the ongoing maintenance and reproduction of advanced colonialism.

¹⁵R.B.J. Walker, “The Subject of Security,” in Keith Krause and Michael C. Williams, eds., *Critical Security Studies: Concepts and Cases* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), p. 69.

¹⁶Michael C. Williams and Keith Krause, “Preface: Toward Critical Security Studies,” in Keith Krause and Michael C. Williams, eds., *Critical Security Studies: Concepts and Cases* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), p. x.

¹⁷*Ibid.*

But before proceeding, an important caveat must be advanced. In attempting to draw insights from a traditional Lakota worldview and lifeways, it is necessary to make certain cognitive leaps across epistemological boundaries and to take seriously culturally-specific ways of knowing.¹⁸ There is an inherent danger in this which involves the possibility of succumbing to the pretension that one who has no lived experience rooted in Lakota culture can unproblematically appropriate the voice of a Lakota person. Accordingly, a sincere effort has been made herein to hear and to take seriously Lakota voices on their own terms. Still, notwithstanding this self-conscious resolve, none of what follows should rightly be regarded as anything more authoritative than a considered set of interpretations. Of course, there are good and well-established grounds upon which to argue that this should always be the case when one approaches a subject matter with which they do not share a thorough and intimate lived experience. Nevertheless, the point is one which it is particularly important to underscore in this instance, given the long history of spurious accounts of aboriginal people(s) which have issued forth from ostensible ‘authorities’ and the nefarious political purposes to which they have sometimes been turned. Finally, it must be emphasized that, while the analysis which follows draws on a particular tradition which is distinctly Lakota, not all Lakota people would freely associate themselves with this tradition. Like any other people, the Lakota nation is not monolithic and we must take care not to contribute to the vast store of existing essentialized caricatures of Native North Americans, whether they intone images of either the ignoble or noble savage.

Aboriginal Peoples and the State(ments) of Nature

Michael Dorris has observed that learning about and from Native North American cultures and histories is rather different from acquiring knowledge in other fields because the researcher seldom ever proceeds from a conceptual *tabula rasa*.¹⁹ That is to say, there is a great deal which must be unlearned before serious and productive investigation can begin. This is perhaps nowhere better illustrated than in the corpus of literature purporting to elucidate the functions and conduct of warfare in traditional indigenous societies. It is difficult to decide whether the historians have followed the anthropologists in their work on this subject, or *vice versa*. Either

¹⁸See Laurie Anne Whitt, “Indigenous Peoples and the Cultural Politics of Knowledge,” in Michael K. Green, ed., *Issues in Native American Cultural Identity* (New York: Peter Lang, 1995).

¹⁹Michael Dorris, “Indians on the Shelf,” in Calvin Martin, ed., *The American Indian and the Problem of History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), p. 103.

way, despite the apparent predisposition on the part of many scholars working in these and other fields to present their conclusions as matters of objective fact, backed up by the (supposed) rigours of Western ‘science,’ discerning the pre-Columbian condition of indigenous peoples is not at all a straightforward and unproblematic undertaking. As Dorris points out, “[i]t depends on the imperfect evidence of archaeology; the barely-disguised, self-focused testimony of traders, missionaries, and soldiers, all of whom had their own axes to grind and viewed native peoples through a narrow scope; and, last and most suspect of all, common sense.”²⁰

Significantly, traditional indigenous sources are seldom ever consulted, their exclusion typically justified on the grounds that the oral literatures characteristic of so many Native societies are less reliable than written forms. Consequently, the body of scholarship on the histories of indigenous peoples has been largely self-referential, continually reproducing whatever errors of perception and assumption as may derive, per Dorris’ reproof, from the application of a generally ethnocentric “common sense.”

Convincingly demonstrating this point is an article by military historian John Keegan which comes as the most recent product of his investigations into the history of warfare on the Plains, and in which he seems not to have consulted, let alone taken seriously, Native sources.²¹ He does, however, appear to have been quite adept in the application of a decidedly Western brand of ‘common sense’ in his analysis of the putative ‘facts’ of indigenous warfare on the Plains. Central to this widely accredited wisdom is the familiar Hobbesian impulse which, finding in the aboriginal condition nothing akin to the state as a means by which political order might be furnished, posits a perpetual state of war and insecurity in its stead. Here Keegan finds himself in distinguished — if notorious — company: Hobbes himself maintained as evidence of the plausibility of his idea of the state of nature that “the savage people in many places of *America* . . . live at this day in that brutish manner, as I said before.”²² While Keegan does not explicitly articulate this assumption, it is implicit in, for example, his assertion that Custer and his 7th Cavalry were “wiped away in an outburst of native American ferocity” while their intended Lakota and Cheyenne victims are described as having been motivated less by the

²⁰*Ibid.*, p. 104.

²¹See John Keegan, “Warfare on the Plains,” *The Yale Review*, 84:1 (January 1996).

²²Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan* (New York: Penguin Books, 1968), p. 187.

pressing need to defend their encampment from the attacking soldiers than by their own “ferocious emotions.”²³

In this and other respects, Keegan shows himself as apparently unable to imagine that certain characteristics and conceptual commitments of the society of which he is a part and product may not be generalizable to the whole of humanity. Similarly, and perhaps partly in consequence of his prior assumption of unrestrained savagery, he ascribes an entrenched and pervasive individualism to the people of the Plains. Indeed, the Hobbesian overtones of his work are complemented by his characterization of the lifeways of the Plains people(s) as “rigorously masculine and individualistic.”²⁴ Keegan attempts to back up this position by way of reducing the Sun Dance — a protracted ceremony in which individuals undergo considerable personal suffering as a mode of self-sacrifice on behalf of the whole of their people and as a means by which to gain spiritual enlightenment — to a contest between participants motivated by nothing more than the selfish desire by each to “demonstrate in public his powers of endurance.”²⁵ According to Howard L. Harrod, “sun dances and other ritual processes provided occasions for individuals to endure the suffering that was requisite for religious experience.”²⁶ Keegan, however, sees, as the only functional outcome of this most sacred of rituals, the participants’ acquisition of “qualities of physical hardness, contempt for pain and privation, and disregard of danger to life that both disgusted and awed the white soldiers who fought them.”²⁷ Thus, he participates in the rendering of Native people(s) as unreal, constructing them at what might be termed the super-subhuman nexus.

Keegan is by no means alone in citing individualized motives as the basis of indigenous warfare. Anthony McGinnis shares this perspective, arguing that “[i]n war, the tribe was important only insofar as it supported the individual warrior and his combat and in the fact that the tribe’s noncombatants . . . needed to be defended.”²⁸ Emphasizing this point, he makes a

²³Keegan, *op. cit.*, p. 41.

²⁴*Ibid.*, p. 15.

²⁵*Ibid.*

²⁶Howard L. Harrod, *Becoming and Remaining a People: Native American Religions on the Northern Plains* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1995), p. 26.

²⁷Keegan, *op. cit.*, p. 15.

²⁸Anthony McGinnis, *Counting Coup and Cutting Horses: Intertribal Warfare on the Northern Plains, 1738-1889* (Evergreen: Cordillera Press, 1990), p. 12.

comparison with a French officer, Pierre de la Verendrye, who was wounded at the Battle of Malplaquet in 1709: “Fortunate enough to recover from his wounds, Verendrye returned home to Canada, having willingly shed his blood for God, King Louis XIV, and France, something the Indians of the northern plains would not have understood — sacrifice for an ideal or a leader rather than for oneself.”²⁹ Individuals in Plains societies, according to McGinnis, were prompted into warfare only in order to obtain wealth and glory for themselves.³⁰ Similarly, John C. Ewers identifies opportunities for individuals “to distinguish themselves” and the pursuit of “coveted war honors” as important determinants of warfare between Plains peoples.³¹

But perhaps the most extreme position as regards the presumed individualized sources of indigenous warfare is advanced by Napoleon A. Chagnon. Although the geographical focus of his empirical work is situated far from the Great Plains of North America, Chagnon’s account of the determinants of warfare among the Yanomami people of Amazonia is worth considering here. Central to his argument is the idea that Yanomami warfare, though sustained by a revenge complex wherein violence by one group begets reciprocal violence in kind from its erstwhile victims, is, at base, motivated both by competition over scarce material resources and by a supposed biological imperative on the part of males in kinship-based groups to secure, by means of violence if necessary, enhanced access to “reproductive resources” — i.e., women. According to Chagnon:

It is to be expected that individuals (or groups of closely related individuals) will attempt to appropriate both material and reproductive resources from neighbors whenever the probable costs are less than the benefits. While conflicts thus initiated need not take violent forms, they might be expected to do so when violence on average advances individual interests. I do not assume that humans consciously strive to increase or maximize their inclusive fitness, but I do assume that humans strive for goals that their cultural traditions deem as valued and esteemed. In many societies, achieving cultural success appears to lead to biological (genetic) success.³²

²⁹*Ibid.*, p. 4.

