Ways of Appropriating: Culture as Resource and Standing Reserve

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Martin Heidegger's term *Ereignis* is usually (and too generally) translated into English as "appropriation".[1] While it may be unfortunate, this somewhat liberal translation (and the interpretations it has spawned) can be used to apply a misunderstanding creatively. "Appropriation" in Aotearoa means something different from what it would have meant in Heidegger's own cultural context. To explore the concept of *Ereignis* against the backdrop of its English translation into "appropriation" casts a new light on cultural relationships, art, and technology. This exploration will generate insights regarding autonomy and reciprocity, distance and involvement, control and letting-be, appropriation and care. I shall bring together theoretical and practical perspectives to look at mediatised art and design within the parameters of concepts indebted to Heidegger.

Appropriation and event

The German word *Ereignis* (event) commonly still has connotations of unexpected happenings due to uncontrollable forces, chance, occasions that reveal something new. Increasingly, however, many in 'the West' think of events as planned occasions ('event management' has become a flourishing branch of the culture and entertainment industries). One such event took place on July 30, 2002. On this day, Sony Computer Entertainment in California announced the release of a new *Play Station* game, *The Mark of Kri*. Despite a considerable degree of event management, the announcement led to unexpected occurrences. Within a year, the game generated discussion that well illustrates a range of different ways of appropriating and of using culture as a resource.

In an interview released on July 18, 2002, the Lead Designer of the game, Jeff Merghart said the development team, in order to achieve a visual design as *unique* as the "fighting mechanics" of the game, had chosen as its setting "worlds and characters" that are "largely Polynesian influenced with generous doses of Asian, Native American and old world Europe thrown in. There are 'looks' that seem familiar but we purposely try to keep it as *ethnically neutral* [my emphasis] as possible." However, according to promotional material, Rau, the main character "in an ancient Mäori-inspired world", uses (amongst other weapons) "the authentic and sacred Taiaha (spear) from New Zealand", wears a "Moko" on his chin, is covered in "Mäori-esque tattoos", and runs around "like a Polynesian Conan smacking people with sharpened bits of metal".[2] So much for ethnic neutrality.

app.pro.pri.ate *vt* **-at.ed**; **-at.ing** [ME, fr. LL *appropriatus*, pp. of *appropriare*, fr. L *ad-* + *proprius* own] (15c) **1:** to take exclusive possession of: annex <no one should ~ a common benefit> **2:** to set apart for or assign to a particular purpose or use… **3:** to take or make sue of without authority or right…
app.pro.pri.ate *adj* (15c): especially suitable or compatible: fitting **syn** see fit.
(*Merriam-Webster's Collegiate® Dictionary*. Tenth Edition, 1994, 1998).)

In legal terms, it is a matter of argument as to how exclusively the developers, or Sony, have (in the sense of the definition of "appropriate", see left), taken possession of a "common benefit". It is likely that they did *de facto*, given their privileged access to economic and strategic resources.

That they have taken or used it "without authority or right" is a claim put forward by Kingi Gilbert. In protesting against this form of appropriation, Gilbert, involved in the video game industry himself, wrote in a March 2003 letter to Sony about a different form of appropriation, which is about slowly acquiring something that one is given in order to make it one's own

and take it into one's care.[3] The way the Taiaha is employed in the game, for example, is "grievous insult" to Mäori who have learnt to use it "for many years under strict protocols and tradition". To use the Taiaha, and other elements of Mäori culture, requires at least "literacy and sophistication of learning in the Mäori world". Gilbert and other participants in a discussion forum at Aotearoa Café do not de-contextualise and de-world Taiaha, Moko, Te Reo, and Mätauranga Mäori but bear in mind their interconnectedness with people, practices and histories.

Given these interconnections, *The Mark of Kri* has negative repercussions for those portrayed there as violent and exotic. Yet it is their culture that was used as resource for something that has now entered as a commodity into arbitrary systems of exchange and profit.

Starting from this event, I want to discuss three forms of appropriation which each have different implications and consequences.

1. Appropriation as in Heidegger's *Ereignis*, which draws us into its realm.[4] If we allow the *Ereignis* to affect us, we experience a new and differently structured field of meanings (Sheehan, 2001: 250). We see ourselves as part of the world, within which we live our finite lives, preceding and outlasting us. The given is what we act out of and into.
2. Appropriation as a *seizure*, where the will for exclusive possession and control dominates. Whatever is seized in this way as a commodity "has to go through the eye of the needle of money" ("Heidegger's Analysis of Production in Being and Time", Eldred, 2000). For that, it has to be torn out of its context and turned into an exchangeable item. Heidegger explores this seizure in the mode of *Gestell* – where everything is turned into *Bestand*: a standing-reserve or "nothing but" a resource.
3. Appropriation as *Aneignung*, a common term in German, which can involve an effort to understand and to win what is either given, or what needs to be struggled for. It is an intricate process through which individuals and groups elaborate their relationships with the world. Through it, the thrill of "unarticulated moments merely lived through (*Erlebnis*)" (McCole, 1993: 2) is integrated into *Erfahrung*, a lasting fusion of experiences. *Aneignung* establishes a connection between the individual, local worlds, and history.

