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Earthen Spirituality or Cultural Genocide?: Radical Environmentalism's Appropriation of Native American Spirituality

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The appropriation by non-Indians of Native American religious practices has become a highly contentious phenomenon. The present analysis focuses on the controversy as it has unfolded within the 'Deep Ecology' or 'Radical Environmental' Movement in North America. Taking as its central case study Earth First!, the radical vanguard of this movement, it describes the diverse forms such borrowing takes, the plural American Indian and non-Indian views shaping the ensuing controversy, and the threats this controversy poses to a nascent and fragile Indigenous-Environmentalist alliance. Concluding reflections address the ethics of appropriation with the aim of reducing the tensions attending these phenomena.

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The problem is one of cultural appropriation. Eurocentric intellectuals habitually take the knowledge of indigenous peoples and incorporate it into their own thinking, usually without attribution. In the process they tend to deform it beyond recognition, bending it to suit their own social, economic and political objectives. Unfortunately, this has, with very few exceptions, proven to be as true of professed 'allies' of native people as it has of their avowed enemies. M. Annette James, Alfred University.

This epigraph introduces a scathing critique of Jerry Mander's *In the Absence of the Sacred*¹ by Ward Churchill, an American Indian Movement (AIM) intellectual and activist, who has been sharply critical of the appropriation of Native American ideas and spirituality by Euroamericans.² Mander had argued that Native American wisdom could help us discern how to live in harmony with nature 'if only we'd let them be and listen to what they say'.³ Churchill concludes that despite Mander's stated desire to learn from Indians, by borrowing from them largely without attribution, and by absorbing Indian ideas 'as their own intellectual property while synthesizing new (and therefore inherently 'superior') vernaculars of societal/ecological reality', Mander 'embodies the worst of what [he] purports to oppose', namely, the destruction of indigenous culture and wisdom.⁴

It is easy to assemble examples where New Age devotees or others drawn to Native American spirituality have stolen sacred artifacts, trespassed and desecrated places considered sacred, or interrupted ceremonies while insisting that they have a 'right' to be present.⁵ There are writers who have been accused of profiteering off Native American cultures by fabricating experiences or apprenticeships with indigenous shamans.⁶ There are non-Indians who are scorned for profiteering off of sweat lodges or other ceremonies purportedly that are derived from Native American traditions. Some of these practices clearly hinder and even thwart specific Native American religious practices.⁷ Yet such threats to Native American religious practice seem small compared to the policies of Federal and State governments which fail to protect, or directly destroy (often through road building and subsequent commercial enterprise) the land base and specific places considered essential for ceremony, herb gathering, and so on.⁸

This essay, however, focuses on cases of the borrowing and sharing of Native American spirituality where it is difficult to find agreement about what constitutes proper conduct or easily discern social impacts.⁹ The following case studies and

reflections are motivated equally by the belief that threats to Native American cultural integrity and religious practice are real and should be forthrightly resisted, and by a fear that blanket condemnations of the appropriation of Native American cultural practices may hinder the nascent and fragile alliances developing in some regions between Indians and non-Indians, and thereby erode the survival prospects of native peoples, their cultures, and places.¹⁰

The primary purpose of this paper is to provide careful descriptions of the specific dynamics involved, and of the arguments about, the appropriation of Native American spirituality, so that readers can form their own views about these phenomena. A secondary purpose is to submit my own views about these dynamics for the reader's consideration, with the understanding that I consider them to be tentative and subject to further revision. Ultimately I hope the description and reflections in this paper will contribute to dialogue and behaviours that will reduce the tensions attending these phenomena.

I began this inquiry with three main perspectives about the appropriation of Native American spirituality in mind. To oversimplify, one view argued similarly to Churchill that, however well intended, such borrowing represents a form of cultural genocide, either destroying such traditions by syncretistically transforming them as they selectively borrow from them, and/or directly threatening Indian survival by assuming that native spiritualities are dead and in need of resuscitation by whites. A second view contended that the appropriation of *Native American* religion is impossible, since the resulting phenomenon is no longer *Native American* religion. A third view held that, since the borrowing of myth, symbol, and rite from one group by another is a central characteristic of cultural and religious evolution, it is inappropriate for religious studies scholars to categorically condemn such developments. Such condemnations would inevitably privilege one form of religion over another.¹¹

Some readers would like to know something about my conclusions at the outset. For now, I hope it will suffice to say that I have found—in various ways to be specified later—that there is merit to and legitimate concerns expressed in each of the preceding three views. Other readers will be interested to know whether and to what extent I have participated in ceremonies led by or borrowed from Native American traditions. My participation in Native American ceremony has been limited to several occasions where Indians and Euroamerican environmental activists have gathered in solidarity around issues of mutual concern. Often at such occasions prayers or other ceremonies are performed, usually by an Indian elder or medicine person. My own participation has been limited to standing and respectfully listening to such proceedings.¹²

Case Studies

The following discussion is based on field observations and archival research conducted between 1990 and 1996 exploring several streams of the North American Deep Ecology (or Radical Environmental) movement, focusing especially on its radical vanguard, Earth First! Earth First! is best known for dramatic civil disobedience campaigns and the use of sabotage in their efforts to thwart commercial civil disobedience campaigns and the remaining roadless areas.¹³ Earth First! activists believe that the natural world has value apart from its usefulness to humans. This moral claim is often grounded in mystical experiences in the natural world that yield pantheistic and/or panentheistic world views, and is often combined with a sense that nature is full of animate, spiritual intelligences, including but not always limited to animals, who can communicate with humans. I have previously labelled Earth First!'s religious orientation 'primal spirituality' because many

within this subculture venerate and seek to learn from and emulate the world's remaining indigenous cultures, especially those cultures unassimilated into the global market economy. They generally consider such cultures to be spiritually and ecologically wise.¹⁴

The desire of many deep ecologists to learn from indigenous cultures produces an impulse to borrow ritual practices.¹⁵ In North America, this has been facilitated by the increasing openness of some Native Americans to such cultural sharing and by the proliferation of New Age practitioners and institutes claiming to be authentic bearers of such practices. The following case study examines such appropriation within the Deep Ecology movement and explores the ensuing controversy among those Indians and Earth Firsters who are attempting to work out an alliance in defense of places that both consider sacred.