³⁰*Ibid.*, p. x.

³¹John C. Ewers, “Intertribal Warfare as the Precursor of Indian-White Warfare on the Northern Great Plains,” *Western Historical Quarterly*, 6 (October 1975), p. 401.

³²Napoleon A. Chagnon, “Life Histories, Blood Revenge, and Warfare in a Tribal Population,” *Science*, 239 (26 February 1988), p. 985.

What may be most interesting about this argument from the point of view of someone who works primarily in the field of International Relations are the similarities which it shares, in several particulars, with Realism. Absent the state, it is individuals who are cast as the ‘rational gains maximizers,’ such that the possibility of political order is effectively precluded. Having thus found his subjects residing in a Hobbesian state of nature, Chagnon, like Keegan, McGinnis, and Ewers, sets about explaining the sources and conduct of their wars in terms consistent with this condition.

If Chagnon is right and warfare in Amazonia is indeed in some significant measure a function of genetic imperative, then it would logically follow that the apparently warlike tendencies of the Yanomami can, with confidence, be mapped back onto their pre-Columbian ancestors. Furthermore, if this behaviour is biologically determined, it must be specified as a general human characteristic. The imposition of Hobbes’ Leviathan, then, serves to explain why it is that the conduct of the Yanomami is peculiar and not universal to the human condition. The political implications of such an inference are simultaneously abstract and immediate: in the abstract sense, it would seem to lend support to the notion of the state as the sole locus of political order; more immediately, it confers moral approbation upon the conquest of indigenous peoples and the suppression of their traditional lifeways, if only (at least ostensibly) to save them from themselves. Indeed, as Jacques Lizot points out, Brazilian newspapers supporting the interests of resource industries which have been accused of orchestrating genocide against the Yanomami in order to gain access to their lands have enthusiastically embraced Chagnon’s writings.³³

Here again, the Hobbesian impulse is not anomalous. It is as readily invoked as a justification for past conquests as for those which are ongoing. Though he does not follow Chagnon onto the thin ice of sociobiology, Ewers (apparently oblivious to the sum and substance of Dorris’ warning about the questionable reliability of early Euroamerican sources) argues that “intertribal warfare was rife [on the northern Plains] at the time these Indians first became known to whites” and that this “is evident in the writings of the pioneer explorers.”³⁴ And, although he acknowledges that there is scant evidence which is suggestive of large-scale battles, presumably with the aim of demonstrating that the possibility of large-scale exterminative warfare was not precluded, Ewers cites the example of an 1866 battle in which “the Piegan *are*

³³Jacques Lizot, “On Warfare: An Answer to N.A. Chagnon,” *American Ethnologist*, 21:4 (November 1994), p. 845.

³⁴Ewers, *op. cit.*, p. 399.

reputed to have killed more than three hundred Crow and Gros Ventres.”³⁵ Nevertheless, inasmuch as raiding for horses was the principal form of warfare among Plains peoples, he submits that this is likely to have been the primary source of casualties.³⁶ With his own motives beginning to show, he continues: “Nor is there reason to doubt that, during the historic period, many more Indians of this region were killed by other Indians in intertribal wars than by white soldiers or civilians in more fully documented Indian-white warfare.”³⁷ Having thus outlined the rudiments of a Hobbesian state of nature as extant on the northern Plains at the earliest stages of European contact, Ewers makes a thinly veiled attempt to rationalize the forced imposition of the Euroamerican Leviathan, proposing that “[h]ad each of the tribes of this region continued to stand alone, fighting all neighboring tribes, it is probable that many of the smaller tribes either would have been exterminated, or their few survivors would have been adopted into the larger tribes, thereby increasing the latter’s military potential.”³⁸

Once more, then, the aboriginal condition has been presented as representative of a state of nature, constructed in decidedly Hobbesian terms. But what Ewers seems to miss is the possibility that the aboriginal condition of the peoples he studies is not, in fact, known to him. In this too he keeps company with Keegan, McGinnis, and Chagnon. By way of contrast, R. Brian Ferguson raises a compelling challenge to the pretension of scholars such as these to know the pre-Columbian lifeways of the indigenous peoples of the Americas, regardless of whether their focus is on the conquered and colonized Plains peoples of North America or the as yet largely unsubdued Yanomami of Amazonia. Recent investigations by Ferguson in which he has focused primarily on the Yanomami suggest that, contra the received wisdom of the Hobbesian impulse, “the most general cause of known warfare in Amazonia is Western contact.”³⁹ Although he does not contend that warfare was unknown to pre-Columbian Amazonia, he does insist that, “[c]ontrary to Hobbes, the intrusion of the Leviathan of the European state did not suppress a ‘war of all against all’ among Native peoples of Amazonia, but instead fomented warfare.”⁴⁰

³⁵*Ibid.*, p. 401; emphasis added.

³⁶*Ibid.*, p. 402.

³⁷*Ibid.*

³⁸*Ibid.*

³⁹R. Brian Ferguson, “Blood of the Leviathan: Western Contact and Warfare in Amazonia,” *American Ethnologist*, 17:2 (May 1990), p. 237.

⁴⁰*Ibid.*, p. 238.

“Ultimately,” he continues, “wars have ended through pacification or extinction, but prior to that the general effect of contact has been just the opposite: to intensify or engender warfare.”⁴¹ Moreover, Ferguson holds this to be a general consequence of European imperialism virtually wherever it has confronted non-state societies, albeit with notable local variations arising from indigenous peculiarities.⁴²

Ferguson attributes this phenomenon to an array of influences which fall roughly into three broad categories, though he stresses that the latter are very much artificial and his interest is primarily with the transformative effects of the specific qualifying factors which he groups under them.⁴³ The first is concerned with the purposeful incitement and/or direction of Native warfare by Europeans. As Ferguson notes, such practices were very common in the initial contact period and were manifest in a variety of forms. The most obvious and direct of these was the use of conquered or allied Native peoples as “auxiliaries or impressed recruits” in European campaigns against unsubjugated peoples on the peripheries of the expanding colonies.⁴⁴ In some cases, notably along the line of confrontation between the English and French colonies of northeastern North America, Native peoples were unable to avoid becoming entangled in wars between the colonial powers themselves. Elsewhere, Europeans found it expedient to facilitate — generally by the provision of arms and other goods — warfare amongst contending groups lying beyond the pale of direct colonial authority. Ewers, however, rejects the idea that European contact incited Native warfare in this way and, as evidence, points to the matter of the support which was given by Euroamericans to the Crow and Arikara in their struggles against the Lakota:

To view the Crow and Arikara as “mercenaries” of the whites is to overlook the long history of Indian-Indian warfare in this region. The Crow, Arikara, and other tribes had been fighting the Sioux for generations before they received any effective aid from the whites. They still suffered from Sioux aggression during the 1860s and 1870s. Surely the history of Indian-white warfare on the northern

⁴¹*Ibid.*, p. 239.

⁴²R. Brian Ferguson, “Tribal Warfare,” *Scientific American*, 266:1 (January 1992), p. 109.

⁴³Ferguson (1990), *op. cit.*, p. 239.

⁴⁴*Ibid.*

Great Plains cannot be understood without an awareness of the history of intertribal warfare in this region.⁴⁵

But, while Ewers is right in pointing out that the colonial powers, by way of exploiting existing animosities between some Native peoples, frequently did not need to rely on coercion in enlisting the service of Native recruits, in the end it was still these powers which enkindled enmity into open hostilities.⁴⁶

A further impetus toward the deliberate and utilitarian incitement and direction of warfare between different Native peoples was the European demand for slaves in the early stages of the colonization of the Americas. As Ferguson explains it:

The initial European colonization of the New World was based on the coerced labor of Native peoples. Adult male captives were sought as field laborers, women and children as domestic servants. Royal decrees — which were often circumvented but which still had an impact — allowed two main avenues for enslaving Indians: taking captives in “just wars” against allegedly rebellious Natives or putative cannibals; and “ransoming” captives held by Indians from their own wars. It was the latter that became the routine source of slaves. . . . Slaving was encouraged by payments in European goods, but raiding was not entirely optional; people who did not produce captives were commonly taken as slaves themselves. Slave raiding was often a constant danger even hundreds of miles from European settlements.⁴⁷

Wilma A. Dunaway draws to our attention similar conditions during the early period of contact in southeastern North America which had a profound effect upon the nature and extent of warfare as practiced by the Cherokee:

Prior to the development of a profitable market for war captives, slaves remained only a by-product of conflicts waged primarily for vengeance. Cherokee clans frequently adopted prisoners of war to replace kinsmen who had died, or captives could be ransomed by the enemies. Once the traders began exchanging goods for

⁴⁵Ewers, *op. cit.*, pp. 409-10.