This conglomerate of different aspects of appropriation/*Aneignung* and *Ereignis*/event is certainly somewhat eclectic and risky. Explorative paths can always turn out to be wrong tracks but that, too, is part of learning to think.[5] Since appropriation in the form of *Gestell* is a threat to both Western and non-Western cultures, and a threat that many people on both sides of this abstract divide feel acutely in their lives today, the risk is worth taking. It may open up, with the help of some Heideggerian and some not so Heideggerian concepts, a space for things to be seen and related to in a different way.

1: Appropriation as *Zueignung* (Being given – giving)

In our everyday, many of us take for granted that *our* world is *the* world. We assume that it is seen and known by others in the same way. This background against which we perceive, communicate, and act Heidegger calls a horizon of disclosure (1944/45: 44ff). How inclusive is such a horizon, and how many people in different spaces and at different times can share it?

Within a horizon of disclosure, where interpretation and interaction happen on the ground of shared understandings, communication is usually smooth. However, each horizon of disclosure conceals other horizons: when we look at a matter from a particular perspective or interest, we will at that moment be unable to see other aspects of the same. Thus people, when they talk about the same video game, may find their horizons are so far apart that they do not even understand what the other is talking about. While the use of the Taiaha appears, for the designers of *The Mark of Kri*, as in the same class as "smacking people with sharpened bits of metal", it is, for Gilbert, part of living and sustained learning in "the Mäori world", involving "protocols and tradition".

The irony in this case is that Gilbert lives within two horizons of disclosure: the concept of "fighting mechanics" in video games, and the general mindset of the industry, will be as familiar to him as it is to the Sony team. Thus he took care in his letter to Sony to explain what is upsetting for him, and why.

> Our family, over generations, has been educating people/organisations about our particular Mäori tribal traditions [and] customs … We are also involved in National Performing Arts competitions that promote and uphold Mäori culture within the New Zealand community … It is with this experience I voice my concerns to you. ... I feel wholeheartedly that your character representation and gameplay does not respect Mäori heritage. I primarily find it offensive that a person of non-Mäori descent would use these symbols for commercial reasons and not invest time and effort back into the Mäori community. ... You have not thought about the wider implications of your actions to Mäori people or indeed any other indigenous people. ... Also, within the game itself, the usage of the Taiaha is offensive. The animations clearly show ignorance of its proper use. It is a grievous insult to me and other Mäori who have been learning Taiaha for many years under strict protocols and tradition. Any Mäori theme should only be applied to games when we have achieved the required literacy and sophistication of learning in the Mäori world (Gilbert, letter to Sony, March 2003).[6]

From the perspective of his horizon, however, Merghart in interview said that *The Mark of Kri* was "influenced by numerous artists, styles and cultures" and that in their effort "to represent a world with its own cultural/ethnic look and style" the team did not intend to "offend any cultures by misrepresenting them". Further:

> There are many variations of Polynesian, Celtic, Greek, etc. designs and patterns throughout the game, but we tried to not replicate anything specific. It was hard because everyone liked the Polynesian flavor that the game was taking on so we tried to make things with a more contemporary or inventive Polynesian twist where we could. ... Rau's isn't Mäori and he's not from or in New Zealand, so we kind of keep our ass covered that way. We apologize for any coincidences (*Interview with Jeff Merghart*, 2002).

What US game designers may call "influenced" would be dubbed "plagiarised" by an increasing number of Mäori. Theirs is a tradition where things are specifically interrelated, in a world that has been handed down into their care. As the Wai262 claimants articulate on their website in 2002:

> The dominant feature of the Mäori worldview is the interdependence and relatedness of all living things based in the belief that we all share a common whakapapa or genealogy. These beliefs are reflected in practices and attitudes of respect for Mauri (life force of all living things). The use of natural resources and human interaction with their natural world are regulated and controlled by practices and laws that [are] govern[ed by] this worldview. …
>
> Because of these genealogical links between Mäori and their universe, each successive generation assumes obligations of kaitiakitanga (guardianship) over the natural and spiritual world. These are taonga (treasures) that are to be passed onto future generations for their sustenance.[7]

We can change horizons of disclosure, sometimes with shock or wonder, when entering or leaving *local* worlds. Some horizons though, like the one described by the Wai262 claimants, are not at all conditional – on the contrary: they condition us. Heidegger identified them with those into which we are thrown by birth. Even if we later move into other horizons, they constitute us initially as human beings.[8] Before we can appropriate (*aneignen*) we have already been appropriated (*zugeeignet*) to Being.[9] Despite what some members of some cultures may believe about their position in the world, human beings and human cultures are "receptive rather than creative with respect to the modes of presence they inhabit" (Young, 2002: 23).

