

## The Return of Ishi's Brain: After an Unsettling Discovery, Anthropologists Reconsider a Legendary Friendship

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IN CALIFORNIA, EVERY SCHOOLCHILD learns the story of Ishi, the last Yahi Indian. On August 29, 1911, he stumbled out of the woods in Oroville, California, 180 miles northeast of San Francisco, his hair singed black in a display of mourning. It was a shocking event: Native Americans, it was thought, had long since been driven onto reservations or onto the margins of white settlements.

According to the best-known version of the Ishi story, barking dogs awakened workers at an Oroville slaughterhouse early in the morning. The butchers found a man cowering, near starvation, beside a corral leading into the building. They called the local sheriff, who handcuffed the Indian and brought him to the town jail for safekeeping.

As word spread about Oroville's new resident, Northern Californians streamed into town to gawk at "the last wild Indian in North America." The Oroville officials contacted the University of California, which dispatched an anthropologist, T.T. Waterman, to the scene. He pronounced Ishi a "Stone Age man"—a sobriquet that stuck to him for life—and took him back to San Francisco by train. Waterman and his fellow anthropologists housed Ishi in a room in the university's museum and set about learning as much of his story as they could. He remained in the museum, working as a janitor and putting on the occasional flint-making show—sometimes for crowds of hundreds—until 1916, when he succumbed to tuberculosis.

Theodora Kroeber penned the most famous account of Ishi's life, *Ishi in Two Worlds* (1961), one of the best-selling books ever published by the University of California Press. A staple of school curricula, it has sold more than 300,000 copies and has inspired a documentary, an HBO film, and several plays. The author was the wife of one of Ishi's closest acquaintances in his last years: Alfred Kroeber, the founder of the University of California's anthropology department and a key figure in American anthropology. In Theodora Kroeber's hands, the story of Ishi and Kroeber was a hopeful one about cross-cultural friendship. Later commentaries, however, have raised the issue of exploitation.

As many times as the Ishi-Kroeber tale has been told, it was not until this year that anthropologists discovered a missing piece of the story—a missing piece of Ishi, in fact. Theodora Kroeber's book mentions that when Ishi died, a doctor at the university, Saxton Pope, performed an autopsy and removed his brain. The body was cremated in a respectful ceremony, but *Ishi in Two Worlds* does not mention the fate of the gray matter. Even before the publication of the book, rumors had flourished, especially among Native Americans, that the brain was sitting in a jar somewhere in the bowels of the University of California at Berkeley. Last January, after an eighteen-month search prompted by questions from native Californians, scholars traced the brain to the Smithsonian.

Why did the anthropologists who knew Ishi best treat his remains in a way they knew would have appalled him? After all, dissections are anathema to many Native Americans, who believe that the body needs to be whole in order to continue its spiritual journey. Upon learning the brain's fate, one contingent of the Berkeley anthropology department (which today resides in Kroeber Hall) voiced unconditional disapproval. Nancy Scheper-Hughes, the author of *Death Without Weeping: The Violence of Everyday Life in Brazil*, circulated within the department a statement that condemned the storage of the brain as a "betrayal" of Ishi, a "perversion" of the ideals of anthropology, and a general "travesty." Scheper-Hughes also expressed regret for the blindness of Kroeber's generation of anthropologists to the destruction of native Californians. After the department debated several drafts, a toned-down version appeared in the May 1999 newsletter of the American Anthropological Association on behalf of all the department's members. It referred to Ishi's fate as "a troubling chapter of our history." In April, Scheper-Hughes drove to the California statehouse in Sacramento to deliver an apology to Indians lobbying for the brain's return.