⁴⁶It is noteworthy that Ewers does not seem to have felt compelled to propose an answer to the question of from whence these animosities originally sprang, the need to do so having been obviated by the prior assumption of a Hobbesian state of nature. He thus postulates precisely that which he presumes to establish. The matter of the sources of enmities pre-dating the imposition of European influences is, however, an important one to which I will return in a later section.

⁴⁷Ferguson (1990), *op. cit.*, p. 240.

war captives, the market value of the captured slaves intensified the frequency and extent of indigenous warfare.⁴⁸

Thus, peoples who may never before have been enemies, or perhaps had never even come into direct contact with one another, developed enduring mutual malevolence.

Ferguson's second broad category is concerned with demographic pressures arising from European colonization and the influences which they exerted on indigenous warfare. The introduction of epidemic diseases against which Native people had little or no immunity was, according to Ferguson, a source of increased hostility between groups when it led to charges of sorcery.⁴⁹ In some instances, catastrophically high rates of mortality due to disease spurred raiding with the express purpose of acquiring captives to be integrated into the abductors' society as a means of population replenishment.⁵⁰ Of greater consequence, however, were the migrations prompted by epidemics, slave raiding, and the ever-expanding colonies themselves. Migration forced direct contact between historically separated groups and increasingly brought them into conflict as refugee groups sought to impose themselves into regions which were already well populated.⁵¹

The third and final set of transformative influences identified by Ferguson is associated with the introduction of Western manufactures. Owing to the greater efficiency of steel tools and other Western goods, such as firearms, *vis-à-vis* their indigenous equivalents, European trade wares dramatically increased the war-making potential of many indigenous peoples. These items thus became both objects and implements of war with the deleterious effect that warfare became a means by which to forcibly appropriate the instruments of warfare which, in turn, made possible its expansion and the appropriation of still more of its instruments. It is almost certainly more than mere coincidence, then, that Native peoples who enjoyed ready access to these goods are frequently the same ones regarded as most warlike in Euroamerican historiographies. Jeffrey P. Blick, for example, notes that the gun-toting mounted warriors of the Plains owed their reputation as a warlike people largely to the historical accident of having been

⁴⁸Wilma A. Dunaway, "Incorporation as an Interactive Process: Cherokee Resistance to Expansion of the Capitalist-World System, 1560-1763," *Sociological Inquiry*, 66:4 (November 1996), p. 462.

⁴⁹Ferguson (1990), *op. cit.*, p. 241.

⁵⁰R. Brian Ferguson and Neil L. Whitehead, "The Violent Edge of Empire," in R. Brian Ferguson and Neil L. Whitehead, eds., *War in the Tribal Zone: Expanding States and Indigenous Warfare* (Santa Fe: School of American Research Press, 1992), p. 9.

⁵¹Ferguson (1990), *op. cit.*, p. 242.

situated at the point at which the lines of trade in firearms supplied by the French in the northeast of the continent first intersected with the diffusion of horses introduced by the Spanish in the southwest. As Blick puts it:

The combination of the gun and the horse . . . enabled many tribes to expand their traditional ranges and to wage warfare in a much more efficient manner. What ultimately resulted was an unequal access to guns and horses. Tribes of the Great Plains proper were able to take advantage of the geographic continuity of the Plains and of the rapid diffusion of the horse and gun. Marginal tribes however, such as the Bannock and the ‘Digger’ Indians of the Plateau and Great Basin, were forced to retreat into inhospitable regions to avoid the raids of their mounted predators, the Blackfoot, Piegan, Shoshone, etc.⁵²

Thus, we see here the confluence of two broad sets of influences as the migratory pressures felt by the Plains peoples in the face of the advancing Euroamerican colonies, combined with their acquisition of horses and firearms, induced warfare between Native peoples, thereby setting in motion still more waves of migration with all of the disruptive effects which that entailed. It must be emphasized that Blick’s position, like Ferguson’s with respect to the Yanomami, is not that warfare was non-existent on the Plains before the introduction of Western manufactures, but rather, that the appearance of these items was typically accompanied or followed in short order by an increase in the frequency and intensity of warfare.

All of this makes Ewers’ above-cited admonition to take into account the history of intertribal warfare on the Plains seem rather more problematic than it may at first appear. It also serves to underscore Dorris’ suggestion that the early Euroamerican accounts of the aboriginal condition of Native peoples may be unreliable — a point which he is not alone in making.⁵³ Ferguson echoes Dorris’ concerns, arguing that the first accounts of contact with indigenous peoples tended to come from “the most disruptive observers imaginable: raiders seeking slaves or mission ‘converts’.”⁵⁴ Moreover, he poses as a more general problem for anthropology itself the fact that the first literate observers are seldom present at the time of initial contact:

⁵²Jeffrey P. Blick, “Genocidal Warfare in Tribal Societies as a Result of European-Induced Culture Conflict,” *MAN*, 23:4 (December 1988), pp. 666-7.

⁵³See, for example, Robert F. Berkhofer, Jr., *The White Man’s Indian: Images of the American Indian from Columbus to the Present* (New York: Vintage Books, 1978).

⁵⁴Ferguson (1990), *op. cit.*, p. 238.

[E]thnology is built upon a paradox. Traditionally, it has sought the Pristine Non — non-Western, nonliterate, noncapitalist, nonstate. Yet the quality of our descriptions of other cultures is generally in direct proportion to the intensity of the Western presence. Literate observers usually arrive rather late in the encounter. The specter haunting anthropology is that culture patterns taken to be pristine may actually have been transformed by Western contact.⁵⁵

But, setting aside for the moment the issue of veracity and the question of timeliness, an even more serious problem from the point of view of anyone hoping to access the aboriginal condition of Native peoples through the accounts of observers, whether contemporary or historical, is the fact that European influences have repeatedly preceded Europeans themselves, changing the lived realities of Native peoples long before first contact. This problem effectively precludes reliance on the accounts of observers with respect to the ‘pristine’ condition of indigenous warfare: refugee migrations, almost by definition, precede the advance of colonial frontiers; following indigenous trade routes, manufactured goods can become commonplace in a given locale centuries before first contact; epidemic diseases are borne by refugee flows as well as along trade routes. By way of example, the winter counts of the peoples of the northern Plains indicate a very high frequency of epidemics dating back to 1714, with the first recorded outbreak among the Oglala Lakota having taken place in 1780⁵⁶ — twenty-four years before they were first visited by the renowned Euroamerican explorers Meriwether Lewis and William Clark in 1804.

So, whether our focus is on the Yanomami of Amazonia, the Cherokee of southeastern North America, or the Lakota of the northern Plains, accounts of the supposed aboriginal condition of Native peoples which rely to any significant extent upon what was, or may yet be, empirically observable are highly suspect. How, then, do we proceed? Douglas B. Bamforth proposes that, if “ethnohistoric documentation of warfare tells us little about precontact circumstances,” this leaves “archaeological data central to any understanding of post-contact changes in these circumstances.”⁵⁷ Accordingly, he directs us to consider the evidence

⁵⁵*Ibid.*

⁵⁶See Linea Sundstrom, “Smallpox Used Them Up: References to Epidemic Disease in Northern Plains Winter Counts, 1714-1920,” *Ethnohistory*, 44:2 (Spring 1997). Winter counts are the basis of the traditional oral historiographical records of the northern Plains peoples wherein each year is identified by way of association with some notable event.

⁵⁷Douglas B. Bamforth, “Indigenous People, Indigenous Violence: Precontact Warfare on the North American Great Plains,” *MAN*, 29:1 (March 1994), p. 97.

uncovered in the excavation of agriculturally-based pre-Columbian Native settlement sites along the Missouri Trench in present-day North and South Dakota, with particular emphasis on one site at Crow Creek. As a control case, he also discusses the Larson site, an excavation of a large former Arikara community near the Missouri River which was occupied between 1750 and 1785, by which time the disruptive influences of the arrival of Europeans on the continent should certainly have been keenly felt. Bamforth notes that trenches and palisades were generally common features of all of these sites, though the extent of their overall development and completeness as well as the degree of attention paid to their maintenance varied across time.⁵⁸ Bamforth, probably accurately, interprets these features as defensive fortifications. But this assumption, in part, leads him to another rather more tenuous one: namely that large-scale exterminative warfare was not uncommon on the northern Plains even prior to the arrival of Europeans on the continent.