Gary Snyder: Early Appropriation by an Elder of the Deep Ecology Movement

Gary Snyder is considered an 'elder' within the Deep Ecology movement. His Pulitzer prize winning book, *Turtle Island*,¹⁶ borrowed its title from a Native American name for North America. Snyder hoped to promote what he took to be native wisdom regarding the sacredness of the landscape, believing that ultimately all people are capable of becoming psychologically and spiritually Native American.¹⁷ During his most formative years a Native American path was inaccessible to him so he went to Japan to study Zen Buddhism, eventually calling himself 'a practicing Buddhist, or Buddhist-shamanist'.¹⁸ Snyder was subsequently criticized for 'cultural imperialism in the adoption of the persona of a white shaman/healer'.¹⁹ He responded that shamanism is a universal cultural experience, is not 'proprietary' . . . to any one culture, and is found everywhere throughout most of pre-history, not only among Native Americans. Although crediting Native Americans for preserving shamanism in North America, Snyder insisted that at the center of shamanism is 'a teaching from the nonhuman'. Shamanistic experiences are widely available, Snyder believes, because they are ultimately rooted in 'a naked experience that some people have out in the woods'.²⁰ He argues that many Native American stories, like the trickster and the woman who married the Bear . . . are found all over the world. Nobody owns them. Its only a lack of [a global] perspective that would make people think such things are their own property'.²¹

With such a perspective Snyder participates in rituals invented and borrowed by those in his own intentional community in the foothills of California's Sierra Nevada mountains. Once when I mentioned to him that new rituals are unfolding within the Deep Ecology movement that he helped inspire he cautioned that it takes time to discern if newly developed rituals are authentic. Nevertheless, he then expressed optimism that profound and new rituals may well be unfolding. Explaining that his community has been doing ceremonies at May day and Halloween for twenty-two years, he commented, we're 'just beginning to feel we're getting it right. Basically we're synthesizing Buddhist, European pagan (Maypole), and Native American elements, and combining it in our own experience', and he added that there are many communists working on similar ritual processes. 'We're trying to find a middle ground between our interests—like I'm a fairly orthodox Buddhist—but I can recognize a lot of value in other traditions'.

Snyder and his community's selective borrowing from Native American spirituality and blending of it with religious practices from other traditions presages the type of

appropriation found in the North American Deep Ecology movement in general—and especially in Earth First!

'American Indian Spirituality' in the Earth First! Movement

The most important spiritual home for many Earth First! activists resembles what religion scholar Amanda Porterfield calls 'American Indian Spirituality' and defines as 'a countercultural movement whose proponents define themselves against the cultural system of American Society'.²² The central tenets of this spirituality,

include the condemnation of American exploitation of nature and mistreatment of Indians, regard to precolonial America as a sacred place where nature and humanity lived in plentiful harmony . . . and an underlying belief that American Indian attitudes toward nature are a means of revitalizing American culture.²³

Such beliefs are pervasive in Earth First!, although I have not encountered anyone claiming to systematically practice Native American religion. I have found, however, a variety of ritual processes and practices inspired by and borrowed from Native American traditions, generally in a piece-meal and unsystematic way, and combined freely with practices borrowed from neo-paganism, traditional religions (especially Buddhism, Taoism, and Hinduism), and even self-help groups and the human potential movement.

Among the practices borrowed (explicitly or implicitly) from Native American cultures are the sweat lodge, the burning of purifying sage, the passing of a talking stick during community meetings, ritual processes such as the Council of All Beings which involve a solitary seeking of nature spirits in a way that resembles vision quests,²⁴ the taking (or discovery) of 'earth names', group and solitary wilderness experiences undertaken under the influence of peyote or hallucinogenic mushrooms, 'tribal unity' and war dances characterized by ecstatic dancing and prolonged drumming (which bear no resemblance, as far as I can discern, to Native American dancing); neo-pagan ritualizing that sometimes borrows elements from Native American religion such as prayers to the Great Spirit in the four directions; a variety of rhetoric such as 'ho' to express agreement during 'tribal' meetings; and 'hoka-hey', an exclamation sometimes spoken to register approval of expressions of militant defiance against the oppressors of nature. A small number of these activists live in tepees and do not cut their hair sharing the belief held by some Native Americans that their strength would be dissipated were they to cut it. Shamanic beliefs in transpersonal experience, such as the possibility of interspecies communication and soul-travel beyond this world, are sometimes found in movement poetry, song, and art.

The sweat lodge appears to be a form of borrowing and is offered at some Earth First! gatherings. I have not participated in these ceremonies but from interviews and by observing the sign-up sheets, it is clear that they contain a variety of ritual practices. One sweat held at woman's retreat, for example, was led by a Euroamerican woman who indicated that she was in training with a Native American spiritual leader and was authorized by him to lead this sweat. A participant indicated that the sweat lodge resembled a traditional Native American ceremony.²⁵

At the 1993 Earth First! 'rendezvous', at least three different sweats were advertised, 'neo-pagan', 'Native American', and a 'woman's sweat'. Defensiveness was apparent, however, and behind the scenes, criticisms of the sweats were expressed by a couple of American Indian Movement activists. Some Earth Firsters responded that these sweats, although inspired by Native American religious practices, were not Native American ceremonies.