But if Kroeber's critics had thought they could pile on this particular dead white male with impunity, they were wrong. Some of the older members of the department—particularly George Foster, an eighty-six-year-old professor emeritus who knew Kroeber and his wife—contend that Scheper-Hughes and her allies have taken self-abasement too far. Arguing his case in a series of letters to his colleagues, Foster termed it a "rank injustice" to suggest that Kroeber did not care for Ishi or protect his interests. The treatment of the Indians of Northern California was "a stain on the hands of all Americans of European descent," Foster wrote in a statement published in the October 1999 *Anthropology News*. "But to imply, as do the UC Berkeley memoranda, that the behavior of Alfred Kroeber and other anthropologists is a metaphor for the nineteenth century genocide of California Native Americans is ludicrous."

Kroeber's high-profile children joined Foster's counteroffensive. Karl Kroeber, a professor of English at Columbia University who specializes in Native American literature as well as that of the British Romantics, accused his father's critics of displaying "unprofessional disregard of the most elementary

procedures of historical scholarship." And the science fiction writer Ursula K. Le Guin—K for Kroeber, as it turns out— wrote to *Anthropology News* to testify that her father was a "profoundly ethical person" who "loved his friends," including Ishi. The exchanges in the newsletter continued throughout the fall, with Jonathan Marks, a visiting associate professor at Berkeley, accusing the Smithsonian of dragging its heels on returning the brain. The Smithsonian's repatriation office riposted that Marks and others were using Ishi's brain as a pretext for self-righteous posturing.

Ishi's brain still sits in a metal locker in a storage facility in Suitland, Maryland, a painfully concrete reminder of anthropology's precarious relationship with the colonial past. In this case, anthropologists' disciplinary anxiety is compounded by another factor. The Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA), passed in 1990, outlines a procedure through which federally recognized tribes can retrieve skeletal remains and sacred objects from museums. (Since Ishi's brain turned up at the Smithsonian, it is technically covered by a separate piece of legislation, almost identical to NAGPRA, that applies to that institution alone.)

No one thinks Ishi's brain should be withheld from native Californians. But some archaeologists and physical anthropologists deeply resent the Scheper-Hughes apology and the attack on one of their field's earliest luminaries. As today's anthropologists seek to disown or correct what they see as embarrassing episodes in the discipline's past, do they undermine anthropology's very foundations? Or are they correct to believe that those foundations are too compromised to support their own work?

ISHI'S CREMATED remains, except those of his brain, sat for decades in an urn in Olivet Memorial Park, south of San Francisco. In the spring of 1997, the Butte County Native American Cultural Committee—an alliance of several tribal groups in and around Oroville—announced that it would seek the return of Ishi's ashes to his homeland, the foothills of Mount Lassen. The request came at a time when the movement for repatriation of Indian remains had picked up considerable momentum in California. The Butte County coalition had also requested the return of more than two hundred Indian skeletons unearthed during the erection of a dam on the Feather River in the mid-1960s. The return of Ishi to his old stomping grounds would not only be just, the coalition members avowed; it would be of great symbolic importance to the repatriation movement. In June 1997, the *Los Angeles Times* reported the committee's desire to transplant Ishi's ashes and mentioned the mystery of the missing brain.

The *L.A. Times* reference set off public relations alarms at Berkeley and at the University of California at San Francisco, where the issue of tribal remains is a sensitive one. Native American leaders had already come to view Berkeley with particular suspicion, since its Phoebe Hearst Museum of Anthropology has one of the largest collections of skeletal remains and funerary objects in the world. Overwhelmed by the effort to catalog its more than three thousand Indian artifacts and bones, housed in four storage areas on and off campus, the museum has had to negotiate several extensions to the NAGPRA deadline for notifying tribes of what it possesses. (In 1999 the museum hired fifteen people to assist with inventorying in the hope of completing three quarters of the paperwork by the end of the year.) Some native groups, however, whose anger over violated graves and stolen objects long predates NAGPRA, view the delay as evidence that Berkeley does not want to give up its collection.