Bamforth bases this position primarily on evidence uncovered in the excavations of the Larson and Crow Creek sites. The latter town is estimated, according to Bamforth, to have been built sometime in the early part of the fourteenth century.⁵⁹ It was at this site that a particularly grizzly discovery was made in 1978: a mass grave in which were interred the skeletal remains of somewhere in the neighbourhood of 500 people.⁶⁰ In addition to the fact of their having been buried together in a mass grave, the condition of the human remains at Crow Creek indicates that the inhabitants of the town almost certainly were the victims of a massacre. A very high frequency of depressed fractures to the skulls of the victims as well as other similar indications would seem to make at least this much irrefutable. Significantly, analysis of the skeletal remains yielded a further insight into the tragic situation of the victims: telltale signs in the condition of many of the long bones indicate that the townspeople had suffered from malnutrition at various points in their lives and many of them were malnourished at the time the massacre.⁶¹ This suggested a motive and context for the slaughter: forcible appropriation of foodstuffs during a famine. Bamforth compares this evidence to that found at the post-contact Larson site where a similar massacre took place approximately four and one half centuries later, likely in consequence, he argues, of the conflict created by mass migrations which were, in turn, a result

⁵⁸*Ibid.*, p. 106.

⁵⁹*Ibid.*

⁶⁰Bamforth cites a count of at least 486, noting that perhaps 50 additional skeletons remain in place. *Ibid.*

⁶¹*Ibid.*, pp. 106-7.

of the same disruptive influences of European colonialism identified by Ferguson and Blick.⁶² And finding the same sorts of osteological evidence — with the exception that indications of malnutrition were not found at the Larson site — and similar fortifications at the two sites, he arrives at the conclusion that “precontact tribal warfare on the northern Great Plains resulted from indigenous cultural-ecological processes rather than from external influences.”⁶³

As noted above, Bamforth is probably right in regarding the ditches and palisades of the villages in the Missouri Trench as defensive fortifications. Less clear, however, is the conclusion that these measures were undertaken in response to endemic large-scale warfare in the region as a feature of its various peoples’ aboriginal condition. Yet this is precisely what Bamforth implies when he suggests that the construction of such defences would have been a tremendous burden for such small populations.⁶⁴ To be fair, he does acknowledge that “features which archaeologists interpret as fortifications could have primarily symbolic or ceremonial significance . . . or . . . could have served simply as warnings which by themselves dissuaded rival groups from resorting to all-out war.”⁶⁵ Ewers, on the other hand, is considerably less cautious: “Surely the prehistoric villagers would not have taken elaborate steps to fortify their settlements had they not been endangered by enemies.”⁶⁶ And, “[w]hoever those enemies were,” he continues, “we can be sure that they were other Indians.”⁶⁷ But can we, in fact, be so sure of any of this? What if the fortifications — if, indeed, they have been correctly interpreted as such — were inspired by rumour and not by event? The very fact that, at least in the cases of the Larson and Crow Creek sites, they would seem to have been unequal to the purpose ascribed to them, suggests the possibility that they were designed in response to some lesser threat. In this regard, it is significant that the northern Plains was noted for small-scale raiding between groups and, especially if Bamforth is correct in assessing periods of food shortage, sedentary agricultural communities, such as the one uncovered at Crow Creek, would have been likely targets of such incursions. Moreover, particularly if we accept Patricia Albers’ suggestion that raiding, as a “mechanism for resolving short-term imbalances in the distribution of goods,” was a

⁶²*Ibid.*, pp. 101-2.

⁶³*Ibid.*, p. 109.

⁶⁴*Ibid.*, p. 111.

⁶⁵*Ibid.*, p. 105.

⁶⁶Ewers, *op. cit.*, p. 399.

⁶⁷*Ibid.*

way of maintaining symbiosis between groups,⁶⁸ the complete destruction of a food-producing village would seem contrary to the interests of the raiders and, therefore, unlikely to have been a common enterprise. Of course, none of this is intended to suggest that any of these explanations necessarily represent more accurate portrayals of the reality of pre-Columbian existence on the northern Plains than those proposed by Bamforth and Ewers. On the contrary, the point here is only to make clear that the archaeological evidence cannot speak to us as unproblematically as Ewers and, to a lesser degree Bamforth, would have us believe.

Bamforth's argument leaves room for a range of conclusions other than those at which he arrives. We may note, for instance, that while he is able to draw our attention to a number of sites along the Missouri Trench, just two bear evidence of large-scale exterminative warfare, and only one of these dates to pre-Columbian times. He does indicate two additional sites at which partially-constructed settlements appear to have been abandoned before completion,⁶⁹ but his interpretation of this as evidence that the would-be inhabitants had been driven off by force, though a plausible enough explanation, is hardly conclusive. Bamforth acknowledges that the data he examines are more suited to determining the scale of warfare than its frequency, even as he concedes that the fortification of settlements became more common after the arrival of Europeans.⁷⁰ One wonders, then, on what basis the Crow Creek massacre should be regarded as anything more than an aberration under conditions which, like the influences set forth from European colonization, were disruptive of the customary lifeways of the peoples concerned. Finally, Bamforth himself draws attention to evidence of famine at the time of the Crow Creek massacre as well as episodically in the years prior. Surely this must be regarded as an extreme circumstance which, though it may well have resulted in a massacre, is in no way indicative of a general trend. In fact, the evidence cited by Bamforth would seem to bespeak precisely the opposite inasmuch as the earlier periods of malnutrition which are also indicated did not result in a similarly catastrophic conflict.

If the archaeological evidence is rendered suspect in consequence of being susceptible of a variety of incompatible interpretations — and this certainly seems to be the case — then we are returned to our earlier problem of whence to proceed. The answer proposed here is simply that

⁶⁸See Patricia C. Albers, "Symbiosis, Merger, and War: Contrasting Forms of Intertribal Relationship Among Historic Plains Indians," in John H. Moore, ed., *The Political Economy of North American Indians* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1993), p. 108.

⁶⁹Bamforth, *op. cit.*, p. 105.

⁷⁰*Ibid.*, p. 111.

the validity of an account of any aspect of the aboriginal condition of a given people must be judged in light of the sociopolitical, cultural, and cosmological contexts of that people, and not those of the observer. Therefore, while it has been useful to discuss the disruptive influences and effects of the arrival of the Leviathan in a more inclusive way, deliberating upon the shared — or at least similar — experiences of a great many indigenous peoples throughout the Americas, it is appropriate to return now to a more focused consideration of the Lakota and to assess the degree to which various accounts of their warfare are or are not consistent with a traditional Lakota worldview and lifeways. Interrogating the evidence in this manner, it will be argued, yields not only an account of the nature and conduct of Lakota warfare which is quite different from those put forth by the anthropological orthodoxy, but also an alternative conception and practice of political order which is equally at odds with that which is so doggedly adhered to by the orthodoxy of security studies.

Changing Cosmological Lenses: An (Alter)Native Worldview and Lifeways

In his response to Chagnon, Lizot draws attention to the serious consequences which may arise from attempts to make literal translations of core indigenous concepts, dragging them across the cosmological divide that separates the worldviews of different peoples. Noting that Chagnon translates the Yanomami word *waitheri* as “fierce,”⁷¹ Lizot counters that such a simple and direct rendering of meaning is not possible. The word is not simply descriptive of a state of being for the Yanomami, but signifies a highly nuanced concept with a broad spectrum of meaning which includes, simultaneously, courage, gallantry, recklessness, and stoicism.⁷² ‘Fierce,’ according to Lizot, “occurs only at the far edge of the spectrum of possible meanings, to describe an extreme behavior.”⁷³ He continues:

To be *waitheri* is to be courageous and stoic, to have no fear of others’ aggression, to refuse submission, to be capable of opposing the will of others, and to stand up to them; it is also to be able to endure the greatest physical or psychological suffering. It is interesting to note that the two animals which, in the eyes of the Indians, best embody *waitheri* behavior are the *coati*, for its bravery, and the sloth, because it “does not die” — in other words, because it endures the

⁷¹Chagnon, *op. cit.*, p. 987.

