

# Ghost Dancing in the Salon

## The Red Indian as a Sign of White Identity

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In May 1885, the Apache chief Geronimo, along with three other chiefs and a large band of adherents, absconded from their reservation in Arizona and fled to the mountains of New Mexico.<sup>1</sup> The reservation life that had been imposed upon Indians by the United States government<sup>2</sup> was a life that endeavored to mold them into good citizens; they attended school and church, wore European style clothes, farmed rather than hunted, and gave up many Indian traditions. It was a life Geronimo and his followers were unwilling to endure, and after some years of uneasy equilibrium, the chief led a revolt that turned into the so-called 'Apache War.' Geronimo held out for over a year, and it was not until the summer of 1886 that the war ended, and the chief surrendered. Eighteen years later, in 1904, the old Apache appeared at the Louisiana Purchase Exposition, the great World's Fair held in St. Louis, one of the grandest of the many such expositions staged in the late nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. Here, he earned himself some money by charging fairgoers to have their photograph taken with him. There proved to be no shortage of whites eager to have a souvenir image of themselves posed with him; and others even bought the buttons off his coat as more tangible mementos of the old warrior.

Geronimo was only one of many Native Americans on display at the St. Louis fair. Visitors could see many sculptures of Indians, both large-scale works outside which were life-size or bigger, and smaller pieces inside the sculpture galleries. There were also living exhibits of different tribes and their artifacts, as well as anthropological and ethnographic exhibits, and, for the less high-minded, a Wild West Show. All these spectacles made the same point: that the

Indian was something of an anachronism in the midst of the progressive modern United States, and, because he was no more than a relic of a past age, he would soon vanish completely. The notion of the Indians as a vanishing race was one that had been central to white discussions of Native Americans since mid-century at least, and was replayed in guide books to the fair, or in works like Weinmann's *Destiny of the Red Man*, a large allegorical sculpture which depicted the Indian as helpless in the face of American progress. It seemed, then, that the process of civilizing the United States, the march of progress, had transformed the red man from savage to citizen, from native to American. And there was no more poignant symbol of this than Geronimo, no longer the Apache chief reclaiming the lands and customs of his forefathers, but a bewildered old man, unable to resist the pressures of modernity and consumer culture. It seems that in the transition from rebel to commodity, from resistance to white culture to complete absorption by it, the Indian's cultural death knell is loudly rung.

This history has been much discussed and the treatment of native peoples by the American government in the nineteenth century is well documented. No one need be in any doubt that the decline of the Indian was not a natural process but a question of a concerted effort by the United States government to exterminate and assimilate. Revisionist history, history from an Indian perspective, is now a well known and widely disseminated area of American Studies both in academic life and in more popular arenas. It is curious, then, as Cherokee artist and activist Jimmie Durham points out, that the American Indian as a colonial subject is invisible to much of the world, including America itself: "in the U.S. people phrase their questions about 'Indians' in the past tense."<sup>3</sup> It is as if the so-called vanishing race really has vanished. While the Indian is widely visible in popular culture, film, fiction, and in institutions like museums and heritage centers, the Indians themselves do not figure in vernacular or official views of America. The Indian is always a sign of a past, a culture that no longer exists. It is as if the process figured by Geronimo's absorption by commerce and commodification has succeeded completely

But this triumph of colonizer over colonized, of white American over red savage, can appear misleadingly simple. Approach-