Eager to stem the tide of criticism, Berkeley scoured its storage rooms for Ishi's brain. Satisfied that it was nowhere on the premises, officials issued a statement in October 1997 declaring the organ's absence and speculating that it had been cremated. The San Francisco campus, the original site of the anthropology museum, also mounted a search, led by the director of the Campus Oral History Program, Nancy Rockafellar. Rockafellar received a promising tip: A retired curator from the Hearst Museum said he'd heard from a Smithsonian staffer that the brain was at the Museum of Natural History. But when Rockafellar called the curator's source in June 1998, the Smithsonian staffer said the story was an urban legend.

Frustrated, she joined forces with Orin Starn, an anthropologist at Duke University who was working on a book about Ishi. When Rockafellar told him about the Smithsonian tip, Starn took one more look at the well-thumbed Kroeber papers in Berkeley's Bancroft Library. In a file of routine exchanges with the Smithsonian that Rockafellar had overlooked, he found a series of letters concerning the brain. When Starn visited Rockafellar's office in December to report his findings, she recalls, "we just sat still for a while." The hunt was over.

The Smithsonian's repatriation office had known about a collection of nine Native American brains at the institution for some time and had cataloged them as "non-skeletal remains." The brains floated in ethyl alcohol solution in a stainless-steel container in the Maryland storage facility. Each was wrapped in fine woven gauze and tagged with an accession number. Ales Hrdlicka, the curator of the Smithsonian's physical anthropology division in Kroeber's day, had a collection of more than two hundred human brains; among them was that of John Wesley Powell, an influential early Smithsonian ethnologist and geologist who had bequeathed his brain to the museum. No one ever flagged Ishi's brain as a matter of special interest.

Following Rockefeller and Starn's revelation, a private donor with connections to UC-San Francisco paid for eight Indians to fly to the Smithsonian in March to discuss repatriation. After a hurried study of the issue, the Smithsonian concluded it would repatriate the brain not to the Butte County organization but to two other tribal entities deemed more closely related to Ishi: the Pit River tribe and Redding Rancheria. Those groups are now waiting for a court order from the state of California to move Ishi's other remains— a legal formality, really—before taking possession of the brain, so that all the body parts can be buried together.

THE DISCOVERY of the brain's whereabouts puts a new spin on a gripping passage in *Ishi in Two Worlds* that is a key part of the Ishi-Kroeber legend. Kroeber was on sabbatical in New York when he learned Ishi was dying. The professor wrote to one of his colleagues that he suspected the doctors would want to dissect Ishi. Kroeber was adamantly opposed to the idea. "Please stand by our contingently made outline of action," he wrote back. "Please shut down on it." He wanted a respectful ceremony and cremation. "If there is any talk about the interests of science," he wrote, "say for me that science can go to hell. We propose to stand by our friends.

The letter arrived too late. Theodora Kroeber says that Saxton Pope out-argued Waterman and Edward Gifford, a younger anthropologist, on the question of performing an autopsy. She describes the operation as an utterly sympathetic gesture on the doctor's part: "He owed it to the world and to Ishi to know as much as he could by any reasonable means learn." Gifford was less sanguine. The treatment of Ishi's body represented "a compromise between science and sentiment," he told Kroeber in a letter. Despite the ambiguous conclusion to the story, what lingers after you put down *Ishi in Two Worlds* is Kroeber's firm and apparently quite emotional stand.

Starn, however, turned up a letter that Kroeber had written to the Smithsonian's Hrdlicka a few months after he returned from his sabbatical. "I find that at Ishi's death last spring his brain was removed and preserved," he coolly wrote. "There is no one here who can put it to scientific use. If you wish it, I shall be glad to deposit it in the National Museum Collection." Other documents show Kroeber dispassionately asking Hrdlicka how to pack a brain for travel.

AS THIS EPISODE suggests, Kroeber was a man of seemingly contradictory sympathies and motivations. Long before the controversy over Ishi's brain, anthropologists with a historical bent had found his interactions with Indians to be a rich subject. "It's hard to be an American anthropologist and not have some kind of idea of what Kroeber might have been," says M. Steven Shackley, a research archaeologist at the Hearst museum. "But he's been characterized so many ways that it's hard to tell what the truth is."