In Heidegger's thinking, the experience of partaking in the disclosure of world is continuously invoked in differences that are dynamic. Thus, the *Ereignis* contains a reciprocal movement of "thrownness" and "projection", of "give-and-take", and "belonging-and-needing" (Sheehan, 2000, 2001).[10] In this, his is not dissimilar to a Mäori worldview with its emphasis on kaitiakitanga – receiving and active caring for what has been given, and the responsibility of handing it on to the next generation. Whether or not we know it, and whether or not we accept it, we are part of a reciprocity that alone enables us to live out of the given world into a new. It is in this sense that *Ereignis* can bring us into our own, through the receptiveness to the "other" of b/Being: what is revealed in *Ereignis* must not

immediately be objectified or reified, but taken in the fullness of its own (Pöggeler, 1992: 24). Relinquishing calculation and control, Heidegger wants us to see that our world is co-existent with something that is largely unknown by us. It is not under our control and only partially affected by our acts. Something we do not create, but that creates us.

2: Appropriation as seizure (taking and making)

From an historical perspective, the relationship between what *is given* and what we project is 'tradition'. It does not simply persist out of inertia; only when it is "affirmed, embraced, cultivated" in combination with the new, and from the position of the present, is it capable of creating new insights (Gadamer, 1989: 281f).

In Gadamer's analysis, the given is engaged, in the serene light of an appropriation through dialogue and understanding. But what if traditions clash? As part of *Gestell, The Mark of Kri* stands in a tradition of (colonial) exploitation. Since the Renaissance, "exotic" artefacts have been used by designers to get away "from the controlling devices of classical design … This type of exoticism was (and is) often less a matter of individual motifs than of a total impression of … form and colour" (Snodin and Howard, 1996: 182). Apply this observation to what Merghart (2002) describes as an effort to "keep [their] ass covered" by not being specific in their replications. Is the exoticism of a "Polynesian flavor" not still intended?

In a review, Jeff Haynes writes that "the evil spell and primitive symbols are all clearly Mäori-influenced". While in many respects critical of the game's technical performance, he concludes:

> However, I will definitely say this for *Mark of Kri*: The Mäori-influenced plot and design was a stroke of pure genius. Not only does it provide a sense of cultural identity, but also opens gamers and developers to new worlds, story possibilities, and heroes. Bravo to SCEA San Diego for taking up the cultural diversity banner in often-homogenous game worlds (Haynes, 2002).

But who is provided with whose "sense of cultural identity", in which "worlds", and what is this identity about?[11] What Haynes regards as "taking up the cultural diversity banner" is from another perspective really the seizure of precisely those peoples' ideas, stories, and images that are a minority amongst the audience and who have not been party to the program's development. It is therefore an offensive misappropriation to Gilbert. Thus, some horizons of disclosure involved in the making and reception of *The Mark of Kri* seem irreconcilable, and they are furthermore associated with different positions of power.[12]

Heidegger repeatedly states that it is in *Ereignis* that human beings and b/Being reach each other in their fundamental nature.[13] Western metaphysical thinking, however, has produced the mode of *Gestell* (Heidegger, 1957: 30) – as "the photographic negative of the *Ereignis*".[14] In this mode, "the real reveals itself as *Bestand* exclusively: the world becomes nothing but a standing-reserve or source for raw materials" (Heidegger, 1977: 24).[15] This horizon of disclosure "drives out every other possibility of revealing" (Heidegger, 1977: 27). Respect and loving care for things make place for rigorous ordering, or for arbitrary and eventually ultimate, disposal. Being, life, and world lose "all that is exalted and holy, the mysteriousness of … distance" (26). Forms that previously revealed things as more than resource vanish: a tree now shows up as "mere" timber, a Taiaha as a "prop" in a game. Everything is now "unlocked" and "transformed" (Heidegger, 1977: 16), "extracted and stored" (14), "distributed" and "switched about ever anew" (16). The original structure of things is destroyed. To fit them into systems of calculation and exchange they are homogenised and standardised. All revealing is now marked by the "regulating and securing of *Bestand*" (27). Things (and people) lose their autonomy. What is intangible and ineffable about them vanishes from perception. While humans may believe that it is they who autonomously issue this challenge, they have also turned into *Bestand*, a second order resource (27).