⁷²Lizot, *op. cit.*, p. 857.

⁷³*Ibid.*

most excruciating wounds; it is difficult to kill. It is not a killer animal like the jaguar that has been chosen to represent the waitheri ideal, but rather two other animals and, if these animals are different, it is because the Indians recognize at least implicitly the two poles of the semantic field covered: courage and stoicism. . . . Perhaps it is clearer now why intimidation cannot constitute the basis of Yanomami social relations: submission is contrary to [Yanomami] morality; it is dishonorable.⁷⁴

Seen in this light, Chagnon's choice of "fierce" as the sole translation for a sophisticated concept denoting conduct regarded by the Yanomami as virtuous is a serious distortion not only of the idea itself but of the comportment and lifeways of this people more generally. In this sense, it stands as a warning with respect to the very serious implications of tearing this or that aspect of a given people's lived experience and worldview from its proper context and subjecting it to the deforming constraints and impositions of a foreign epistemology. Thus, as we move to consider more fully the worldview and lifeways of the Lakota it is imperative that we avoid the mistake of constructing that which may seem nominally familiar in terms of what we might imagine to be correlates in our own lived experience. In short, we must endeavour to take Lakota voices, ideas, and perspectives seriously on their own terms and in their appropriate cosmological contexts.

We are confronted with such perils almost immediately as we turn to Lakota accounts of the nature and conduct of their warfare. Neither Black Elk nor Standing Bear advance any claim to anything akin to a tradition of non-violence among Lakota and neighbouring peoples on the Plains in pre-Columbian times. Nevertheless, Standing Bear maintains that, contrary to the image of them advanced by scholars like Ewers, Keegan, and McGinnis, the Lakota were not warlike:

Contrary to much that has been written, warfare with the Lakota was not a tribal profession. They did not fight to gain territory nor to conquer another people. Neither did they fight to subject other tribes to slavery. They never kept captives nor exacted tribute from those subdued, and there was no institution that remotely resembled a prison. As a matter of fact, the philosophical ideal of the Lakota was harmony, and the most powerful symbol was that of peace. So powerful was this symbol that the wise men or chiefs had but to present it to the warriors and they obeyed its mandates, no matter how reluctant they might be.⁷⁵

⁷⁴*Ibid.*

⁷⁵Luther Standing Bear, *Land of the Spotted Eagle* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1978), pp. 40-1.

And while Standing Bear indicates that the revenge complex was active on the Plains, he suggests that revenge was an infrequent determinant of warfare as compared with incidents arising from incursions by rival groups into areas understood to be the exclusive preserve of the Lakota.⁷⁶ Of central concern was the prevention of buffalo hunts by rivals in Lakota territory (this is a very significant point and one to which we will return in the next section).

It might be tempting to interpret what Standing Bear says here as paradigmatic of what some might take to be, after the manner of Samuel Huntington's "Clash of Civilizations" thesis,⁷⁷ a general characteristic — even a law — of the human condition: that human groupings tend toward chauvinism, individuals therein more readily exhibiting affinities toward those with whom they most closely identify. Ewers goes even further, asserting that "[t]he roots of intertribal warfare in this region can be found in the very nature of tribalism itself — the common disposition of the members of each tribe to regard *their* tribe as 'the people,' and to look upon outsiders with suspicion."⁷⁸ McGinnis concurs in this, implying that the very fact of a strong sense of self identity among peoples of the northern Plains occasioned hostility toward outgroups.⁷⁹ This, however, is wholly inconsistent with the rudimentary precepts of a traditional Lakota worldview deriving from a cosmology which is inherently resistant to the construction of orders of hierarchy.

Standing Bear notes that, although the pre-reservation Lakota depended completely on hunting for their survival, they never killed simply for sport. As he explains it, this can be attributed to a fundamental belief that all creatures have the "right to live and to increase."⁸⁰ Robert Bunge furnishes an excellent example of the centrality of this notion in Lakota ethics, pointing out that it was common practice when taking seeds from the burrow of a mouse in order to flavour soup to leave behind some morsel of food for the mouse as payment. As Bunge puts it: "Even a mouse must live; it cannot be deprived of its means of life without payment in

⁷⁶*Ibid.*, p. 40.

⁷⁷See Samuel P. Huntington, "The Clash of Civilizations?" *Foreign Affairs*, 72:3 (Summer 1993).

⁷⁸Ewers, *op. cit.*, pp. 397-8; emphasis in original.

⁷⁹McGinnis, *op. cit.*, p. 2.

⁸⁰Standing Bear (1978), *op. cit.*, p. 69.

kind.”⁸¹ Similarly, Rice observes that the appropriate emotion following on a successful hunt was not one of triumph or jubilation, but pity.⁸² This was consistent with the absence of a belief, pace the Euroamerican perspective, in the superiority of humans over other animals — or plants for that matter. In fact, according to Bunge, precisely the opposite view was held: if anything it was humans who were regarded as inferior, relying as they did for their survival on other species which not only did not need them but which fared better without them.⁸³ This regard for other living things was expressed best in the conceptual ascendancy of the circle over linear expressions of existence, the latter lending itself more readily to the construction of hierarchy. And lest this proposition be dismissed as romanticism, it should be noted that such respect was not completely unpragmatic from a Lakota point of view inasmuch as their own well-being was reckoned as inextricably tied to that of all others.

The importance of the circle in Lakota cosmology is considerable. As one Lakota informant, Tyon, explained to J.R. Walker:

The Oglala believe the circle to be sacred because the Great Spirit caused everything in nature to be round except stone. Stone is the implement of destruction. The sun and the sky, the earth and the moon are round like a shield, though the sky is deep like a bowl. Everything that breathes is round like the body of a man. Everything that grows from the ground is round like the stem of a tree. Since the Great Spirit has caused everything to be round mankind should look upon the circle as sacred for it is the symbol of all things in nature except stone. It is also the symbol of the circle that marks the edge of the world and therefore of the four winds that travel there. Consequently, it is also the symbol of a year. The day, the night, and the moon go in a circle above the sky. Therefore the circle is a symbol of these divisions of time and hence the symbol of all time.⁸⁴

This account by Tyon bears unmistakable overtones of the Lakota sense of the intrinsic relatedness of all things. Moreover, as Black Elk makes clear, the power which sustains life flows directly from one’s connection to this circle of relatedness, a connection which is upheld,

⁸¹Robert Bunge, *An American Urphilosophie: An American Philosophy BP (Before Pragmatism)* (Lanham: University Press of America, 1984), p. 94.

⁸²Rice, *op. cit.*, p. 67.

⁸³Bunge, *op. cit.*, p. 46.

⁸⁴Quoted in J.R. Walker, “The Sun Dance and Other Ceremonies of the Oglala Division of the Teton Dakota,” *Anthropological Papers*, 16 (1917), p. 160.

in part, via literal expressions of the circle in everyday life: “You will notice that everything the Indian does is in a circle. Everything they do is the power from the sacred hoop . . . The power won’t work in anything but circles.”⁸⁵ Tyon concurs in this, citing it as the reason why the Lakota lived in round tipis which they arranged in a circle.⁸⁶ And just as the power and unity inherent in the circle is important to the well-being of individuals, so too is it crucial to the health of the nation. The sacred hoop of the nation is a metaphor, derived from the camp circle, for the holistic unity of the Lakota people. Like the tipis which make up the camp circle, the nation is seen in terms of a hoop wherein no one constituent part is logically or implicitly prior to any other and such that all are equally necessary to complete the unity of the circle. The significance of the circle, then, is rooted in the assumption of an essential continuity from individual, through nation, to all elements of the cosmos, and back again. In fact, no one of these can be separated out from the others, since together they constitute a single totality encompassing all of Creation. Nature, therefore, is not something which must be overcome, with the result that the accent is on harmony over struggle; as Bunge stresses, emphasis is placed on adjusting to nature, not subduing it.⁸⁷ In keeping with the endless unity of the circle, all things in the universe simply exist in a balance which was fixed soon after their creation.⁸⁸ Adjusting to this balance ensures its maintenance and, by extension, the security of all in Creation. Contra the Judeo-Christian heritage, the Lakota were never cast out of their Eden; on the contrary, they are inseparable from it.

The assumption of the fundamental interrelatedness of all things is expressed in the Lakota maxim, *mitakuye oyasin* — usually, if somewhat imperfectly, translated as “all are my relatives” or “we are all related.” *Mitakuye oyasin* is in no way regarded as a normative proposition, but as a statement of simple fact whose falsity is so completely unthinkable that it may rightly be regarded as an aspect of Lakota ‘common sense.’ According to Fritz Detwiler, from this perspective, simply by virtue of their being part of the sacred hoop of the cosmos, “all

⁸⁵Quoted in DeMallie (1984), *op. cit.*, pp. 290-1.