ing this history, it is all too easy to see the Indian Wars and the rounding up of aboriginal peoples first onto reservations, and thence into ghettos, slums and unemployment, as an act of unqualified hostility and aggression. Well, of course in many respects this is the case, and it would be unwise to act as apologist for the government of the time and its policy. What needs to be added to the story, however, is that this hostility and repression is complemented by a rich cultural tradition of admiration for and interest in the Indian; a wish to hang on to the vanishing race and halt the process of extinction. Certainly, Indians are regularly represented as savages, and in discourses from the ethnographic to the comic, one of their principal defining features is violence. One would expect such representations; after all, they serve to validate Westward expansion and extermination. Similarly, the vanishing race paradigm, while often less pernicious, justifies a similar Social Darwinist view of the world – a view that had great force in late-nineteenth-century America – wherein the Indian is the victim of natural forces. But there is also a large set of ostensibly positive representations, images and accounts of the Indian which are full of admiration, even desire; representations, moreover, that seek to make the Indian endure both discursively and physically. Some of these representations are familiar – the Indian as noble savage, for example – but there are others. In many cases, particularly earlier in the century, the Indian is adopted as an alternative classical heritage; while Europe has Greece and Rome, so America has her native peoples. The famous academic painter Benjamin West insisted that the *Apollo Belvedere*, that sculptural icon of classical male beauty, resembled an Indian warrior; and James Fenimore Cooper famously describes Indian men in similar terms in his novels, as bronze sculpted antique heroes in the wild. This conception of the aboriginal even extends to scientific and pseudo scientific discourse. The Professor of Ethnology at Philadelphia's Academy of Natural Sciences, Daniel G. Brinton, lecturing in 1890 described the Algonkin tribe as "on a par with the famed heroes of antiquity."<sup>4</sup> Public sculpture earlier in the nineteenth century speaks the same language, fashioning the Indian as a neoclassical nude, imbued with the same qualities as classical heroes through the use of ennobling white marble, and the metaphysically reso-

nant forms of the ideal body. The Indian, then, is not represented only as a savage; in addition to widespread reports of Indian savagery and violence, there is a noble savage stereotype as well as definitions of the Indian centered around fortitude, endurance and stoicism, the classic tropes of manliness. What is at stake here is not simply a wish to endorse normative masculinity by an appeal to an ostensibly natural paradigm, but also the question of nationhood. The manly, brave Indian is often compared to other non-white peoples. Francis Drake, an acolyte of the great ethnographer of the Indians, Henry Schoolcraft, says of the Indian:

Here is no effeminate Asiatic, no fetich-worshipping African, but instead of these a man, erect and self-reliant.<sup>5</sup>

There is an attempt to fashion “our” aboriginal as better than those of other colonial powers. The sentimentality of these positive views persists even into the early part of the twentieth century. At St. Louis, for every image that to modern eyes seems negative, there is an image that attempts to speak for the Indian. Cyrus Dallin’s *Protest of the Sioux*, another large scale image of Indian warrior on horseback, even articulates Indian discontent and functions as a reminder of the treatment meted out to native peoples by the government.

What I want to propose here is that these apparently positive views are less to do with the issue of Indian identity and more a useful medium for the consolidation of whiteness. In the remarkable and volatile ethnic mix of late-nineteenth century America, the Indian is a figure around which a white nation can be constructed. The colonizer represents the colonized in such a way that admiration for the Indian is a displaced self-admiration or narcissism, an implicit consolidation of white power. Almost every aspect of the displays and exhibits at St. Louis, for instance, seemed to speak not of Indian life and customs and history, but of whiteness: white history, white progress, white geographical expansion, the white taming of the wild Indian. This maneuver is a common colonial strategy, not least because it is one that enables a colonized people’s cultural identity to be curtailed.

At the same time I want to propose a model of cultural identity that endeavors to explain how culture itself can complement the

work of guns in redefining the colonial subject and, more importantly, how the colonial subject can define himself. Although, as an art historian, I am largely concerned with visual analysis, how things look, here I shall concentrate on the structural issue. This is not to say that the specifics of iconography, style and so forth are not important; but rather to suggest that before one can provide a complete analysis of an art work, one needs a model of cultural identity into which the example of a certain cultural form can be inserted. I want to begin my argument by considering what the figure of the Indian might mean in the context of a white monument. I take the example of public sculpture, since it is a prestigious, highly visible and aesthetically elevated form, and a medium that became increasingly widespread in America through the second half of the nineteenth century, but similar arguments could be staged in relation to many other cultural forms, whether high or low.