Kroeber had been an assistant professor of literature at Columbia University in the mid-1890s, when, out of curiosity, he enrolled in a course on American Indian linguistics with the young Franz Boas. He was fascinated by the search for patterns in ethnographic data and soon embarked on fieldwork—at first, with the Arapaho Indians in Wyoming. In 1901, he went west to take a job at the University of California's anthropology museum, which was then in San Francisco. He spent much of the next two decades working among native Californians — labors that culminated in his landmark book, *Handbook of the Indians of California* (1925). Later, he turned to more abstract works on psychoanalysis and anthropology as well as on the commonalities among major civilizations over the *longue durée*. But it was the work with native Californians that proved his lasting legacy. When Boas retired, he asked Kroeber to take over the Columbia department, but Kroeber declined.

Kroeber's goal was to document as much of vanishing Indian culture as he could, and in this he was indefatigable. His 995-page *Handbook* includes descriptions of the languages and traditions of dozens of tribes. In recent years, some of what he collected has become the foundation for a reclamation of native culture: People who have never heard a word of their ancestral language can learn it in a basement on the Berkeley campus, from remastered versions of the recordings Kroeber made.

In the 1950s, in the twilight of his career, Kroeber also argued the side of Indians in a major land-claim case. He refuted common misconceptions: for example, that the Indians' lack of written law meant that they didn't believe in property ownership. He noted that the Indians used natural landmarks as boundaries; that small groups laid claim to large swaths of territory; and that trespassing was sometimes punished by death. He found the suit pointless and dispiriting, but his arguments prevailed, and in 1968, eight years after his death, each of California's Indians was awarded a token sum.

And yet, although Kroeber made many positive contributions to the position of Native Americans in California, he was not greatly alarmed by the plight of a vanishing people. Indeed, all of his work began from the premise that Indians were disappearing through an inevitable historical process and that nothing could—or perhaps even should—be done to prevent it. Kroeber believed that it was his duty to take what he deemed a purely objective perspective with regard to humankind, claims Thomas Buckley, an anthropologist at the University of Massachusetts at Boston who has written on early-twentieth-century anthropology. The

scientist should not be distracted by the "little history of pitiful events," Kroeber once wrote, like wars or individual cases of suffering. Rather, he should keep his eye trained on the broad contours of history, the millennial leitmotifs.

In addition, Kroeber viewed all post-contact Indian culture as adulterated. In the preface to his Handbook, he wrote that he had, "after some hesitation," omitted all accounts of the Indians' tribulations at the hands of whites. The subject was not "unimportant or uninteresting," he wrote, but it belonged more properly to the historian. "It is also a matter," he added, tellingly, "that has comparatively slight relation to aboriginal civilization."

"You can look at that and say it is a very dehumanized way to deal with people," says Les Field, an anthropologist at the University of New Mexico. "Indians today are saying, from a 1990s perspective, 'Why couldn't he also have documented the injustices those people were suffering?'" In the April 1999 issue of *Current Anthropology*, in an article called "Complicities and Collaborations," Field further argues that Kroeber's close linking of tribal identity to specific customs, dress, and lore helped reinforce an excessively rigid approach to the discussion of Indian identity that persists to this day. The Bureau of Indian Affairs has used Kroeber's work, and that of other anthropologists of his era, to help determine which tribes deserve federal recognition and which are extinct or long since folded into other groups. Field finds this to be an ambiguous legacy: One tribe Field has worked with, the Ohlone of the San Francisco Bay area, is still trying to overrule Kroeber's opinion that it had died out by 1925.

In a forum on the article, published in the same issue of *Current Anthropology*, Buckley retorts that Field himself is dealing partly in stereotypes. Buckley notes that ethnologists of Kroeber's era had widely varying personal and professional attitudes toward the subjects of their research; to lump them all together as collaborators with the march of empire, he argues, is simplistic. And to hold anthropologists responsible for how federal agents used their work requires a more nuanced notion of complicity than Field had entertained. To do so, Buckley says, also obscures the importance of the early anthropologists' work to the current cultural resurgence of Native Americans. "More broadly, however, I feel that criticism of these 'anthropologists' has gone about as far as it usefully can without further encouraging reckless, self-serving, and counterproductive anthro-bashing."