⁸⁶J.R. Walker, *op. cit.*, p. 160.

⁸⁷Bunge, *op. cit.*, p. 94.

⁸⁸Raymond J. DeMallie, “Lakota Belief and Ritual in the Nineteenth Century,” in Raymond J. DeMallie and Douglas R. Parks, eds., *Sioux Indian Religion: Tradition and Innovation* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1987), p. 31.

beings are related in a way that reflects the ontological oneness of creation.”⁸⁹ As Detwiler explains it:

The Oglala understand that all beings and spirits are persons in the fullest sense of that term: they share inherent worth, integrity, sentience, conscience, power, will, voice, and especially the ability to enter into relationships. Humans, or ‘two-leggeds’ are only one type of person. Humans share their world with Wakan and non-human persons, including human persons, stone persons, four-legged persons, winged-persons, crawling persons, standing persons (plants and trees), fish-persons, among others. These persons have both ontological and moral significance. The category person applies to anything that has being, and who is therefore capable of relating.⁹⁰

From this perspective, given the emphasis on adjusting to — as opposed to subduing — nature, and inasmuch as other peoples are, like the Lakota themselves, related parts of a supremely holistic cosmos, seeking to subdue them in warfare would be inconsistent with Lakota cosmological commitments. Moreover, it would be self-destructive since it would fragment the sacred hoop upon which all life depends. *Mitakuye oyasin*, then, expresses not only the interrelatedness, but also the interdependence of all elements of Creation.

It is interesting in this context to note part of a question posed by Simon Dalby: “[C]an security be rethought in terms that do not necessarily equate difference with threat . . . ?”⁹¹ We may also wonder whether it need be that the identification of difference so conceived must proceed to an instrumentally denigrating process of ‘Othering.’ Dalby argues that the common assumption that Western modes of sociopolitical organization are superior to other forms and ought to be universally embraced is fundamental to the rendering of difference as threat.⁹² By way of contrast, Laurie Anne Whitt argues that “as an ethical and cognitive virtue” in many Native societies, wherein it “mediates not only human, but human/nonhuman relationships,” the notion of respect operates such that, “since everyone and everything has important functions,

⁸⁹Fritz Detwiler, “‘All My Relatives’: Persons in Oglala Religion,” *Religion*, 22:3 (July 1992), p. 238.

⁹⁰*Ibid.*, p. 239.

⁹¹Simon Dalby, “Contesting an Essential Concept: Reading the Dilemmas in Contemporary Security Discourse,” in Keith Krause and Michael C. Williams, eds., *Critical Security Studies: Concepts and Cases* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), p. 9.

⁹²*Ibid.*, p. 10.

they deserve to be respected for what and how they are.”⁹³ And this outlook derives, in no insignificant way, from the ontological assumption not only of epistemological diversity, but of cosmological diversity as well. Accordingly, as Harrod explains:

Even though there were religious interchanges among groups, Native American peoples were not motivated to convert others, because they did not believe that one religion was true while the other was less true or even false. Evangelism and conversion were not the point of these religions. Indeed, to offer the power of one’s central religious rituals to another was viewed as dangerous since such activity might cause a diminished relation of one’s group to life-giving powers.⁹⁴

Similarly, according to Vine Deloria, Jr.:

No demand existed . . . for the people to go into the world and inform or instruct other people in the rituals and beliefs of the tribe. The people were supposed to follow their own teachings and assume that other people would follow their teachings. These instructions were rigorously followed and consequently there was never an instance of a tribe making war on another tribe because of religious differences.⁹⁵

It should be noted also that if, as Deloria maintains, no wars were fought over “religious differences,” this would almost certainly mean that divergent lifeways would not have been a source of derision either given that, as with most Native societies, spirituality for the Lakota was not ontologically separable from any other aspect of life or existence, however mundane. In this regard, the absence in most Native languages of any pre-contact word by which to indicate ‘religion’ or ‘spirituality’ as discreet spheres is particularly telling.⁹⁶ Thus, while difference would not, in and of itself, have been constructed as threat from a traditional Lakota perspective, owing to the commitment to a transcendent unity inherent in the sacred hoop of the cosmos, threat might rightly be cast as difference.

⁹³Whitt, *op. cit.*, p. 243.

⁹⁴Harrod, *op. cit.*, pp. 103-4.

⁹⁵Vine Deloria, Jr., “Is Religion Possible? An Evaluation of Present Efforts to Revive Traditional Tribal Religions,” *Wicazo Sa Review*, 8:1 (Spring 1992), p. 36.

⁹⁶Cynthia R. Kasee, “Identity, Recovery, and Religious Imperialism: Native American Women and the New Age,” *Women & Therapy*, 16:2-3 (Summer-Fall 1995), p. 84.

This broad outlook, which wrought no impetus to enforce conformity of others to one's own will or ways, was also reflected in the political structures of decision-making authority characteristic of Lakota bands. A band's council was called to convene whenever (and only as) needed to fulfill its legislative function. Although formal membership was restricted by way of invitation, anyone was free to speak in the council. Consistent in some ways with the principles of ancient Athenian democracy, all decisions were required to be products of consensus rather than majority vote — so long as consensus could not be reached on a given question or issue, no decision could be rendered. This was fundamental to the Lakota conception of authority expressed as *Oyate ta woecun*, translated by Standing Bear as "Done by the people" or "The decision of the Nation."⁹⁷ Although a form of executive authority did come to prevail in matters of immediate urgency — such as when the band was under attack — it was completely specific to and coterminous with the special conditions which called it into being in the first place. The *akicita*, for example, performed a nominal and transitory policing function during buffalo hunts and were invested with considerable powers of censure in ensuring that the hunt remained a coordinated effort and that no individual did anything which might jeopardize its success. Still, even in this temporary form, authority was not automatically vested in any one designated individual or group, but was deferred to those most adept at dealing with the particular concern at hand.⁹⁸ All of this is not to say that the Lakota were without identifiable leaders. Individual bands were nominally led by *itancan* — symbolic patriarchs who could attain their positions only by way of positive attributes of character, earning them the respect and admiration of the band. Though they held a place of honour in council, the *itancan* were not possessed of any independent decision-making authority which could be made binding upon their bands or any individual members thereof. To the extent, then, that they could ever presume to speak on behalf of their people, it would have to be on matters where collective decisions had already been reached in council. Moreover, the status of the *itancan*, contingent as it was on the reverence of their people, was subject to swift revocation should they attempt to exceed their authority or otherwise fail to adhere to high standards of character.⁹⁹

Perhaps more highly valued than any other virtue or disposition of character was the willingness on the part of individuals to place themselves in harm's way if necessary for the

⁹⁷Standing Bear (1978), *op. cit.*, p. 129.

⁹⁸See Catherine Price, "Lakotas and Euroamericans: Contrasted Concepts of 'Chieftainship' and Decision-Making Authority," *Ethnohistory*, 41:3 (Summer 1994).

⁹⁹William K. Powers, *Oglala Religion* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1975), pp. 202-3.

good of the band. Accordingly, Lakota men, in particular,¹⁰⁰ were importuned to comport themselves in the manner of the buffalo bull. It was the unswerving habit of these animals to turn and face any predator in defence of the rest of the herd — a people in the fullest sense, from the perspective of the Lakota. And this was regarded as the ideal behaviour of the individual Lakota vision-seeker: to make the transition to warrior when the need presented itself and to set the welfare of the whole of the people as first priority.¹⁰¹ These individuals, then, contrary to the orthodox accounts reviewed above, were vision-seekers first and warriors second; Standing Bear tells us that each, “[r]ather than putting all his ingenuity to work on the refining of warfare . . . was exerting his finer energies toward getting closer to the inner secrets of nature . . .”¹⁰² In this regard, John A. Grim emphasizes that “[t]he somatic deprivation during vision fasting . . . as well as the piercing during the Sun Dances, are spiritual acts which are directly tied to specific functional cosmologies.”¹⁰³ Moreover, such acts of self-sacrifice, which Keegan sees fit to reduce to individualized expressions of bravado, were undertaken in pursuit of a vision by way of which it would become possible to live up to the buffalo ideal.¹⁰⁴ As Rice puts it:

While conflict and pain must be known, the ability to endure them depends on remembering the buffalo virtues at the centre. The survival of warriors or visionaries in violent motion outside the camp circle depends on remembering one’s family at the centre. For young men this must become natural. At first one may be tempted to see only honors for oneself, to look outward at the enemy more than inward toward the circle, to forget everything but personal glory . . . In the sense that buffalo bulls put the safety of the herd before their own, the purpose of the sun dance, its attendant rites, and other ceremonies is to make people into buffalo in that they become animated by the buffalo spirit.¹⁰⁵

But if vision-seekers were to become warriors in moments of danger, it was necessary for them to undergo profound transformations of demeanor as befit the situation. And as Rice argues,

¹⁰⁰While it was generally the role of men to serve their people as warriors when the need arose, this was neither necessarily nor ubiquitously so.