Increasingly, public monuments are discussed by historians in terms of public memory; as material objects which materially manifest collective memories, be they national, ethnic, or civic. The memorial, particularly, is by its very nature designed as a permanent remembering of a person or an event; an object to ensure that something is not forgotten. In many analyses, memory is placed in opposition to history, as if these are two quite distinct modes of providing an account of the past. But to make this distinction between subjective memory and objective history is misleading, since memory is a metaphor. A monument is not an active form of remembering, an internal event 'recorded on nerve ends and privately screened' as Nabokov puts it. Nor is it involved in involuntary recall, as if it were a sculptural madeleine dipped in the tisane of an afternoon stroll. Public memory as exemplified by the monument is, instead, a form of history; but one that aspires to the status of memory, what one might call a mnemonic history. Public sculpture attempts to implicate the viewer in such a way that he makes a connection between the subject of the monument and himself. When the citizen sees a monument to, say, a national figure, he is positioned such that he can place himself in a genealogy and trace a connection from that figure to himself, as if he were remembering a part of his own history. In effect, the monument aims to provoke the fiction of a

psychological or even bodily continuity between the past event and the heart or mind of the viewer. The interested viewer is to internalize the history presented and understand that history as consonant or continuous with his own.

This involvement in a history, the internalization of historical examples as if they were memories, is central to any sense of identity. The obvious answer to the question "Who am I?" or "Who are we?" lies in a past that explains how one came to be at that point asking the question, or how one came to be part of a "we," part of a group in which one had a stake. A cultural identity must begin with a shared past, or, more exactly, the assumption of a shared past, a mutual self-positioning in a historical narrative. This is history from the inside – which is why I call it mnemonic; a history shaped and developed by affect.

In a sense, the public monument provides us with a very clear example of how cultural identity is constructed through pastness. The monument is a means of making concrete the sense of pastness that is so crucial to identity, be it national, ethnic, sectional, or whatever. The highly visible, large scale iconography of public sculpture can prescribe what the parameters of one's pastness are – what figures, what events, what places – or, alternatively, how that pastness is to be symbolized. To talk of cultural identity is, at the same time, to talk of ethnicity; the one seems, necessarily, to entail the other, even if it is a question of a group denying an ethnic status. It is material culture – monuments, images, artifacts, fictions, rituals – which expresses ethnic allegiance and it is material culture which forms ethnicity, presenting an image of what it is to belong to an ethnic group and what kinds of social practice are necessary to maintain that allegiance. However, this is not to say that material culture is synonymous with cultural identity. The former is concrete and can be defined ostensibly; all one needs to do is point to objects and events. The latter is more nebulous, and seems almost indefinable given the seemingly endless range of factors which might determine it. What I want to propose is a definition of cultural identity as that which emerges between affect and the material; it is the set of ideas and beliefs that transforms an emotional connection to a past, a custom, or a place into an item of material culture. In the terms laid out by Herbert J. Gans, in his important article on sym-

bolic ethnicity,<sup>6</sup> cultural identity emerges from the space between symbolic culture and practiced culture; not simply an attachment to the ways and customs of the old country, nor the concrete articulation of this, but the translation of one into the other. It is clear, I hope, how this relates to mnemonic history, since that history is the very narrative leading from symbolic to the practiced.

As one might expect given its closeness to cultural identity, ethnic identity also clearly works in this way; it, too, is a question of affect, and it too relies on a sense of pastness as a means of measuring one's right to inclusion. It is no surprise then that in nineteenth-century America and subsequently, ethnic communities used the public monument as a means of asserting their presence, of defining which histories answered the question "Who are we?" For ethnic identity, though, it is not only the temporal dimension of history that matters; equally, if not more important, is a sense of geography. The pastness that American ethnic groups rely on is focused on another country, the Old Country, very often a Utopian or fictional space that only roughly corresponds with an actual geographical site. Ethnic identity emerges in the historical and geographical distances between the old, the homeland, and the new, the nation; a sense of selfhood or of community is fostered by a notion of common memory. The same kind of mnemonic structure is deployed, where public memory is constructed as a history to be internalized.