BELIEFS ABOUT the travails of Indians had changed markedly between the start of Kroeber's career and the publication of *Ishi in Two Worlds* in 1961. Sentimental in parts, unflinching in others, the book is a product of the uncertain period just before the dawn of the Indian-rights movement. Its early chapters include one of the first honest accounts of what, in Northern California at least, can only be called a genocide. Northern California had been populated only patchily by Europeans as late as the 1850s, when the gold rush changed everything. Some towns took up collections for Indian hunters; the federal government reimbursed the mercenaries' expenses. "The Indian must be exterminated or removed," the Humboldt Times proclaimed in 1863. From 1850 to 1900, the Indian population in California dropped from some 200,000 to 50,000.

Ishi's tribe was all but annihilated in 1865, Theodora Kroeber recounts. Soon after settlers decided that the Yahi were responsible for three murders, a gang of settlers surprised and surrounded them on the upper waters of Mill Creek. The leaders of the raiding party debated whether to kill just the men or to slaughter everyone. They opted for ruthlessness. "Many dead bodies floated down the current," one participant in the attack wrote, and a later expedition found "forty or forty-five" skeletons at the site.

Two further massacres, one in 1866 and one in 1871, were thought to have finished off the Yahi. For forty years, however, a tiny band hid amid steep canyons and dense forests, suppressing the smoke of their fires and running from any sign of humanity, white or Indian. In 1908, a group of surveyors stumbled on the Yahi hiding place, driving the survivors from their home and precipitating the final odyssey that claimed the life of every Yahi but Ishi.

Like many Indians, the man who emerged from the woods would not tell outsiders his family name. It was Kroeber who dubbed him Ishi, which means "man" in Yahi. Kroeber shielded him from hucksters who wanted to make a carnival sideshow out of him, but he did arrange a coming-out party, at which Ishi met university trustees and society figures. And advertisements announcing Ishi's flint-making and archery demonstrations were placed in newspapers in every language spoken by San Franciscans.

Ishi's companionship helped Kroeber recover from the 1913 death of his first wife from tuberculosis, Theodora writes. As for Ishi, she says he saw in the anthropologist a noble figure with whom he had much in common—more than he did with most Indians. "The relation was one of respect and trust and abiding affection, each for the other," she writes.

Kroeber understood. The Yana world view was a subject to be gone into comfortably and knowledgeably with him, and all things Yana became near and natural and worthy and living once more, as Ishi and this friend of his talked about them, such being the special *Geist* of the born ethnologist.

Nonetheless, some scholars have wondered how close Ishi and Kroeber could truly have been, since neither man ever learned more than bits and scraps of the other's language.

Pope, Ishi's doctor, who worked in the hospital next door to the museum, was enthralled with the Indian's archery skills and spent hours practicing with him. T. T. Waterman, the anthropologist who originally brought Ishi to Berkeley, shared his colleagues' affection for the Indian, writing later that Ishi "convinced me that there is such a thing as gentlemanliness which lies outside all training." In May of 1914, the anthropologists took Ishi back to his ancestral lands for a three-week camping trip. The anthropologists, striving to commune with nature, swam naked. Ishi kept his loincloth on.

JUDGING FROM these rhapsodic tales of mutual admiration and friendship, it would hardly seem that Ishi suffered mistreatment at the hands of the Berkeley anthropologists. But today's scholars are not satisfied with Theodora Kroeber's account of Ishi's years as a museum piece, nor are they comfortable with her husband's reticence regarding the injustices that delivered Ishi into his hands in the first place. The posthumous voyage of Ishi's brain, in clear defiance of the Indian's wishes, brings all of these issues to the fore.