It follows that *Gestell* not only dominates technology but underlies the whole of the modern worldview, penetrating all areas of life and being. Calculation and mechanical speed, a trend towards the gigantic, and the tendency to homogenise each and every mood and feeling, in turn lead to a craving for shallow sentimentality and the titillating thrill of episodes (Heidegger, 1989: 120-124). As an example of this condition, *The Mark of Kri* panders simultaneously to violence and exoticism. Intertwining art and technology, it employs a "competitive strategy as well as straight brutality with beautifully animated kills and an engaging story line, all in a richly painted world" (Mueller in *Interview: Mark of Kri Sharpens Axe*, 2002).[16]

The Taiaha, "the most unusual of Rau's tools" becomes a link between ethnicity and violence. It is "a weapon from New Zealand, which has a spearing tip at one end and a blunt-flat stretch at the other end. The blunt end is used for breaking bones and cracking skulls." Depending on one's position and the world one lives in, one starts to feel sick or aroused. But there is more:

> The juxtaposition of this beautiful look with brutal violence is one people will be unfamiliar with. With most developers going for realism, we thought we would do something different. We wanted to bring art to life. We wanted to tell a story, we wanted combat, and we wanted it to actually *look* like someone was hit with an axe when they were hit with an axe (Mueller in *Interview: Mark of Kri Sharpens Axe*, 2002).

Beauty and myths are drawn in to clench the deal. With breathtaking frankness, Mueller declares that the game is "no cutesy fairy tale: I don't think people are skinned alive in cutesy fairy tales". But a tale it is – and one, as a reviewer remarks, "based on the Mäori legends and traditions".[17] In passing, Mueller gestures towards spirituality by mentioning the figure of the bird Kuzo who "is Rau's spirit guide". Then, in the same sentence, he turns him into *Bestand*, as "an essential tool in *The Mark of Kri*". In the calculating manner of *Gestell*, "the story is designed so that many tales must be told" (and many copies can be sold) "if one wants to know the full history of the world we've created. There's much we haven't said in this tale. What we can say is that we are very busy, and so is Rau" (Mueller, 2002).

From this perspective, the world is a cultural supermarket where artists or designers pick from the "given" to "create" works of art (or artwork).[18] Implicit here is the twentieth century Western concept of autonomous art which, from the beginning, exploited "primitive" art (Clifford, 1988: 120f, 147f)[19] to rejuvenate European art forms (Dröge and Müller, 1995: 190). … Accordingly, Steve Dykes of Sony Computer Entertainment NZ holds that "[a]t the end of the day, video games – like movies or books – are pieces of art and the developers have licence to be creative" (at *The Mark of Kri on Playstation 2 - Long Read*, 2003).

While art can be an area of resistance from which to develop an understanding of the *Gestell*'s danger (Heidegger, 1977: 34), it can also be easily absorbed. From within the mode of *Gestell*, how could protests such as Gilbert's be intelligible? When the world is revealed through profit, control, and competition – how can care, heritage, or spirituality be perceived?[20] From a Mäori perspective, Kiri (a participant in the debate on the Aotearoa Café forum) is

> not at *all* surprised that they immediately equate the objections with money. How could they do otherwise? 1. Money is the basis of their understanding of the world in general. 2. They have *no* comprehension of why Mäori object to the use of these words, images and concepts. (27.04.03 at *The Mark of Kri on Playstation 2 - Long Read*, 2003).

These observations may at first seem to have little to do with art, but there is a connection: Heidegger says that art has to stand in relation to the "realm that it opens up"; it has to be received by a culture as a whole, transporting its people "into that people's endowment" (Heidegger, 1975: 41, 77). Once art works are "torn out of their own native sphere", their world, they become a matter for the "art industry". Then, they become items for "art appreciation", to be maintained and be busied about, or to be supplied and critiqued (40). In that sense, what we associate as the specimen of "fine art," when we hear the word "art," is rarely regarded as "art" in the Western sphere: the art of Indigenous peoples.[21]

That *The Mark of Kri*, in order to "provide … aesthetic design", as well as for the semblance of uniqueness, has recourse to exoticism should come as no surprise. Already in 1908, Adolf Loos (1908: 103) claimed: "The lack of ornament is a sign of intellectual power. Modern man uses the ornament of past and foreign cultures at his discretion. His own inventions are concentrated on other things". Trivialised art and developed technologies then both obey the same rules of the *Gestell*. In both, an oblivion grows towards b/Being.[24]