In late-nineteenth-century America, as the number of public monuments grew at a phenomenal rate, the usefulness of sculpture for the creation of ethnic identity seemed problematic to some commentators. There was a palpable tension between ethnicity and nationality, the tension that lies in any term like Irish-American or Italian-American. It was as if the memory promoted by monuments to ethnic history was at odds with official memories of nationhood. In 1892, an editorial in the journal *The American Architect* complained about foreign subjects for public sculpture:

for a city, wealthy, energetic and assuming to be cultivated, to allow itself to be decorated with reproductions of foreign works of art of doubtful value, simply because some group of homesick and hardly naturalized aliens think well to offer them for her acceptance is one of the most curious evidences of the half-baked way in which a democracy attends to its public duties.<sup>7</sup>

Images of figures like Bolivar, Garibaldi, Walter Scott, Burns and Heine asserted the European over the American, the ethnic over the national, and kept communities bound too strongly to their countries of origin. In effect, immigrants were remembering the wrong men and the wrong ideals. But it is in order to resolve such tensions between the ethnic and the national that the figure of the Indian is so useful; it can be used to redirect mnemonic history along national lines, and to position the white ethnic as a white American.

The American art establishment of the mid-nineteenth-century was profoundly anxious about the possibility of a national sculpture. Artists, critics, and aestheticians all felt a need for America to assert its individuality in sculpture; and yet, America was completely dependent upon Europe for sculpture. Major monuments were by Italian and French sculptors; to be trained required a journey to Rome or Paris; style was dictated by European masters; even the finest materials came from across the Atlantic, and so, unsurprisingly, the most important American practitioners were in Europe, mainly in Rome, the center of the art world at the time. An American initiative was clearly needed. One of the most obvious ways of creating authentically American sculpture was by turning to national subject matter, and, rather than repeating the iconographical vocabulary of European traditions, to find themes that were peculiar to national life and history; and what better national theme than the figure of the Indian? American literature had already begun to explore this aboriginal heritage, and Westward expansion had amplified ethnographic interest in the peoples of the West – it seemed a foregone conclusion that the visual arts should follow.

In 1869, John Quincy Adams Ward's *Indian Hunter* was unveiled, the first piece of sculpture by an American to be placed in New York's Central Park Standing on a rectangular plinth, the statue depicted an Indian accompanied by his dog, stealthily moving forward, the man's body poised as if catching the scent of his prey. The figure was much admired and widely applauded; it seemed to have stamped American identity on large scale sculpture successfully. Not only had many smaller versions of the piece already been cast and circulated, but full-size versions were also erected in



Buffalo and Cooperstown, both in New York State. National history, a native figure, as well as what writer Hamlin Garland called the use of the Indian as “material”<sup>8</sup> all point to the fact that power inheres in this image; it implicitly endorses a racial hierarchy with white above Indian through its context and its very making. But the principal aim of the *Indian Hunter* was not to offer an observation on racial difference inside American borders. What the figure of the Indian does is to mark a clear difference between *white* identities on either side of the Atlantic. It is the difference between American and European that is the more important. Of course, the racial hierarchy is not to be overlooked, but the Indian is a sign of a white American identity; the image works to unite white ethnic groups as American in opposition not simply to the non-white Indian, but in opposition to non-American whiteness. In the material practice of New York, viewing sculpture in the park, whether as a connoisseur or as a bypasser strolling on a Sunday afternoon, allows a mnemonic structure identifying America then – the Indian hunt – and America now the statue in the park. This works for Anglo-Saxon, Jew, Pole or any other colonizing group, regardless of the deep fissures of class and ethnicity among whites.

What Ward is doing in this sculpture is redefining the cultural significance of native culture, giving it a new historical or mnemonic context, through its translation into the material culture of white power. Indian hunting grounds were often sacred spaces, and so the hunt, for many Indian peoples, was a culturally significant event that connected them to both the land and to a history; hunting grounds were sacred spaces. To use Gans’s terms again, the hunt was a form of practiced culture which expressed a less tangible symbolic culture; and thus the repetition of the hunt, the replaying of the ritual was something that marked the consolidation of a cultural identity. Here is a very straightforward example of how cultural identity is formed: between affect – the symbolic past of the hunting ground – and the material – the actual hunt – lies a history, a pseudo-memory of always having done this and, hence of belonging to a group that is defined across time and at any one moment through a shared process of hunting upon a certain site. In the sculpted hunter, however, the material culture is detached from Indian identity and inserted into a different dialectic: the material

practice of the hunt is transformed into the symbolic culture of a past America which is, in turn, manifested in the practiced culture of contemporary sculpture. And in the space between these two elements it is white cultural identity that emerges. Perhaps this is to say no more than that any cultural practice will have a different meaning for different groups, not least for insiders and outsiders. Yet one must not forget that imbalances of power enable those with cultural and political authority to determine meaning.