Ambivalence pervades the movement with regard to sweat lodges. One woman chose not to attend an Earth First! sweat after the 1993 rendezvous because it was not led by a Native American and therefore was not 'traditional' enough. (She conceded, however, that it was meaningful for the participants.) Others will only attend 'neo-pagan' sweats because, they believe, such sweats do not 'trip-off' Native Americans. Still others attend neo-pagan sweats simply because criticism of Native American style sweats has become so fierce.

Some of the confusion about what to do results from differing perspectives among Native Americans themselves. However, most Indians would prefer that non-Indians explore their own heritage as a spiritual resource rather than borrowing from Indian traditions.²⁶ Yet I have also often heard Indians say that Native American religious practices are crucial if the world is to be preserved. Some believe that it is only pure, *uninfluenced* native ceremony that can preserve the world. But a significant minority argue that non-Indian participation in 'the red road' is necessary if humans are to reharmonize life on earth. Still others believe that borrowing from Native American traditions is nothing but another incident of Euroamerican thievery.

For example, one deeply spiritual Earth First! musician who has diligently worked to forge alliances with Native Americans was told by a Native American friend that non-Indians should not participate in sweat ceremonies. This Earth Firster empathizes with native concerns about the integrity of their culture, but quietly indicates that such ceremonies have facilitated some of his most formative spiritual experiences, drawing him closer to the creator and all creatures. I have heard such testimony from numerous participants in this movement. Although he is willing to forgo such ceremonies in the presence of Indians who might take offense, he stated emphatically that he would not entirely forgo this ritual practice, because 'nobody's going to fuck with my spirituality'.

This example shows how the hope of most Earth First! activists to preserve the natural world becomes intertwined in a complicated way with their respect for Native American spirituality and their feelings of kinship with the natural world, their concomitant desire to preserve the indigenous cultures there revere, and their own tendency to find meaning in indigenous myth and ritual practice. These related but not easily reconcilable tendencies can be illustrated by discussing some of the complications resulting from the effort to forge an alliance among Earth Firsters, traditional Indians, and militant American Indian Movement activists.

A Morning Circle

Earth Firsters chose Mt. Graham as their national rendezvous site in the summer of 1993 partly because they consider it a 'sacred island ecosystem' due to its unique and threatened flora and fauna, but as importantly, because people they consider sacred, namely the Apaches, who also revere the mountain, believe a University of Arizona telescope project there is an act of desecration.²⁷ Moreover, the Earth Firsters hoped that their defense of the mountain would promote a broad alliance with Native Americans.

Although traditional Apache spiritual leaders had invited Earth Firsters to ceremonies on their reservation and on Mt. Graham itself, tensions flared during a morning meeting at this rendezvous. These tensions reveal diverse views among Earth Firsters and Indian activists about the appropriate ways to respect Native American culture and religion.

Precipitating the long, emotionally wrenching discussion was an evening where inebriated Earth First! revelers encroached upon an 'alcohol free campfire'. Complaints were raised at the next morning's 'circle' (begun after the passing of smouldering, purifying sage). The assembly was reminded that the Apache elders had requested that there be no alcohol on the Mountain. Someone proposed a resolution to this effect. (As early as the 1991 rendezvous in Vermont, activists worried that the rendezvous's alcohol-fuelled party atmosphere could alienate Native American activists who decry alcoholism and its contributions to cultural genocide.)

A majority were willing to pass quickly a resolution disapproving of alcohol consumption. The outnumbered opposition, however, was difficult to budge. Virtually all of the debate centered around whether alcohol consumption was compatible with respect for the sacred people—the Apaches and other indigenous nature peoples—and the sacred mountain itself.

Among the most prominent voices was a young American Indian Movement activist named Angel. Appealing for abstinence from alcohol, he articulated two arguments often repeated thereafter: drinking is disrespectful to the mountain itself, and to the indigenous peoples of this continent, whose nature-beneficent cultures are threatened with extinction by the dominant European culture. 'In our hearts we don't want you to drink, he entreated, 'look to your heart. Look to respect these natural places'. 'If your family is into the bottle . . . you'll respect that by not drinking . . . You're supposed to be our allies, not our enemies, and you can't be our allies if you don't help us here'.

At this point, the debate went back and forth. 'As an anarchist', a woman helping to block a resolution against drinking explained, 'I don't want any restrictions. Even if we make restrictions, they will be ignored'. Several others agreed loudly, clapping and exclaiming 'ho', ironically using a mode of agreement borrowed from Native Americans. Passionately, and on the verge of tears, a man expressed dismay at such sentiments. 'There are lots of native nations watching us. Many won't come here because of the alcohol, because of their fear' of us, due to our reputation for alcohol abuse. 'We're talking about [risking an alliance with] six million indigenous people in North America!'

This plea did not convince those ideologically opposed to any official position: 'We don't want to make laws about this stuff. It should come from the heart'. Verbalizing his disbelief, another impassioned appeal followed, 'We're arguing about whether or not to respect a mountain. What's going on here? Are we going to respect the mountain or not?' Another confessed to feeling bad that she drank alcohol the previous night, 'I've prayed and asked the Mountain for forgiveness' she exclaimed, 'we can learn a lot from this mountain—and alcohol gets in the way'.

To all this another woman replied incredulously, dismissing the notion that the mountain has an opinion. 'The mountain doesn't care if we drink or not'. Another woman rejoindered that to deny the mountain has a perspective is 'a white view', arguing 'we also have people in our tribe hurting themselves with alcohol' and concluding 'out of respect for the mountain we should not drink'.

Despite occasional interjections opposing the resolution against alcohol consumption, the majority relentlessly mounted their case for it. A wiccan priestess who had facilitated diverse forms of ritual practice in the movement began by expressing her empathy for those who want to drink. 'I come from a Catholic and a pagan perspective. In both, drinking is sacramental'. Normally I'd rebel against rule makers, she continued, 'But here, this is someone else's church. It's right for them, in their church, to ask us not to

drink—just as I would ask them not to use tobacco, their sacrament, in many of our pagan ceremonies'. She also reminded the assembly that Ola Cassadore Davis, the Apache elder leading the opposition to the telescopes, had requested that each morning and night, they all take a moment alone to listen to the Spirit of this mountain. 'If we do that,' she suggested to much clapping and many 'Hosi!' 'that voice will make the decision for us'.