Both art and technology have, according to Heidegger, a common root in the Greek concept of *technë,* which occurs when humans lend b/Being a helping hand to reveal "whatever does not bring itself forth" (Heidegger, 1977: 13). Both technology and art can responsively bring forth what is waiting to be unconcealed. Both can, however, also partake in the mode of *Gestell* and thus in its danger. Both can be calculated and manipulated. Together, artistic and technological practices may quantify and dissipate culture – until even their objects disappear "into the objectlessness of standing-reserve" (19). Whether or not video games in general, and *The Mark of Kri* in particular, count as "art" is from this perspective irrelevant. What matters primarily in the context of appropriation and *Ereignis* is neither form, nor the art world, nor the artist's status, nor even the way it is received. What matters is what happens in a "decisive confrontation" with the world-concealing ways of *Gestell* (Heidegger, 1977).

3: Appropriation as *Aneignung* (unconcealing and caring)

There is at least a possibility that *The Mark of Kri*, as event, could turn into an *Ereignis* capable of entering into a decisive confrontation with its age. Whatever its makers' intentions might be, its presence is in some ways independent of them. It is possible that in their work something of the world is still revealed behind their backs, as it were, because from their perspective it is not intelligible.

Appropriating Heidegger's thoughts, we could first stop believing that all events can be planned and controlled, and accept crises as opportunities. Next, we would sincerely accept that our world is not everyone's – that a different horizon will bring other facets of being into the open. With that realisation, we could be responsive to the tensions between different worlds. We could learn to live temporarily in an in-between space to experience others' realities.

The idea that we bring about and control what happens is, in Hannah Arendt's words, "forever defeated by the actual course of events, where nothing happens more frequently than the totally unexpected". So that, "to reason in the form of 'reckoning with consequences,' means to leave out the unexpected, the event itself" (1958: 300). In the events surrounding *The Mark of Kri*, for instance, the developers reckoned to some degree with the consequences of their actions concerning cultural appropriation. They tried to keep their "ass covered" as regards Intellectual Property laws. Would they have anticipated a stand like Gilbert's, though? The disturbance it has created is, if recognised in terms of *Ereignis*, a chance to be thrown into something as yet unknown. Crises can change the meaning of what we take for granted, providing an opportunity for reassessment of our frameworks of reference, our horizons. For this, however, we need to let ourselves be affected by critical encounters and allow reconfigurations to take place.

This is unlikely to happen at a safe distance: in fact, is it not possible that the difference between appropriation and mis-appropriation of a foreign culture be determined by the nature and degree of distance the appropriators maintain?[25] Not wanting to know about the other's reality prevents a form of appropriation (as *Aneignung*) that involves *Aus-einandersetzung*, meaning "confrontation" or "encounter", but also an "establishment of difference" (see Young, 2001: 27). As long "the people who produced the art" are, as "real beings", "regarded as embarrassing to the fantasy", and as long as the reality of their "daily struggles for survival" is glossed over (Mead, 1997: 13), then no real encounter seems possible. Differences cannot be established but are likely to be assumed. Lacking confrontation with the "material core" of a culture, people's nostalgic desire for a world "where a just and honourable life was still possible" (Semsek and Stauth, 1988: 707) is likely to stagnate in preconceived notions rather than initiate change. Separated from its own material core, the longing for "reality, locality and inter-subjectivity" (707) is easily manipulated and re-processed by the culture industries into simulated utopias. Confrontations with different horizons, on the other hand, require adjustments that entail changes, be it even small ones, in those who participate in the *Aus-einandersetzung* (see Young, 2002: 102).

What would motivate people to undergo those changes? If, as many in the West feel, the world lacks meaning, change must be welcome. But the act of merely accumulating and manipulating more versions, more screenshots of the world (a globalised one here, an esoteric there), or signs (a laptop here, a Taiaha there), or stories (accounts of successful careers here, legends there), is not likely to bring it about. Change requires a collision from without, like a flash of truth, by which we can recognise what exists outside of our plans and projections. For even in what we

may feel we have created ourselves by our "initial act of will", there will come a point where "an astronomic rotation takes place" in the configuration of events "through which we have *to listen to them* instead of *inventing them*" (Gargani, 1988: 79). The reward is freedom from a horizon where everything is similar and exchangeable: "that unendurable regime of simply possible thoughts which is the state of repetition, of tedium, of hysterical rigidity, of the metallic voice" (80).