¹⁰¹Rice, *op. cit.*, p. 126.

¹⁰²Standing Bear (1978), *op. cit.*, p. 170.

¹⁰³John A. Grim, “Native North American Worldviews and Ecology,” in Mary Evelyn Tucker and John A. Grim, eds., *Worldviews and Ecology: Religion, Philosophy, and the Environment* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1994), p. 47.

¹⁰⁴Rice, *op. cit.*, p. 127.

¹⁰⁵*Ibid.*, p. 132.

what may have been regarded as virtuous conduct when the band was in need of protection would have had destructive consequences if brought back within the camp circle.¹⁰⁶ A literal transformation into and back out of the role of the warrior was therefore requisite. Just as the buffalo bull generally behaves as any other member of the herd, exhibiting the qualities of bravery and measured truculence only in the event of danger and never inwardly toward the herd, the Lakota warrior was expected to step easily from one social context to the next. The blackening of the faces of returning warriors described by Black Elk, then, may be read as a symbolic expression of this imperative transformation.

In an interview conducted in 1931, Black Elk recounted the story of Crow Nose, a Lakota vision-seeker cum warrior who awoke to discover an enemy who had made his way into his band's camp. Crow Nose, acting like a buffalo bull, killed the intruder, whereupon he painted his own face black.¹⁰⁷ In another interview thirteen years later, Black Elk, discussing the conventions of a Lakota war party returning victorious from battle, explained that they would stop to blacken their faces with charcoal before re-entering their own camp.¹⁰⁸ But he also noted an exception to the practice:

There is a rule that if a war party goes out and one or two were killed, the members of the party do not blacken their faces. They can have a victory dance anyway, but when the people see the unblackened faces, they know someone was killed, and the mourners get ready. As a rule the mourners keep on mourning as long as there is no revenge. If there was someone in the tribe who had been mourning since the last war party when some relative was killed, they blacken their faces and rejoice when a war party comes back and has made a kill — revenge.¹⁰⁹

This would seem to lend support to the proposition that the practice of blackening faces was a symbolic expression of the transformation out of the state of being associated with the warrior in order to facilitate the transition of the individual from the outer sphere of warfare to the inner sphere of the camp circle. Given the existence of the revenge complex, it is interesting to note that when members of the war party were lost in battle the returning warriors did not stop to

¹⁰⁶*Ibid.*, p. 140.

¹⁰⁷DeMallie (1984), *op. cit.*, p. 167.

¹⁰⁸*Ibid.*, p. 369.

¹⁰⁹*Ibid.*, p. 370.

blacken their faces before returning home. In a culture wherein symbolic observances were treated with great importance, we may surmise that this was indicative of a sense that all obligations in the outer realm had not yet been resolved — i.e., slain comrades remained to be avenged — and that the responsibilities of the warriors, in their role as warriors, had, therefore, still to be fulfilled. This would also be consistent with the account of erstwhile mourners blackening their own faces upon the return of a war party which had killed an enemy: their revenge burden having thus been satisfied, the conditions were met for their own transformation of demeanor and accompanying transition back into a social context defined by a re-established atmosphere of peace.

Rethinking the Nature and Determinants of Lakota Warfare

Clearly, the orthodox anthropological and historiographical accounts of Lakota warfare, exemplified in the work of Ewers, Keegan, and McGinnis, are inconsistent with the realities of a traditional Lakota cosmology, worldview, and lifeways as outlined above. And yet, there is no denying that warfare was a part of the pre-reservation lived experience of the Plains peoples. Moreover, even if, as we have seen, the Euroamerican Leviathan instrumentally exacerbated tensions between traditional enemies, inflaming them into open warfare where this might not otherwise have resulted, the fact remains that these enmities existed to be exploited in the first place. Richard White stresses that Lakota groups almost never went to war against other Dakota peoples.¹¹⁰ Conversely, as Standing Bear makes clear, there most certainly were outgroups which were unambiguously identifiable to the Lakota as enduring enemies.¹¹¹ And, although there is no evidence to suggest that any Plains people ever undertook to decisively eradicate or even forcibly subdue an adversary population, we are nonetheless challenged to suggest a more satisfactory explanation for inter-group malevolence than the conventional claims that this or that group is the ‘hereditary enemy’ of some other. As White rightly objects, this simplistic construction is set forth as though “each group were doled out an allotted number of adversaries at creation with whom they battled mindlessly through eternity.”¹¹² What this underdeveloped

¹¹⁰Richard White, “The Winning of the West: The Expansion of the Western Sioux in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries,” *Journal of American History*, 65:2 (September 1978), p. 321.

¹¹¹Standing Bear (1978), *op. cit.*, p. 40.

¹¹²White, *op. cit.*, p. 342.

explanation lacks, then, is a viable hypothesis as to from whom or what such ‘inheritances’ may have been received.

As we have seen, the orthodox attribution of warfare on the Plains to a combination of the anarchic environment of a (presumed) Hobbesian state of nature with the (again, presumed) insufficiency of indigenous forms of sociopolitical organization as means by which to furnish political order, rests on highly contestable evidentiary terrain and, more problematically, is not reconcilable with a traditional Lakota worldview and lifeways. However, a plausible alternative account is proposed by Thomas Biolsi, who stresses the centrality of ecological factors as determinants of abiding animosities between certain Plains peoples. Biolsi, Like Ferguson and Blick, attributes Plains warfare, in part, to the disruptive effects of the arrival of Europeans in North America. But while he highlights the pernicious effects produced by mass migration in particular, he sees them as a necessary but not a sufficient cause of war. “The point is not,” according to Biolsi, “that these movements did not contribute to large-scale intertribal warfare, but that some additional factor or factors were involved.”¹¹³ And he finds these factors bound up in the imperatives of everyday survival for peoples who depended almost completely on a single resource: the buffalo.

Biolsi’s argument is not that buffalo were in undersupply and that this ultimately gave rise to lethal competition between contending groups. Were this to have been the case, we might expect that different bands among the Lakota — or among any other people of the northern Plains for that matter — would also have developed bitter rivalries. In any event, at least until the depletion and eventual extermination of the herds by Euroamerican hunters in the latter part of the nineteenth century, buffalo were plentiful enough on the Plains to provide in abundance for the needs of the various peoples who relied upon them for their survival. But, as White notes, buffalo migratory patterns were unpredictable so that, despite their great numbers, they were not always immediately available.¹¹⁴ A further complication, according to Biolsi, was that once a hunt was underway, the herd would stampede, the greater endurance of the buffalo allowing them eventually to outdistance the hunters’ horses. In addition, there was the danger that, even if it did not reduce the herds themselves, continuous hunting might have the effect of permanently driving them away to safer ranges. As Biolsi explains, this resulted in the development of a cooperative survival strategy wherein Lakota bands, though they spent the

¹¹³Thomas Biolsi, “Ecological and Cultural Factors in Plains Indian Warfare,” in R. Brian Ferguson, ed., *Warfare, Culture, and Environment* (Orlando: Academic Press, 1984), p. 145.