Dennis Davies, a man who leads neo-pagan sweat ceremonies at some Earth First! retreats argued similarly, 'It seems to me that, despite the fact that the entire Earth is sacred, this place is especially sacred. We must remember why we're here, what our duty is. Respect is not to much to ask'.²⁸ A woman agreed, noting that 'We've drawn inspiration from their cultures—is the least we can do—we're talking about helping them to survive'. Another woman argued that there had been too much talking about what 'I' want, not enough about what's good for the Earth or what's good for 'the sacred alliance with the native peoples here'. These appeals were greeted with expressions of approval by at least ninety percent of the approximately two-hundred assembled activists.

After a dissenter again inveighed against more rules, Daniel Zapata, a long-term American Indian Movement activist, stepped forward to state that his people have substances like peyote to alter consciousness, but 'the bottle symbolizes the destruction of our people. If you want to help the family, you have to be in solidarity' with us in this struggle too, he insisted. He concluded by grounding his anti-drinking argument in the sanctity of the Mountain, reasoning 'If we are to respect this mountain you have to respect our bodies that come from it'.

Shortly thereafter, Calvin Hecocota, a Paiute from southern Oregon and a long-term American Indian Movement activist who had worked closely with Earth First! activists since 1989, exclaimed, 'I don't want to have to go home and report that we spent so much time talking about chemical dependence [and] respect for Native Americans. I want to talk about strategies to make respect for the land happen'. Expressing his sense of kinship with the land its inhabitants, he made a variety of observations: the tree people, the bird people, are listening, 'These peoples have to decide if they want you back . . . 'I think about, when you're leaning against a tree, you're leaning against a relative. . . 'I came here to promote community; to pray; to understand that it's all alive'.

After a long discourse he returned to the central debate: 'To be warriors you have to do the [ceremonies] to purify your body. Keep in mind that you are teachers, he urged, 'We need powerful minds and spirits to be real warriors . . . The trees don't need [alcohol, you don't] either'. Ormiously, he warned that alcohol jeopardizes the alliance, 'I'll oppose you coming to sacred mountains if I know you bring alcohol here'.

What is striking about this discourse, especially the views expressed by these Indian activists (and by the Apache elders at other times and places), was that they expected the Earth First! activists to respect their religious practices and the mountain itself. Yet there is disagreement and ambivalence about Earth First!ers and other non-Indians borrowing specific rituals. Nevertheless, a central part of their religious practice is the consecration and veneration of sacred places (in this case, Mt. Graham), and clearly, they expected their allies to conform to and practice this element of their religion through their own acts of consecration and veneration toward this mountain. Indeed, at this rendezvous the Indians present were much more concerned that Earth First!ers act reverently toward the mountain, thereby respecting Native American religion and implicitly borrowing from it, than there was criticism or concern about the borrowing of elements of Native American religion.

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An Alliance Workshop

This can be illustrated by describing a workshop of about 40 Earth First!ers and half a dozen Indians on the theme of the emerging Earth First!-Indian alliance. The workshop immediately followed the morning circle and was led by two Earth First!ers and two Indian activists.

The session was introduced by Patricia, a young Indian activist who asserted that cultural genocide is the underlying theme of the workshop, urging the assembled Euroamerican activists to support their struggle for survival. 'We need you, he explained, because 'you know the language of the enemy, lots of big words. You know a lot about nature. You get to go to the Universities. We need you to help us'. But you can't just be intellectuals, he implored, 'you have to understand our spirituality' and our customs if we're going to work together.

Daniel Zapata also stressed how the Indian community needed the talents of educated earth peoples. He described how alcohol has separated many Indians from the earth, that he himself had been struggling with alcohol for ten years, and that his participation in the Sun Dance helped him realize that he should seek an honourable death, not in a brown bottle, but 'in an act of resistance' against those who would destroy his culture and all their non-human relations.

Zapata then described prophesies that had been emerging among the Sun Dancers and in other Native American communities. 'We're seeing many prophesies saying the same thing. This is a most critical time. We all have a purpose and a meaning here'. He explained that the elders of the Sun Dance believe 'all struggles were one struggle', and that if we 'sage ourselves off [and] sit in a circle [we can] work it out'. Therefore go to the sweat lodges, purify yourselves—the medicine people are saying the time is at hand'. Later in the discussion he again urged the assembly, 'Go out, get naked. . . come to the sweat lodges, pray with the pipe. Give me some of that Earth First! religion. But don't do that with a bottle in your hand. Act not out of guilt, what's done is done'.³⁰

Several times, during interviews with different Native American activists, I was invited to attend a Sun Dance following the rendezvous, including by Tom Bedonie, a spokesperson for the Traditional Independent Diné (Navajo) Nation.³¹ He stressed that one must bring a proper spiritual attitude and that those attending would be questioned before admission.³² Here the concern was not that Euroamericans should eschew sharing in Native American ceremony, but rather, that they do so sincerely. It seemed to be assumed that those in the Mt. Graham resistance who were fighting for endangered species and for the religious freedom of the Apaches, would be worthy—hence the invitations.