Only a responsive involvement with someone other can make us aware of our prejudices. They are, as pre-judices, unavoidable for any understanding of the world to take place but, if unrecognised, they can also lead to a "tyranny of hidden prejudice" (Gadamer, 1975: 270) that fixes and limits our horizon. In the "experience of the 'Thou'", the Thou "asserts its own rights and requires absolute recognition". Some truth can become visible "only through the 'Thou', and only by letting myself be told something by it" (Gadamer, 1975: xxiii). No assumption of understanding the other in advance must be made. We still remain situated in our own context; it is not negated in the mutuality of the conversation. In fact, to be aware of the location from where one listens and speaks makes understanding possible in the first place. Entering that in-between space, with all its tensions (promises of creativity) can help us understand the boundaries of our views. So that, like travellers returning home with new experiences, we can start to embrace different relationships (449). Gadamer calls such experiences "fusion[s] of horizons" where, characteristically, both the perspectives of the Thou and one's own enter into an openness from which new worlds can arise (577).

In confrontation, which can establish difference, and in conversation, in which commonality can be produced, a space may open up. A mode of being may arise where artists or designers engage in a form of appropriation that is different from seizure. In such openness, even decontextualisation can be something very different from the switching and extracting typical of the mode of *Gestell*. Done with an awareness of people and their horizons, with regard for the object and the world it belongs to, and with attentiveness for effects and consequences, it can be a critical engagement in which an object reveals the world newly and which sometimes leads to a flash of truth. Those who participate can acquire a different understanding and appreciation of things in the many aspects of their beings.

Appropriation as *Ereignis*

Could perhaps a more neighbourly relationship with those who live in different worlds (but still share some of our own), and the frictions and events in the in-between space we inhabit together, lead to a different way of treating culture? Perhaps we would no longer regard it purely as a resource or standing-reserve. The alternative meanings of resource,[26] indicating ability, origin, sustenance, and assistance, hint at how culture can be something that nourishes our creativity, not only by being there as a source from which we draw, but also by invoking relationships with others who cooperate with us.

The event of *The Mark of Kri* could turn out to be a small *Ereignis*. Its producers and designers are working within the mode of *Gestell*: in a very powerful global corporation which through its profit driven operations prevents other modes of disclosure (Heidegger, 1977: 18). By starting a conversation with some of its representatives, Gilbert has potentially opened up a space that could become an in-between. Into this space, he brings not only his familiarity with the horizon of *Gestell*, but also that with a Mäori world, where the modes of *Gestell* have not fully developed, even though they increasingly make an impact.

In the confrontation of these two horizons of disclosure, and in a conversation that takes the differences of the Thou seriously, the reciprocity of *Ereignis* as need and belonging, as give-and-take, could become actual. People who have not simply reduced culture, the common world, to a standing-reserve may see from their perspective aspects that 'Westerners' have unlearnt to see. Their different knowledge of being may help all that are gathered around *The Mark of Kri* to better recognise the dangers of turning everything into *Bestand*. Those who live in the mode of *Gestell*, on the other hand, are able to bring into discussion their own experience of it: the dangers and disappointments, but also the chances that technology offers in revealing the world.

Let us imagine that *The Mark of Kri's* producers and designers did not only use elements of Mäori culture because market research says that exotic cultures sell. Let us assume they actually liked what they knew about it, be it ever so little. This would make it seem possible that they are interested to learn more, to get to know the people of that culture and engage in a conversation.

In such conversation, in opening up a space of the in-between, money will always be wasted, positions made precarious. But that is, in itself, an emigration from the mode of *Gestell*. Not only for the sake of it, but also for the sake of respecting the Thou, and for the sake of letting things be. It would probably lead to a situation where light pulsations of indifference could change into hard-core shock where somehow the crossover goes beyond a peripheral appropriation and becomes part of who we are. Such form of appropriation, a reciprocal movement between giving and taking, needing and belonging without striving for control, is a far cry away from the way the term appropriation is used presently in Aotearoa, and for good reasons. A different practice would give the word a different meaning.

Notes

Thanks to Ross Jenner and Nina Corsten for their comments during the development of my argument and for their editorial interventions. My apologies to the reader for not always quoting from existing English sources. The article was written in Germany, where it is often near impossible to access English translations of German texts.

1 The recurring translation "Appropriation", or "event of Appropriation", appears to go back to Joan Stambough's translation *On Time and Being* (Heidegger, 1972). On page 19, she inserts two sentences that are not contained in the original German text, without marking this as an addition: "*Ereignis* will be translated as Appropriation or event of Appropriation. One should bear in mind, however, that 'event' is not simply an occurrence, but that which makes any occurrence possible."

2 These are all quotes from the promotional material.

3 Later posted in a forum at Aotearoa Café (*The Mark of Kri on Playstation 2 - Long Read*, 2003).

4 Through the *grant* of "es gibt" ("it gives" – there is). See Heidegger (1972).

5 Heidegger himself insisted more than once that he cannot issue certificates proving correctness or truth, no more than anyone else, and encouraged the reader to walk his own path of responsive, reflective thinking (postscript to 1950: 187).