"What happened to Ishi, at the hands of science, was a desecration and a perversion of the larger values in anthropology that we hold most dear and certain," reads the Scheper-Hughes statement. "We now realize that the anthropology that emerged in the early 20th century—so called 'salvage anthropology'—was, in reality, a human science that emerged and grew up in the face of American genocide."

Scheper-Hughes is an energetic, voluble woman of fifty-five who specializes in medical anthropology. She recently co-founded a group, Organs Watch, that will investigate rumors of organ harvesting, theft, and sale, especially in Third World countries; she has also been studying the dynamics of reconciliation in South Africa. In a book she is working on for the University of California Press, to be called *Undoing: Violence and Democracy in the New South Africa*, Scheper-Hughes explores several instances of black-on-white violence in 1993 and 1994, just before the watershed elections, and traces the efforts of the perpetrators and the victims' families to make sense of these violent acts. Interestingly enough, those efforts often involved face-to-face apologies.

"I've come to think that it's not just psychobabble to get up and say that things were done that today we would like to think we would have done better," she says. "We're not saying Kroeber was evil or culpable. All of us might have acted the same way. But in reflecting on the past maybe some of us can better understand the mistakes we are making now." She adds, "It was unthinkable that so many people thought that we should not make that apology."

To Scheper-Hughes's colleague George Foster, however, what was unthinkable was to let the besmirching of Kroeber's name go unanswered. Ishi was lucky to have wound up in the hands of anthropologists, Foster suggested in his memos and in his Anthropology News statement; no one else would have known even a few words of his language. Kroeber's critics, Foster contends, read far too much into the colorful fact that Ishi lived in a museum. The scenario does seem tailor made for a pointed essay on colonialism, and indeed it has provided grist for several. But Foster points out that two guards also lived in the museum full time and that visiting Indians were regularly put up there. Ishi wasn't exactly sleeping in a diorama. Contemporary accounts, moreover, suggest he was grateful that his language and customs were recorded.

Foster's arguments boiled down to this question: What would the critics have done differently? Sent Ishi to a reservation, where he would have been destitute and unable to communicate? How would they have reacted if they had returned from a sabbatical—a ninety-hour train ride away from their campus—to find the pickled brain of a friend? Wouldn't donating the brain to science seem reasonable? Research on brains may now seem macabre, but it was a given at the time—as universally accepted then as postcolonial theorizing is today. "I think the Berkeley stand was an ill-designed effort on the part of some people to denigrate the past in order to build themselves up," Foster says.

The combative Karl Kroeber added another point in a September letter to the current and former chairs of the Berkeley department, Paul Rabinow and Stanley Brandes: What right did the Berkeley anthropology department have to judge others' handling of Native American issues when, in stark contrast to Alfred Kroeber's day, it currently offers virtually no courses on Indian culture?

MANY PEOPLE emerged from the Ishi controversy with bruised feelings. Among Indians, the Berkeley apology soothed some but left others indifferent. Art Angle, the chairman of the Butte County group, says he appreciates it. "I realize that this was a big step for the University of California," he says, although he adds that "it didn't go far enough." Native American studies professor Gerald Vizenor, who led a successful campaign about a decade ago to have a university courtyard named for Ishi, was less enthusiastic. The

anthropologists' pained rhetoric avails Native Americans little, he contends. "There are good and sensitive people every- where," he says, "but this is obviously too little too late. It's not even good irony." Far more helpful, in Vizenor's view, is a planned internship for Native Americans at the anthropology museum.

Officials at the Smithsonian complained that the press and some anthropologists had treated the institution unfairly. Particularly irksome to them was Jonathan Marks's article in the April issue of *Anthropology News*, which seemed to suggest the Smithsonian did not want to return the organ. Titled "They Saved Ishi's Brain!" the article concluded with this statement: "Why anyone of ordinary sensibilities would hesitate longer than the blink of an eye to rid themselves of such a useless and gruesome (and yet at the same time meaningful!) artifact is frankly beyond comprehension." The peeved Smithsonian officials responded that they couldn't exactly mail the brain out to the first person who requested it. Under the law, they had to ensure that it went to a federally recognized, culturally affiliated tribe. "I'm less than confident that a lot of the people talking about this are aware of the benefits of going through the repatriation process—the chance it gives for tribes to participate in the process," says Thomas Killion, the manager of the repatriation office. In the November newsletter, Marks responded that the Smithsonian's slow reactions and rationalizations resembled the Internal Revenue Service's handling of "your mixed-up tax refund."