Such invitations to sweat lodges or Sun Dances confused some of those assembled who were familiar with criticisms of Euroamerican participation in such ceremonies. One asked if this were appropriate. Another man explained that he was confused about his own identity—detached from his own heritage which at one time was pagan. He said he didn't want to imperil Indian spirituality. Patricia responded 'lots of my people too have forgotten their roots. I've made alliances with all sorts of people everywhere'. But he nevertheless urged them to 'try to go back to your traditions, your family places. Know yourself first', before borrowing our practices. Angel also expressed his clear preference that the whites strive first to return to their own pre-Christian, pagan traditions.³³

To this another man complained that he can't go back and find a Druid for a teacher because non-Indian paganism has been systematically suppressed. Our teachers have all been internal, but this is not enough, he explained. Plainly he continued 'We need

to turn to Native American elders. How else [given the extermination of our own pagan heritage] can we find an earth way? We're asking how to live on this land and we're not trying to rip-off Native Americans'.

Angel responded 'I'm not saying you are', while another Earth Firster declared that Druidary is alive in England and Ireland, recommending a new book on Druidary as a way to steward nature. To this, after agreeing that it is valuable to seek one's roots, another man insisted that now, we are all from Turtle Island, 'the visions and prophecies are here now; the dream time is for all people'.³⁴

Jim O'Conner, who often facilitates the Council of All Beings rituals at Earth First! gatherings, injected another idea, that Earth First! itself was a tribe developing its own nature spirituality. Although he borrows from Native American religion, he insists that he is in a different tribe, 'I'm an Earth Firster,' he proclaimed. Lone Wolf Circles, another Earth Firster involved in facilitating Earth First! ritualizing, also thinks that Earth Firsters are developing their own form of tribal nature religion and that, in the alliance between Indians and Earth Firsters, both can contribute to each other's spirituality. He believes that a prerequisite to such reciprocity is a recognition that both Indian and Earth First! spiritual practices deserve respect.

The alliance workshop was capped when Calvin Hecocota suggested that the key to Spirituality is to go out and talk to the land'. That is how we learn about spirituality, he explained. We've been programmed to wait for others to guide us, but,

you find it within your own spirit. Don't wait for guidance. Only the Creator can do it. Do vision quests, be alone. Go talk to creation. Ask for permission to enter. All the trees are watching you. After watching you, the trees will pray for you, they will help you. Go out alone, don't announce it, its a personal step. [He concluded:] I'm on a search. I've had a dream that somewhere in this land—we'll focus on the biggest occupation of a mountain or a river, with three to five thousand people, to prove a point, that this place, all of it, all the beings, are so important that we'll protect it. I'm searching for that place now. A major occupation will take place. A place the government and multi-national corporations want most. Will you be the Earth people? Let's show them what resistance is. [Shouts of approval.] We do share an alliance of nations, the tree nation, plant nations, animal nations, people nations. Raise your hands in solidarity with the whole world, in the creators. Let's show them what the spirit of people is. The children deserve more than detritus—Let's raise the spirit and conscience of this whole county, and find a place we can all converge on. I'm a firm believer in *no compromise!*

Dennis Martinez: Ambivalence, Culture Cops and Hot Heads

A month prior to this workshop, in the Sinkyone Wilderness of Northern California, I spoke with Dennis Martinez, who is a board member of the Society for Ecological Restoration and a Native American (an O'odham-Chicano) activist involved with the Takelma Intertribal Project and the American Indian Cultural Center, located in southern Oregon.³⁵ Martinez advocates the use of 'traditional ecological knowledge' or 'Indian stewardship' as a model for land management. He has fought alongside those members of the small Indian bands of Northern California who have sought to preserve sacred places in northern California wilderness areas. In such struggles, Martinez has worked closely with Northwestern Earth First! activists. Consequently, he is well aware that many of these activists are drawn to Native American spiritual practices.

During the interview, after he mentioned the poetry of Gary Snyder, I asked him to respond to Snyder's view that, because animistic perceptions and shamanism are prevalent wherever monotheism is not, no one province or tradition has a monopoly on

such spiritualities. Martinez noted that Indians have a legitimate concern about non-Indians introducing 'other cultural influences' when participating in Indian ceremonies and that given the diverse threats to Native American cultural survival, such blending can be destructive. Nevertheless, he acknowledged Snyder's point about the universality of nature spirituality.

Everything is alive and has a spirit . . . it's universal, that's true, all tribal people [have this experience]. [But] also, you don't have to go to Indian ceremonies to communicate with the spirits of this land, or go to sweat lodge, or things like that. In the old days, the [Indian] people used to do a lot more alone-type stuff; ceremonies are a lot more public today than they used to be. It's really kind of dangerous to [go more public] because you're open to all sorts of other cultural influences. But the real thing is that you, as a spiritual sovereign, and the Creator, and the spirits of the land, you can talk to [them]. . . . Its a matter of going and believing that nature is sentient and can respond to you, and has a spirit that can respond to you. That's what it's all about. You don't need a group . . . ceremony . . . [or] ritual to do it. There are certain things that come out of that, that are powerful, and healing takes place, but to communicate as a Native, you can do that alone in the woods . . . The old people always spent a lot of time alone . . .

There are Indians who say that white people can go back to their European [pagan] roots, but for all practical purposes the ties to that land were gone a very long time ago. [But] you don't have to go the Indian way . . . [or] resurrect Celtic traditions to be spiritual, it's all very simple, you can just go direct back to the land.³⁶

I then reiterated Churchill's critique of non-Indian borrowing and profiteering from Native American spiritual practices and suggested that even Churchill, and certainly the Traditional Elders Circle (which has condemned such profiteering), seemed to leave room for respectful not-for-profit participation in, and learning from, Native American spirituality and wisdom.³⁷ Martinez replied,

I don't know any medicine people, from South Dakota or Minnesota, or Sedona Arizona who don't have mostly white people going to their sweat lodge. But there are many who only have Indians, but even those teachers have white people involved in the ceremony at some point, so I would say that horse is out of the barn and its too late to close the door, but you have to direct the process.

Martinez seemed sad that the horse *was* out of the barn but nevertheless was hopeful that the outcome could be positive. Martinez believes however, that it is unlikely the outcome will be positive unless 'legitimate medicine people' oversee the more widespread extension of Native American spirituality.