¹¹⁴White, *op. cit.*, p. 335.

winter months in separate encampments, would come together in the summer for the Sun Dance and to take part in large communal buffalo hunts. This allowed both for a limiting of the number of hunts as well as the organization of a coordinated descent upon the herd by all hunters so that each would have a chance to make a kill before the inevitable stampede began.¹¹⁵

All of this makes a good fit with Standing Bear's testimony to the effect that the main cause of warfare between the Lakota and their enemies was incursions by the latter into Lakota territory for the purpose of hunting buffalo.¹¹⁶ Inasmuch as encroachments of this kind could have jeopardized Lakota access to the buffalo, they were a potential threat to survival. Thus, this is also consistent with the cultural value placed on the virtues of the buffalo bull in its defence of the herd: warriors forcibly preventing the exploitation of Lakota hunting grounds by rival groups would have been perceived as adhering to this ideal. Indeed, according to Standing Bear, all other ascribed motives and incentives notwithstanding, the primary objective sought by Lakota warriors was ensuring that the buffalo were not driven away.¹¹⁷ Underscoring the seriousness which the Lakota attached to the imperative of restricting and regulating the number and conduct of buffalo hunts is the provisional policing function performed by the *akicita*. As Biolsi observes, the institution of the *akicita*, whose instructions could not be disobeyed by even the most influential *itancan*, "stands in marked contrast to the generally noncoercive nature of Plains political relations."¹¹⁸

All of this is suggestive of a plausible account of the origins of the seemingly intractable states of war which existed between certain Plains peoples and which gave rise to their characterization as 'hereditary enemies.' In Biolsi's view:

Although states of war had particular histories and developmental cycles, we can speculate about events initiating such relations. Migration was an historical factor that could initiate competition, warfare, and social disjunction because tribes with no previous contact with each other would have been unlikely to consolidate for hunting without a more or less purposeful alliance. Initial contact

¹¹⁵Biolsi, *op. cit.*, p. 151.

¹¹⁶Standing Bear (1975), *op. cit.*, p. 56; (1978), *op. cit.*, p. 40.

¹¹⁷*Ibid.* (1978), p. 170.

¹¹⁸Biolsi, *op. cit.*, p. 151.

would thus have been as separate camps, interfering with hunting and resulting in competition and warfare.¹¹⁹

And given that the advent of European colonialism in North America set off hitherto unprecedented mass migrations of indigenous populations, we may reasonably conclude that a great many ‘traditional’ enmities were forged not out of the aboriginal conditions of the peoples concerned, but as a function of the arrival of the Leviathan. Biolsi finds support for this view in the oral historiography of the Cheyenne who first came in contact with the Assiniboine in the manner described above at a time when the latter were already possessed of firearms. A battle ensued and the Cheyenne, never having encountered such weapons, suffered devastating losses. Biolsi notes that as a consequence, “[t]he Cheyenne and the Assiniboine became traditional enemies.”¹²⁰ We thus find in Biolsi’s argument an account of indigenous warfare on the Plains which, while it is consistent with a traditional Lakota worldview and lifeways as well as with the testimony from a variety of Native sources, also does not conflict with the archaeological evidence introduced by Bamforth even if it does stand in opposition to his interpretations of it.

Conclusion: Two Orthodoxies, One Perspective

Returning finally to a consideration of the different functions respectively fulfilled by the Euroamerican ticker-tape parades and the blackened faces of Lakota warriors, the most basic determinant of difference between the two can be located in the standards and processes by which each society is able to legitimize warfare. For each, this is, at some level, a function of establishing that its own conduct has been just. In this context, the post-Gulf ticker-tape parade in New York was just one brief scene in a much longer enactment of an allegoric tale which constructed the righteousness of American involvement in the war for consumption by those Americans who had no immediate stake in it themselves. In fact, as Sussman argues, the medium of festival serves the additional function of manufacturing a sense of shared experience to the extent that “[s]pectators display their belonging to society, to the nation, and to a version of history in elaborate costumes, accessories, and signs.”¹²¹ For the pre-reservation Lakota, however, such performances were wholly unnecessary: given the confluence of consensus-

¹¹⁹*Ibid.*, p. 154.

¹²⁰*Ibid.*, pp. 154-5.

¹²¹Sussman, *op. cit.*, p. 167.

oriented decision-making, a worldview conditioned by a cosmology positing transcendent unity and mandating respect and reciprocity, and the social imperative of behaving like the buffalo, the possibility of unjust war was effectively precluded. This is not to say that a victory in war would not have been a happy occasion worthy of celebration — the point is simply that any such observances as may have taken place were not performed in order to confer legitimation.

In the realm of political possibilities, the key essential difference between Lakota and Euroamerican societies is that, for the Lakota, domination and subordination for the purpose of maintaining political order takes place within the individual instead of being imposed from without by the Leviathan. It is for this reason that the *akicita* can rightly be regarded as anomalous. This is highlighted by the practice of blackening faces, implicit in which is the imperative that, upon returning to the camp circle, the virtues appropriate to the outer sphere of warfare be suppressed after the manner of the buffalo bull. That is to say, the role of the warrior must be shed in deference to that of the vision-seeker. To the extent that there was a domain in which order had to be maintained, then, it was the responsibility of each individual over themselves. But order on a level transcendent of individuals was not something to be sought after, constructed, or imposed by humans. On the contrary, order, by this view, was inherent in the sacred hoop of the cosmos, as reflected in the treatment of nature as the paragon to which human behaviour was to adjust rather than as an empty wild to be subdued and turned to instrumental human purposes. Thus, politics was less a pursuit dedicated to the attainment of the ‘good life’ than a reverential process designed to ensure that the band did nothing which might upset the balance of the natural order and thereby cause the already extant good life to slip away.

This clearly raises a challenge to the account of political order which undergirds the orthodox theoretical approaches to security studies. Interestingly, the orthodoxy of historical anthropology is similarly contested here. Noteworthy also is the fact that the conventional mainstream interpretations of indigenous warfare outlined herein are ontologically consistent with the orthodoxy of security studies and with the Realist tradition in International Relations more generally. Perhaps the most fundamental point of convergence between these two orthodoxies, one which is closely tied to the association of the state with political order, is in their shared commitment to the notion of a Hobbesian state of nature. Though not always explicitly articulated, it is found lurking somewhere beneath the surface in each of the several mainstream accounts considered above. And this points up and underscores the profound ethnocentrism of the theoretical mainstream of security studies inasmuch as it converges so neatly with that of historical anthropology. After all, here we find two groups of scholars whose only salient connection in the context of what is discussed here is a shared position in

sociopolitical time and space. Moreover, this disciplinary divide is itself underscored by the almost complete inattention paid by International Relations scholars to indigenous peoples.

Given the shared assumptions of these two bodies of scholars, it should be of more than passing interest here that the widely accepted accounts characterizing the aboriginal condition of Native peoples as mired in interminable warfare are not, as may have been imagined, founded on unambiguous evidence unmediated by subjective interpretation. Those working in the orthodox theoretical traditions of security studies would thus do well to consider the implications for their own field of the very weak foundation upon which the conventional conceptions of indigenous warfare have been constructed. True enough, there does seem to be some evidence of catastrophic, exterminative conflict between Plains peoples, as suggested by the archaeological record. But even leaving aside all questions relating to the manner in which this evidence has been interpreted, it is scant at most. And, in a field wherein many scholars have found it appropriate to describe the Cold War as a 'long peace,' its many attendant wars and the overriding nuclear threat notwithstanding, it would be strange indeed if it were now to be strenuously argued that the relics of a few archaeological excavations which may, at best, establish that, under extreme conditions, exterminative warfare occurred in highly localized fashion — once in every several centuries constitutes evidence that warfare was generally endemic.

Finally, it is worth noting that an important part of any colonial project is the remaking of the colonized to suit the colonizer's preferred — and often requisite — image of them. In this regard, the enduring image of the savage in the state of nature has considerable instrumental utility, not only in cases such as the ongoing plight of the Yanomami or in the exoneration of past conquests on the northern Plains, but in the continued colonial domination of conquered Native peoples throughout the Americas and elsewhere. To the extent that the mainstream theoretical approaches to security studies — and to International Relations more generally — exclude Native knowledges and lifeways in deference to the familiar Hobbesian impulse, they are inseparable from the more comprehensive processes of invalidation by which the colonial subjugation of Native people(s) is sustained. Though not directly culpable as purposeful agents, scholars working in this tradition, like their counterparts in the orthodoxy of historical anthropology, are nonetheless implicated in the ongoing project of advanced colonialism. Furthermore, if, as has been argued herein, the commitments by which the denial of Native knowledges is justified do not stand up to critical scrutiny, we are left with the unsatisfactory circumstance that these selfsame commitments, by orienting the interpretation of ambiguous evidence, are themselves the source of whatever putative proof can be invoked to support them. One may thus be forgiven for taking pause to wonder whether a frequent enough repetition of an

unsubstantiated idea can, in some instances, actually serve to make it true. By extension, the final paradox is that the invisibility of indigenous peoples from the perspective of adherents to the orthodoxy of security studies is in some measure reproduced by the failure of these same scholars to see them. Unlike that conveyed by the Lakota vision-seeker/warriors returning to their band with blackened faces, then, the message for security studies would seem to be that a matter of considerable importance urgently awaits resolution.

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