Some Native American spokespeople say that although the Smithsonian behaved honorably, relations with Berkeley remain badly strained. "Once the Smithsonian saw that the paper trail led to them, they were nothing but cooperative," says Mickey Gemmill, an administrator at the Redding Rancheria tribal office. "As far as over on the other side, we have an entirely different feeling about them and how they are going about the business of repatriation." It didn't help that before Rockafellar and Starn did their sleuthing, Berkeley had told the Indians the brain had probably been cremated.

ISHI'S BODY and brain will soon embark on what the Yahi would consider their final journey; but the scholarly odyssey is far from over. Who was the "last Stone Age Indian," and how did he become the stuff of legend? What, finally, does that legend have to do with the real Ishi, or the real native Californians? Berkeley's Shackley argues that Ishi might not even have been solely of Yahi extraction. The archaeologist has examined the arrowheads Ishi fashioned at the museum and found that they do not match other Yahi arrowheads in the university's collection. He speculates that Ishi might have been kidnapped as a child by the Yahi from the neighboring Maidu. According to oral tradition, kidnapping raids were common, and other research has suggested that Ishi did not share the physiognomy of the Yahi. It's more likely, Shackley contends, that Ishi was of mixed Nomlald-Wintu and Yahi ethnicity.

Even if they accept the notion that Ishi was the last of the Yahi, some scholars argue that the oft-repeated Ishi tales contribute to a misunderstanding of that long-vanished tribe. In his forthcoming book, Orin Stam plans to show how the myth of the "last Stone Age Indian" has shaped understanding of the Indians of Northern California. *Ishi in Two Worlds*, he says, is positively brimming with myths. When Ishi was discovered in Oroville, Theodora Kroeber wrote, he wore garb fashioned from "ancient covered wagon canvas." In fact, the last covered wagon had come through a half century earlier. A recently discovered transcript of an interview with one of the men who first found Ishi suggests that the Indian wore a common piece of clothing known as a sheepherder's jacket—basically, a flannel nightshirt stolen from some miner's cabin.

Starn has also reexamined Kroeber and Waterman's notes on the Yahi language. It turns out that the tongue has a number of loanwords from Spanish, demonstrating, he says, that the Yahi had at least some contact with other Indians who had spent considerable time with Spanish-speaking ranch hands in the area. It's even possible that the Yahi had worked on ranches employing Mexican overseers in the 1840s. "One can imagine," Starn says, "that rather than having lived this autochthonous, pristine lifestyle, they had been part of a pastoral money economy, and then reprimativized themselves in the mid-nineteenth century in response to the increased violence that came with the gold rush and Anglo settlement." In any case, Starn says, Ishi's story is far more complicated than many have thought.

Anthropologists aren't the only ones reexamining the tale. Native artists have confronted it, sometimes satirically. In a poem called "Postcard," published in 1995, Edgar Silex, a member of the Pueblo Nation, describes taking his son to the Museum of Natural History in New York, where he is relieved not to see Ishi's bones or to find the last Yahi "weaving / baskets or chipping arrowheads."

Meanwhile, Karl Kroeber wants to ensure that the story of the anthropology department's condemnation of his father won't die. He is writing an account of the affair, to be deposited with the Alfred Kroeber Papers in the Bancroft Library along with the flurry of memos and articles inspired by the discovery of the brain. It will be a time capsule of academic absurdity, he avers. His father's actions, he wagers, will wear better, as the years pass, than will those of the current denizens of Kroeber Hall.

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