Martinez does not think, however, that the danger is people *selling* the practices: 'that will come back on them'.³⁸ He relates a story about Walter Bresette, a member of the Red Cliff band of the Lake Superior Anishinabe (Chippewa), a prominent defender of treaty rights and co-founder of the Green Party in Wisconsin, who has worked hard to forge alliances between environmentalists and Native Americans in the Great Lakes region.³⁹ When someone asked Bresette about whites taking the spiritual ways, he recounted a time when he attended a pow wow immediately after being called a 'woods nigger' by the rednecks in Northern Wisconsin. There he witnessed an Indian man verbally assailing a white woman for reading Tarot cards. 'Walter started listing all the things in the pow wow that were modern and not traditional, and he said, 'how do we know that the Spirit hasn't told her to do it, she has the right to pursue the calling.' Martinez commented, 'That's a real spiritual person talking. Most culture cops are not personally very spiritual people. . . . I don't believe in culture cops'.

Of course Martinez understands why people are upset: it seems like their religion is 'the last thing [Indian] people have that's theirs'. He agrees that the introduction of non-Indian influences can be destructive. And he understands why people think that the commercialism of Indian practices is dangerous, why people are 'upright' about money-changing hands, 'even though in the old days there was always an exchange for healing'. But he insists that,

really really spiritual people are not culture cops, they don't exclude. The bitemess is understandable. But the commercialism will come back on those who abuse the ways. You have to have faith in the Spirit. It's not a human thing, it's a spiritual thing. People everywhere are too removed from that idea of what spiritual is. Spiritual people are scattered evenly throughout all ethnic, racial and cultural groups. [Although there is a lot of anger about feeling ripped-off, Martinez concluded that, in] the Indian way, you pray for everybody . . . The real tragedy is that the really spiritual people, the elders, are dying; and that there are too many hotheads.⁴⁰

Vision Quests—for a Fee

I have entered into the discussion of the appropriation of Native American spirituality with reservations, cognizant of the legitimate fears, sensitivity, and anger about such appropriation. Certainly there are examples within the deep ecology movement, including within Earth First!, that are troubling for anyone concerned about the flourishing of Native American people and culture.

For example, during the spring of 1993, Lone Wolf Circles (mentioned above as one who thought that Indians and Earth Firsters were tribal nature peoples who could learn from one another), and a group calling itself the 'Earth Ways Tribe', advertised a series of wilderness workshops: some dealt with practical wilderness skills, others apparently borrowed from Native American spirituality. The brochure described Lone Wolf as a shaman 'of Nordic descent' who 'draws from twenty years of visionary wilderness experience to reach a consciousness once common to all peoples'. Lone Wolf was to lead vision quests and rites of passage, drawing on 'traditional tracking skills, ceremonial sweats . . . a pipe ceremony . . . , ritual, drumming, walking meditation, personalized study of the medicine wheel [including the mapping of one's growth on it], and the intensity of the wilderness experience [itself] to reconnect, to remember our place in the sacred flux. . .'. The flyer explained that 'The quests end with silent time on a power spot, and for those who are willing, a solo of one to four nights on the Kachina Cliffs, places of animate spirit'.

Perhaps anticipating objections, the brochure also asserted, in a way reminiscent of Gary Snyder's defense of white shamanism that, 'throughout the history of humankind, our primal ancestors have turned to the wilderness for instruction and empowerment. On every shimmering continent, indigenous Africans, Celts and Vikings all engaged in some form of Vision Quest, instigating and celebrating the transitions in an individual's life. As a result the tribe was blessed with shared insights available nowhere but the source itself: raw, inspired nature'.

Lone Wolf planned to charge between \$350 and \$475 for these ceremonies, bringing down the wrath of several Earth Firsters who took to calling him a charlatan, mostly behind his back. One public rebuke, a scathing letter published in the *Earth First!* journal, clearly identified Lone Wolf in everything but name. The letter began by decrying the physical and cultural genocide waged against the native people of this land. Then, borrowing from Ward Churchill's classic attack on 'plastic medicine men,' the author vented.

Everywhere, (every-fucking-where) one looks plastic medicine men/women and pseudo shamans are popping up calling up spirits like Kokopelli or selling sweat lodge ceremonies, vision quests or rites of passage. These new age morons . . . are ripping off native culture and their naive new age groupies. . . Sincerely practicing Native religious beliefs on an individual bases (sic) is not wrong, but exploiting Native religious beliefs for personal gain whether it be for money, or to get the pants or skirt off some naive new age wanna be is fucking wrong.⁴¹

The letter's author concluded, 'just because one is a long time EFL activist doesn't give one an unquestioned right to exploit Native American culture'.⁴² The workshops did not occur and Lone Wolf's attempt to charge money for them was viewed as a mistake by many Earth First! activists, even those who value his contributions to tribal unity and spiritual ritualizing.

I know of no other examples within Earth First! where activists charged for rituals inspired by Native American spirituality. Lone Wolf responded to these criticisms in the subsequent issue of *Earth First!*, arguing that there is,

a fine line . . . between protecting the exclusivity and privacy of one's cultural processes and invalidating another's personal, [spiritual] connection [to the earth]. What of non-Indians who have grown up on the reservation, and call a particular tribal world-view their own? What should a non-Indian do if invited by a Native American to join a ceremony? The line is further blurred when we consider the ritual use of sweat lodges, drums and vision quests, which are common to primal peoples of every race and point of origin.⁴³