Of course, government policy worked to ensure that this positioning of the Indian in cultural representation was made concrete in terms of political representation, and that the Indian identity should be forged between an old, symbolic heritage and a modern culture of citizenship. By 1890, official policy was to remove as many material affiliations between Indians as possible. In his report of that year, the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, T.J. Morgan wrote:

It has become the settled policy of the Government to break up reservations, destroy tribal relations, settle Indians on their own homesteads, incorporate them into national life, and deal with them not as nations or tribes or bands, but as individual citizens. The American Indian is to become the Indian American.<sup>9</sup>

The effect of such a move was not simply to continue the process of taming and containment – at this point by imposing a particular productive and economic function onto the Indian – but to transform native peoples by redrawing the boundaries of cultural identity; to ensure that their past, their culture functioned, like the *Indian Hunter*, as a sign of national identity, rather than of ethnic singularity. Indian cultural identity was no longer consolidated between mythical past and, say, the modern hunt, but between the hunt in the past and a life as an American farmer in the present. In the same report Morgan deplores the employment of Indians in the popular Wild West shows that toured in America and Europe,<sup>10</sup> and, again, one wonders whether his disgust is founded less on his ostensible worries about the erotic and demoralizing nature of the spectacle, and more on the fact that even in this commodified form, the Indian's practiced culture stands in the same relation to his symbolic culture, thus allowing the same kind of identity to be endorsed. If this were the case, it was an

unfounded fear since, as subsequent history has shown, the commodification of a people's culture is the surest way to nullify its political force.

Works like the *Indian Hunter* clearly have an implicit stake in the idea of the vanishing race. In order to recontextualise Indian culture, within white mnemonics, all native material culture has to be consigned to a symbolic past, a mythical America that no longer exists. Recent debates about Indian heritage centers often point out how Indian heritage is seen as a historical, a symbolic formation that lies outside memory. This would suggest that the process is still continuing, even in attempts to preserve Indian material culture. One of the most brilliant and striking critiques of this process occurred when Indian artist James Luna created an installation piece in California's Museum of Man in 1986 called *The Artifact Piece*. Central to the installation was Luna himself, lying in a case, labeled like a museum exhibit, unmoving. It was as if his very body or person, as an Indian, was an incomplete sign that required a position in a museum in order to signify – but, inevitably, signifying whiteness, the white institution, the white triumph over the Indian.

By now, I think we can see another crucial polarity which has a stake in cultural identity, namely that between the cultural and the political. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak makes the important point that if the colonial subject is to be critiqued, the historian has to distinguish between and make explicit two distinct kinds of representation.<sup>11</sup> Spivak uses the German words *Vertretung*, meaning substitution or political representation (in the sense that someone might be represented by an MP), and *Darstellung*, representation in the sense of portrayal or depiction. Discussing this distinction in an interview, Spivak takes an etymological excursus to explain it.<sup>12</sup> *Vertretung* she explains is derived from the verb *treten*, to tread, and thus might be understood as treading in someone's steps, wearing someone's shoes. *Darstellung*, representation in the sense an art historian would understand it, is a process of *dar zu stellen*, "to place there." However, while one must be aware of separate political and cultural representations, one must also account for their relationship in the fact that the former necessitates the latter. In order to tread in someone's steps, in order to *vertreten*, the subject has to be

placed there first, *dargestellt*. That is, in order to be represented politically the subject has to be defined or consolidated: how else would one know whose shoes to fill? Moreover, Spivak demands that theory assess the ideological ramifications of this:

We must note how the staging of the world in representation – its scene of writing, its *Darstellung* – dissimulates the choice of and need for ... proxies, agents of power – *Vertretung*.<sup>13</sup>

This polarity is exactly what Luna's performance deals with; that the Indian subject is *dargestellt* in such a way that the Indian voice cannot be heard in the powerful silent image of the vanished race. Of course, there is no voice that can escape history, there can be no positioning that evades being positioned; but what if that voice only functions in the past tense, what if that positioning is one that silences the subject, like Luna, reduced to no more than a museum piece? Just as a sense of cultural identity requires not only affect but a means of making that affect concrete within a history that includes the self, so it needs a depiction, a *Darstellung*, that can provide adequate grounds for a political representation or voice for that self.

