III. Rethinking Origins and Indigeneity
Introduction

Roots, I sometimes think are a conservative myth, designed to keep us in our places.
(Rushdie 86)

Tribal groups have, of course, never been simply “local,” they have always been rooted and routed in particular landscapes, regional and interregional networks.
(Clifford, “Diasporas” 310)

Michael Taussig has asked: if “most of what seems important in life is made up and is neither more (nor less) than, as a certain turn of phrase would have it, ‘a social construction’ . . . why don’t we start inventing?” (xv–xvi). What if people already do, especially where theory and poesis are so inextricably interwoven that we cannot separate the practice of articulation from its theoretical implications, as John and Jean Comaroff (1987) have suggested? This is not to argue for the continuous and unregulated re-telling of history in societies where the social texture of life is or was constituted by oral texts. The interpretation of history (everywhere) changes with(in) societal discourse, and, where landscape is closely tied to these constructions, so does the landscape. Perhaps the idea of the social constructedness of life – as of landscape, identities, history, and the like – is not altogether new or strange to a society where a conversational poetics of social construction as that which molds and makes a person, and as that which is constantly negotiated, is common cultural practice; a practice that is neither veiled nor naturalized but, instead, is seen as the medium for the ongoing production of the being-as-becoming of social existence.