Lone Wolf noted that most people 'are of mixed lineage with no single point of origin to return to [and therefore] . . . it doesn't serve anyone, or the Earth, to make them feel 'out of place.' Since 'we have lost our Pleistocene shamans [and] have had our Celtic/Nordic rituals stolen from us', he continued, we must 'listen to the elders of North America . . . [after all] we have no elders to turn to for instruction, no rites to call [our] own'. This is why,

the deep ecology and land based environmental communities have begun to fashion rituals relevant to . . . the planet's dire straits . . . So in base camps next to threatened forests, at river rendezvous, and even in county jails . . . they piece together pieces of prayers, symbols and ideas. They draw from the universe to tap the power of the sacred circle, sweats and burning sage. They gather bagpipes, drums, rattles, a saxophone—and open themselves to giving voice to Spirit, to Gaia.⁴⁴

Despite these rationales for borrowing from Native Americans, at the 1993 Earth First! rendezvous, after two Indian activists objected to a scheduled sweat lodge, and after Lone Wolf explained to these activists that medicine sweats were practiced 'by my own Nordic and Sami ancestors', he nevertheless asked a Euroamerican friend to refrain from leading a sweat with his Plains-style medicine pipe. Instead, he urged him to conduct the sweat 'with only things the meadow provides. Act out no ritual that doesn't arise from our own tribe and our own experience, and sing no song in any language not channelled through us by the spirit'. Describing his approach in *Earth First!*, Lone Wolf explained that in this exhortation,

I was giving voice to sentiments I'd heard from [Winona LaDuke], a powerful native activist [who said], 'It is essential that people reconnect with Earth-based religions, but many times people are trying to practice Lakota vision questions (sic) or other practices

out of context. You can't practice Lakota without being in the context of a Lakota community'⁴⁴

These apparently contradictory impulses—defending the borrowing of Native American wisdom and practices while eliminating obvious Native American elements in a sweat ceremony when objections arose—illustrate how difficult it has been for Lone Wolf Circles and others to appropriate elements from Native American spirituality while simultaneously appeasing those critical of such appropriation. Recent events suggest that the problem has become perennial. Sweat lodges were again controversial at the February 1995 Earth First! activists' conference near Austin, Texas. One planned sweat was labelled 'spiritual—not Native American', a second was set aside for women 'in their moon', and a third for children and parents. A fourth was labelled a 'party sweat' and scheduled because some of the organizers felt that activists who do not consider themselves to be religious should have an opportunity to 'enjoy' the lodge.

At a morning circle, Lakota activist Guy Lopez objected to the party sweat. He asserted that this sweat was sacrilegious (especially since alcohol was permitted) and was more than enough to ensure that Native American traditionalists would not work with Earth First! In a low key manner he nonetheless proclaimed that he was 'ready for an action', and threatened to tear down the lodge and widely publicize the offense.

In response a meeting was arranged with the lodge builder who, upon hearing the objections, decided to dismantle the lodges. He said that he viewed this area as holy ground and he apologized for giving any offense. Still, he defended the lodges arguing that, as an anthropologist, he knows that all religions borrow. He added a personal testimony regarding how sweat lodges had transformed his own consciousness and bonded him to the Earth. Nevertheless, by the end of the conference, the organizing committee had drafted a formal apology that was delivered to Mr. Lopez.⁴⁶

Mr. Lopez responded by supporting the decision to take down the lodges, indicating that he did not want such barriers to cooperative relations. But he also indicated that he was not opposed to their participation in sweat lodge ceremonies, only sacrilegious ones. He told the gathering that indigenous people could have been present blessing this meeting and holding sweats here for you'. There is nothing like having traditional elders support your work. Without such support, he said, something is missing here. Underscoring that alcohol and a women's moon time should never be mixed with the sweat ceremonies he warned that if the American Indian Movement were present, the lodges would have been dismantled. He concluded offering the hope that these difficulties could be overcome.⁴⁷

A Mountain Hermit

Lou Gold provides a contrasting example. A burnt-out social activist and professor of urban sociology, Gold retreated to the Pacific Northwest seeking personal healing and regeneration. There he heard a talk by Oren Lyons, a traditional chief of the Onondaga Nation. As Gold recalls it, Lyons said 'Indians are the only people who speak for the trees, for the water, for all beings, and when you lose that, [you've lost everything]'. Lyons inspired Gold to get involved politically and soon he was arrested and convicted for blocking logging trucks.

Gold rejected the condition of his probation, that he stay out of the forest, telling the judge, 'the forest is my church, and you can't restrict my religion. . . . I'm going to go back in there'. He had brought Ed Little Crow, a Native American friend with whom he had participated in sweat lodge ceremonies 'to witness to my authenticity and sincerity'. He

also issued a press release as he set off for a vigil on Bald Mountain (within the Kalmiopsis wilderness of southwestern Oregon) explaining that it was 'for peaceful and religious purposes'.

Gold spent 56 days on the mountain, falling in love with it. In an act of consecration he set up a medicine wheel and began praying every sunset on the mountaintop, resolving to return every summer as an act of religious devotion. He recalls magnificent discoveries during a second summer on Bald Mountain. One afternoon, standing in the medicine wheel during a thunderstorm with 'lightening . . . striking everywhere, arms wide open . . . singing at the top of my lungs a makeshift Indian chant . . . my version of it . . . as these lightening bolts were hurtling everywhere'. Afterward the mountain,

settled down into this outrageous peacefulness [revealing] what I had been looking for, that in the wild . . . its not an issue of peace, not a choice between violence and non-violence, [after all], what can be more violent than a raging thunderstorm . . . at the same time what can be more peaceful than that gentle calm after the storm. And I looked at [everything around me] and I saw them as equally valuable. And I said damn, I haven't been looking for peace, I've been looking for harmony. What the natural world represents is a harmony between elements. And I looked around at the medicine wheel, and I suddenly had another level of awareness . . . that it was all in the medicine wheel, the west is the darkness, the colour is black, the east is the sunrise, and the colour is yellow, the south is a peaceful place of young growing things and the north is a fierce place of struggle. And what the medicine wheel said was that we had to walk the whole circle, that we couldn't get around the circle by preferring the light over the dark, or by preferring the calm security of growth and gentleness to the fierce struggle of the winter.