What, though, of Indian resistance? Did that not insist on a presentness, on a practiced culture, on Indian memory? The dominant culture did its best to suppress any kind of uprising and, as with Geronimo's revolt in the 1880s, the government moved quickly to put down any insurrection, any attempt to revive Indian life outside the reservation and outside the limits imposed by official agencies. As one might expect, native peoples refused to give up their culture and continued to resist the imposition of our American identity. Despite this retreat, they could not escape the logic of white representation.

Another Indian on display at the St. Louis Fair was a smaller piece in the sculpture galleries: Paul Wayland Bartlett's *Ghost Dancer*. This is a bronzer about 170 centimeters high, made around 1889, and is a figure of an Indian dancing. Bartlett represents the Indian as grotesque, with an ugly face grimacing, the body sinewy and lean, indecorous in terms of its anatomy, its nakedness and its wild movements, limbs flailing in all directions. The pose in part is a testament to Bartlett's skill – he is able to balance a figure

standing on only one leg – but there is also an implicit comparison with more conventional sculpted bodies. While the ideal nude relies on a perfectly proportioned body, a sense of repose, and utter decency, where nudity is a sign of metaphysical status, of the transcendence of the corporeal, Bartlett's Indian dancer is undoubtedly naked. His undress is a sign of a primitive, uncivilized nature. The figure was first shown as a plaster model in the Paris Salon of 1889. Again, it was an image that asserted the American identity of the sculptor and the successful incursion of Transatlantic art into the hallowed halls of the great academic tradition. As with Ward's *Indian Hunter*, the figure signals the sculptor's nationality and his position in both a national school (the subject) and the great tradition (a modern style derived from sculptors like Fremiet and Rodin, and participation in the Salon). The statue is then a kind of hinge, both connecting and separating Bartlett from Paris, and connoting a specific white ethnicity. Indian practiced culture is misrepresented as America's symbolic culture as a pastness that finds its modern expression in high art. Just as Geronimo was absorbed by the Fair, so this generic figure's meaning is dependent upon the great institutions of white culture.

But the *Ghost Dancer* and its contextual history provide an interesting example of the way in which white representation can continually absorb Indian resistance; and this absorption points to a more profound issue of how the efficacy of resistance can depend upon the formation and deformation of cultural identity. In the Paris Salon the piece was simply titled *Indian Dancer*. It was a generic figure, not identifiable as any particular tribe or practice, and yet standing for all of them. The dance has a long tradition as a means of stereotyping the Indian; from the narrator of Tennyson's *Maud* to television cartoons, simple but wild dancing has, with the possible exception of scalping, featured as the Indian cultural practice par excellence. Bartlett's figure keys into this tradition; it is a trope that audiences both sides of the Atlantic would recognize. The following year, 1890, saw one of the most significant moments in Indian history. A Paiute named Wovoka reported a series of revelatory dreams, in which the Great Spirit had informed him that the old days could be returned if Indians performed a dance – the Ghost Dance. The cult soon spread from

tribe to tribe, including the Sioux, who found in the dance even greater possibilities of revival. While Wovoka had spoken of the return of the slaughtered buffalo and hunting grounds, the Sioux conceived of the Ghost Dance as a means to a precolonial Utopia where the white man was gone. Such was the zeal of the Sioux in practicing this religion, and such was their determination to dance away the white man, that the government became worried and attempted to quell the dance. This led to outright war – the Sioux believed that by wearing magic shirts attached to the cult of the dance they would become invulnerable to bullets – and the outcome of the entire episode was the infamous and tragic massacre at Wounded Knee in 1890.