6 The clients in the Wai 262 claim state more generally on their website that the regular use of "Mäori images, icons and symbols" to promote New Zealand in an international market is, if at all, only a superficial recognition of its value. It is usually "undertaken without consultation or the consent of the people concerned. Unfortunately, New Zealanders will often avail themselves of Mäori culture and identity when it suits their purposes but … sharing the benefits of that exploitation, … is another matter." (Arts and Design: http://www.wai262.co.nz/id_m/arts.htm).

7 (Introduction: http://www.wai262.co.nz/id_mvs/Maori_Value_System.htm).

8 The use of "horizons" (pl.) is not Heidegger's own. However, in his 1951 *Erläuterungen zu Hölderlins Dichtung* he suggests that any future new beginning "can no longer remain in its Occidental singularity. It opens up to the few other great beginnings which, within their own element, belong to the sameness of the beginning of the end-less hold in which the earth is retained" (quoted in part 10, Eldred, 2000). Heidegger's qualification of "few" other great beginnings, though, is made from his own Occidental horizon. For a discussion of the differences between Heidegger's ontic and ontological concepts of world, see Young (2002: 8ff). Young's books *Philosophy of Art* and *Heidegger's Later Philosophy* are the most succinct English introductions to Heidegger in this area that I am aware of. Many of my summaries or conjectures here were helped by his texts).

9 Being (capitalised) is, in Young's (2002: 15) translation, the manifest *and* hidden side of reality, being's generative ground. For a detailed discussion of being and Being, see pp. 10-25. For those who want to simply dismiss "Being" as a mystifying abstraction, today's mystifying concretions are perhaps less puzzling. e.g.: "Hi. This is the qmail-send program at paradise.net.nz. I'm afraid I wasn't able to deliver your message to the following addresses. This is a permanent error; I've given up. Sorry it didn't work out."

10 See also about the reciprocal movement (*Gegenschwung*) of belonging and needing: Heidegger (1989: 251, 263).

11 See Linda Smith (1999: 89) about *Trading the Other* as the "first truly global commercial enterprise", and Irene Daes (1993: §18-9) about the relationship between "publicity about the victimization of indigenous peoples" and a renewed interest by Europeans to acquire "indigenous peoples' arts, cultures and sciences. Tourism in indigenous areas is growing, along with the commercialisation of indigenous arts."

12 Walter Benjamin, one of Heidegger's early opponents, shares with him a view of appropriation as sudden, and even violent: "To articulate the past historically is not to realise 'what it really has been like'. It means the appropriation of a memory as it suddenly lights up in a moment of danger" (Benjamin, 1969: 270). History, for both, is not a chronology of facticities. But Benjamin's take on events of appropriation owes much to his political insights. Not only is most of what is recorded as history written from the perspective of the victors (270), the state of emergency we live in is, as the traditions of the suppressed can teach us, historical normality (272). Heidegger exhibits by comparison with Benjamin a peculiar blindness, which Karsten Harries attributes to a "view of things which too easily skips over the ontic and specific in the interest of the ontological and essential. Thus Heidegger never names the victims: jews, gipsies, homosexuals or communists, his ontological perspective makes him ontically blind" (1992: 212 ff; – see also Marcuse quoted in McCarthy, 1992: 283; and Anders, 2001: 72ff: "Heidegger's concreteness begins after hunger and stops before economy and machinery: in between sits 'Dasein', hammers its stuff and thus demonstrates care and the new beginning of ontology.") Like Marx, Heidegger attempts to overcome the Cartesian subject/object division, where the human subject withdraws from engagement with the world into the ego-centric interiority of his own consciousness. But despite his declared intention to overcome metaphysic's separation from the world and lived human experience, and to start with what is *in* the world (with what happens and exists concretely), his concreteness still mostly remains void of historical events, tangible relationships, and contemporary actors.

13 By losing the characteristics given to them by metaphysics: see Young (2002: 26ff).

14 "Das Ge-Stell ist gleichsam das photographische Negativ des Ereignisses." (M. Heidegger: Vier Seminare, Frankfurt a. M. 1977, S. 89, quoted in Capurro, 1981/2002). Western metaphysics (and in its wake modern natural science and technology with their concentration on causal efficiency, i.e. instrumentality) increasingly sets its horizon of disclosure tyrannically as categorical and absolute – thereby occluding other horizons (Heidegger, 1977: 6, 14).