When Bartlett's figure was reexhibited at the Chicago World's fair of 1893, the famous and appropriately named White City, the title had been changed to *Ghost Dancer*. This was now no longer an image of a generic dance, but of a specific one; it enacted an ethnographic fiction, one that justified the dancing stereotype, and again transformed Indian's practiced culture into the symbolic culture of America and white progress. The fact that Indian ethnic identity is shaped in representation in ways which reflect or endorse national policy may seem unremarkable; one would, after all, expect a colonial power to position its subjects in ways which would validate its actions, and which would predetermine the limits of their political participation. What is particularly interesting about the example of the Ghost Dance, however, is the way this process is replicated in the material culture of the Indians themselves. The Ghost Dance Religion is significant in having a Messianic basis. Visions and prophecies, as in most cultures, had long been features of Indian practice, but Wovoka's father, Tavibo, whose own visions acted as a precursor of his son's and a prototype for the Ghost Dance cult, reported a revelation that the world would be swallowed up and three days later Indians would be resurrected corporeally. The analogy with Christian belief is unmistakable; Indian prophecy had clearly been influenced by the attempts of whites to convert Indians to Christianity. Similar analogies can be found with other religious uprisings, where narratives of crucifixion, death and resurrection structure beliefs.<sup>14</sup> Although one might see this as a case of the colonized attempting

to turn the tools of their subjection into tools of rebellion, it might also be interpreted as a case of self-fashioning, of finding a cultural identity to connect affect (the past) with culture (the present), as inevitably rerouted via the white economy. It is clear that a straightforward ethnic revival is not possible; Indian culture is changed by the history of colonization, and a revolt that merely attempts to block out that history simply endorses the notion of a vanishing race and provides a symbolic Indian past as the prehistory of a white present

While both these statues function as signs of whiteness, as building blocks in the construction of a national white identity, there is, of course, a significant difference in that Bartlett's dancer is a negative representation, one that aims to present the Indian as undesirable, barely human, while Ward's hunter is an attempt to present the Indian as beautiful if doomed. Whilst one should by no means overlook this difference, it is perhaps less significant than it seems at first. Much work has been done which seeks to identify those images which denigrate the Indian, which seem to be analogous to racist policy, and those which ennoble and present – and, indeed, much recent debate about race and representation in everything from television to school text books, seems to operate according to this paradigm of racist and anti-racist representation. However, what is more important is where the Indian is positioned, who is defining the Indian, and what possibilities there are for the Indian to challenge this definition. What political concept of the Indian emerges from the field of representation? Again, one cannot fail to see how the statue of the dancer relates to the question of the *political* representation of the Indian, the constitution of the Indian subject in government policy. The Ghost Dance did not critique white imperialism; and that is evident in its usefulness as an image of whiteness in Bartlett's sculpture. Instead, it merely tries to evade the problem of being colonial subjects, by enacting a spooling back of time to a utopian past. As Spivak points out, "a nostalgia for lost origins is detrimental to the exploration of social realities within the critique of imperialism,"<sup>15</sup> and it is such a nostalgia that characterizes the Ghost Dance. The Ghost Dance does little to challenge the idea of a vanishing race; indeed, it endorses the idea in its implicit notion that redemption

can only be gained through a reversal of history. The trajectory of mnemonic history from affect to the present is rewound as material culture becomes an attempt to recreate the illusory moment that embodies symbolic culture. And because there is no engagement with the material circumstance of colonialism, no voice emerges to challenge the *Darstellung* of white culture. The shoes of the ghost dancers do not move forward to a political status. They do not provide footprints in which others may tread. They merely perform the steps prescribed by the colonizer; they merely function as part of the white's symbolic culture.

This is my fundamental point: that, because cultural identity emerges in the space between affect and material culture, to appropriate the latter – to turn Indian culture into the stuff of museums, heritage centers – is to radically circumscribe the possibility of a cultural identity that is more than a reminder of an historical episode. It is essential to read representations of the Indian against the background of the Indian Wars, massacres, assimilation, the reservations; and I would not wish to suggest that these are not the crucial episodes in Indian history and the crucial means by which whites silenced them. But we must also pay account to the absorption of the Indians and their culture by white colonial history, and understand how Indian cultural identity has been damaged by this. Ethnic revival, ethnic resistance, and the search for a cultural identity is bounded by the Salon, the park, the fair, as well as the photograph, the reservation and so on. And today, while Indian practiced culture becomes the symbolic culture of a modern America, enshrined in visitors' centers, historical monuments and so on, the Indians themselves all too often have a new practiced culture of alcohol, poverty and unemployment. Moreover, that symbolic culture is so profoundly commodified, just like Geronimo, one wonders if it can ever become a practiced culture again in the same way – the performance of a ritual or use of an artifact can perhaps only be to imitate, position oneself like a ghost dancer; to attempt to reverse history, to make the present a memory of the past.