15 See Young's comments on Lovitt's translation of *Bestand* as "standing-reserve" (Young, 2002: 44). While I agree in principle with his argument, unfortunately – for my purposes – his translation as "resource" obscures a difference I consider important. "Resource" in English still has connotations of "ability", "resourcefulness", and "source of help or sustenance". *Bestand* does not have these connotations, either in common German use or in Heidegger's. The latter's common use implies another ambivalence: one cluster of its connotations revolves around "existence", "duration", or "continuity" – terms alluding to historical or cultural matters; another cluster around "stocks" and "assets" – common terms in accounting and micro-economics. Lovitt's explication of Heidegger's use seems to the point to me (in Heidegger, 1977: 17). In the context of this essay, the ambivalences inherent in both the German *Bestand* and the English *resource* are fruitful. They suggest that it may ultimately be *the ways in which things are appropriated* that make the difference between *Ereignis* and *Gestell*.

16 (Associate producer Dan Mueller). As an example of technical brutality, "Rau would do a back thrust to nail the enemy in the gut while still facing his current aggressor. We call this the 'Bruce Lee' effect. It helps make the user look extremely good at the game before they have even scratched the surface." This and all other quotes of Mueller are taken from an interview, 28.11.2002, published as "Interview: Mark of Kri Sharpens Axe. Sony's early 2003 schedule takes shape, led by extreme cartoon violence from the States: full details inside".

17 SAH: *The Mark of Kri:* http://www.monkeyrivertown.com/brains.php?ART=307

18 A participant in the Aotearoa Café forum debate observes an assumption of "western artists' supposed right to 'artistic expression' which seem to give them licence to pillage from the cultural property of whomever" (Rangikaiwhiria 22.4.2003, at *The Mark of Kri on Playstation 2 - Long Read*, 2003).

19 The term "primitive" has indelibly sedimented significations, in particular when combined with the term "modern" (Goldberg, 1993: 162). "Indigenous peoples [are usually] viewed as 'backward' by Governments" and "have been the targets of aggressive policies of cultural assimilation. Their arts and knowledge were frequently … simply destroyed in the course of colonization. ... Tourism, [and] a growing consumer demand for 'primitive' art ... now threaten indigenous peoples' ability to protect what remains of their heritage" (Daes, 1993: §159).

20 This emerges very clearly in the debate about coastal areas when Nick Smith, MP for Nelson, claims that if Mäori were given title, it would "only be a matter of time before they want to exercise all the powers that go with that". He fears loss of control of public access, but also "security for those people who have business or public facilities in the coastal area". (quoted in Martin van Beynen: MP pushes foreshore petition, 28 July 2003 Stuff™, http://www.stuff.co.nz/stuff/0,2106,2581792a8153,00.html). Whatever Mäori may or may not do, were they given title, it cannot be assumed that they would do what Nick Smith takes for granted as normal.

21 From a perspective he shared with many other "experts" of his time, Hamilton (1901: 6), for example, wrote: "From a general point of view, the whole of the art work of the Mäori comes under the head of ornament". But from Heidegger's perspective, Mäori art has a characteristic of great art that "modern art" lacks: "in great art … the artist remains inconsequential as compared with the work, almost like a passageway that destroys itself in the creative process for the work to emerge" (Heidegger, 1975: 40).

22 GamesDomain.com, Preview, *The Mark of Kri*. (http://www.gamesdomain.com/playstation2/previews/The_Mark_of_Kri.html)

23 The concentration on "other things" that require "intellectual power" is indeed a typical step in the history of *Gestell* (Heidegger, 1975: 80-1): the good and the beautiful, as non-intellectual activities, increasingly came to constitute a huge remainder. "Ever since scientific work … has given itself its own proper and appropriable places through rational projects capable of determining their procedures, … ever since it was founded as a plurality of limited and distinct fields, in short ever since it stopped being theological, it has constituted the *whole* as its *remainder*; this remainder has become what we call culture. This cleavage organizes modernity. It cuts it up into scientific and dominant islands set off against the background of practical 'resistances' and symbolizations that cannot be reduced to thought" (Certeau, 1984: 6).

24 Only insofar as art is less concerned with calculating, classifying and measuring – or exploiting the world's resources – is it more likely to take part in a project of opening-up and revealing.

25 At the Aotearoa Café forum, a participant who called himself 'A Mäori Päkeha' suspected that the widespread lack of understanding amongst Päkeha regarding the foreshores claim has to do with wanting to stay aloof: what stops them from getting closer to the issues, "[p]ersonally, I think it is having to engage with Mäori". In reply, Rangikaiwhiria wrote dryly: "Actually no truer statement summarises the situation..." (30.07.03 and 31.07.03: http://www.aocafe.com/forums/viewtopic.php?t=594).

26 See note 15.

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