This may seem to be a dispiriting and negative conclusion, but it need not be. At first sight, the gesture of an artist like James Luna may seem only to sum up the damage done by other repre-



sentations like the *Indian Hunter*, the *Ghost Dancer*, and the numerous other images that littered the exhibition grounds of St. Louis, but in doing this it simultaneously offers a sense of critique absent in more naive ethnic revivals. History cannot be undone, and it would be all too easy to become enmeshed in a Utopian dream of an “authentic” culture, a nostalgia for what never existed. But by paying attention to history, by understanding the relationship of past and present, of affect and culture, of *Vertretung* and *Darstellung*, it may be possible to move to a new dialectic where white material culture can become the symbolic culture of the Indian, and in a new self-definition, a new material culture, a new cultural identity can emerge. Cultural identities change through time, and recognition of that change must involve the development of new material cultures to bear a more pertinent and critical relationship to a feeling for the past and to refigure collective mnemonic histories. This is already evident in Indian voices that do not speak from inside white representation, demanding that the Indian become a sign of him- or herself; the struggle now is for a political representation, a *Vertretung* of this voice. These are the shoes to fill, the steps to take, rather than those of the dancers, or of Geronimo, shuffling around the St. Louis fair, his footprints only remembered in photographic souvenirs.

## Notes

1. Some of the material in this article is taken from “‘To a Man, a Race, and a Cause: St. Gaudens and the Shaw Memorial,’” the Tomas Harris Lectures 1996, which I delivered at University College, London, in March of that year. I would like to take this opportunity to extend my profound thanks to Professor David Bindman and the History of Art Department at University College for inviting me to speak.
2. One might object to the term ‘Indian’ on the grounds that it is racist; the more widely accepted, and more acceptable term, seems to be ‘Native American.’ However, I wonder if the latter really is an advance. The aboriginal peoples of North America only become Native Americans after a colonial power has named that land mass ‘America’ – and hence ‘Native American’ is complicit with the colonial appropriation of the country just as ‘Indian’ is. Moreover, the use of any homogenizing term, rather than the names of individual peo-

ples, like Zuni or Cherokee, is a problematic gesture. The solution would have to be something unusably cumbersome like 'peoples of the geographical land mass that subsequently came to be America'! I therefore use Indian for two reasons: firstly, that the very difficulty of finding an acceptable term is a reminder of their status as a subject people of a colonial power, and, second, because Indian signifies the construction of the aboriginal in white discourse and the white imagination, and my topic here is actually the white representation of a native people.

3. J. Durham, "Cowboys and....," *Third Text*, 12, Autumn, 1990, p. 7.
4. D. G. Brinton, *Races and Peoples: Lectures on the Science of Ethnography*, New York, 1890, p. 253.
5. F. S. Drake (ed.), *The Indian Tribes of the United States*, 2 Vols., Philadelphia, 1891, Vol 1., p. 11.
6. H. J. Gans, "Symbolic Ethnicity: the Future of Ethnic Groups and Cultures in America," *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 2:1, 1979.
7. *The American Architect and Building News*, Vol. 36, No. 856, 21 May 1892, p. 122.
8. H. Garland, "The Red Man as Material," *Booklover's Magazine*, August 1903, p. 196.
9. Quoted in W. E. Washburn, *The American Indian and the United States: A Documentary History*, 4 Vols., New York, 1973, Vol. 1, p. 435.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 458.
11. G. Chakravorty Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?" in Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg (eds.), *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, Basingstoke, 1988, pp. 275-6.
12. Spivak, "Practical Politics of the Open End" in Sarah Harasym (ed.), *The Post-Colonial Subject*, London and New York, 1990, p. 108.
13. Spivak (note 11 above), p. 279.
14. See for example those cited in the Indian Commissioner's Report for 1891, reprinted in Washburn (note 9 above), pp. 560-564.
15. Spivak (note 11 above), p. 291.