This experience led Gold to conclude that the 'challenge to human beings was to walk in balance to experience [all these elements] intelligently. Expect the snake to be the snake, don't be angry at it'. Gold recounted that through this experience he saw that 'the expression of goodness in a natural system was the intricate web of life itself, it included everything, including the fact that one organism eats another organism . . . it was all good'.

Gold was not practising Native American religion but was influenced and inspired by it; yet he did not do so lightly. When I asked him how Native American religion had influenced him, he initially denied that he knew much about it. Nevertheless, he stated that native ceremonies had played an important role in his path to forest activism. Shortly after moving to Oregon he attended Lakota-based sweat ceremonies with Ed Little Crow, reporting that 'the sweat lodge just connected me with Earth, the mother'. After describing the ceremony, and how the heat forces one to hug the earth, Gold explained how it enhances one's connection to the earth, 'its like you're sitting there in the womb of the Earth and the rocks are actually referred to as the Ancient Ones. . . . He recalled how when standing on the top of Bald Mountain, he felt the need for a ritual, and that making a medicine wheel seemed appropriate. On the mountain,

you want to talk to the four directions, to the sky above, to the Earth below . . . it just seemed natural and comfortable . . . The most important thing that I do [to ritually bond with the mountain] is going up to the mountain top every sunset, lighting some cedar and sage, walking the circle, and doing a little ritual, in which I thank the West for the darkness, the North for the struggle, the East for the vision and the light, the South for the ability to grow, and the sky above and the Earth below, and then I acknowledge that there is something greater than me, the Mystery, the Great Spirit. And I enact a relationship by doing the ritual, and that in fact creates the relationship.

Gold believes that ritual is very different depending on how grounded people are in their relationship with the Earth. He believes that usually, hippies doing sweat lodges are not grounded in such a relationship, but that it is different with an Indian medicine man. Even though Gold obviously prefers that Indian spiritual leaders lead sweat ceremonies, in his view, not all ceremonies must be led by them. 'People like my ceremony on Bald Mountain . . . this is my tenth summer, and I have seen people do the ritual [even] in driving storms'.

Many Native American ways and ideas 'just seem comfortable' to Gold. 'I use them and try to do so in ways that will be of service to those who are listening'. Nevertheless, Gold said that 'I don't consider myself a follower of Native American religion . . . my spirituality is soup, its stew . . . but when its time to find the right metaphors, I find [Native American] metaphors come easily to me [and have become] a source of genuine religious experience'. Native American cosmologies 'give me an ability to access what I'm calling ecological consciousness . . . feeling the relationship to all this magnificent stuff we call the creation'.

When asked if he uses such metaphors in his talks in order to promote ecological consciousness, Gold answered, 'Sure, if my mission were to promote detachment. I'd go the Buddhist direction, but my mission is teaching people about our relationship to the Earth, and trying to foster the development of an ecologically based consciousness'. Thus, all 'metaphors and ceremonies and rituals from the aboriginal world [are important] but the only one[s] I have access to are Native American'.

Furthermore, Gold explained, Native American symbols are preferable to the philosophical and abstract parlance of deep ecology. Promoting spiritual breakthroughs is a poetic challenge. 'I'm not going to stand up in front of a group of people and talk about biocentrism, because it won't reach into them [affectively]'. It is more effective, Gold insists, to use the Lakota medicine wheel 'to assert a vision of the harmony of all parts'. This Euroamerican deep ecology activist believes that Native American symbols and ceremonies are the most effective means of tapping into human spiritual potential and facilitating activism in defense of the natural world.⁴⁸ From this perspective, the appropriation of at least some elements of Native American religion is an important prescription for the future harmony of life on the planet.

When asked if he has been criticized by Native Americans for anything related to his affinity for Native American spirituality, Gold replied 'not at all [although] I was worried about it'. He then told a story: 'There is an incredible song from the Sun Dance. I tried to sing it, but couldn't remember it well, and I evolved it my own way. Later [at a sweat lodge], I asked to sing the Sun Dance song the wrong way, and my Indian friends said ok.' Then I sang it as I had done on Bald Mountain. Afterward they said, 'Lou you didn't sing the song the wrong way, you sang the Bald Mountain song the right way'. Invariably, Gold said, Indians who hear my [public presentations] say, 'good work, keep doing it. When I asked Ed Little Crow how to pray with the medicine wheel on Bald Mountain he said, 'there are two ways to do it. Do it like your grandfather taught it, or come from your heart. People will know and will recognize it [as authentic], and you'll know'.

Summary and Reflections on the Ethics of Appropriation

Moral reflection on the appropriation of Native American spirituality requires an adequate understanding of the diverse ways it occurs and the complex social contexts from which it emerges. By illustrating the complexity of the controversy the preceding examples erode quick judgments about such appropriation. Reflections on the ethics of

appropriation follow. Some of the analysis and suggestions will be controversial: they are designed to spur constructive dialogue about the ethics of appropriation and promote understanding among those engaged in the defense of diverse lands and cultures.

There certainly are controversial examples within radical environmental subcultures of the appropriation of Native American religion; even though these groups are generally sympathetic to if not romantic about Native Americans. Yet as we have seen—many of these activists express concern about cultural imperialism and strenuously object to any profiteering associated with borrowing Indian religious practices—and still others object to any borrowing whatsoever.⁴⁹

Generally speaking, I have not found comprehensive attempts to appropriate Native American religious practice but rather a piecemeal borrowing from such practices and rhetoric. The activists engaged in such borrowing do not presume that they are actually practicing *Native American* religion. Rather, they tend to believe that they are developing their own tradition, that their 'tribe' is different from but has spiritual affinity with what they take to be the spiritual perceptions of traditional Native Americans; namely, a sense that the land and all its inhabitants are sacred, related as kin, capable of communicating, and worthy of defense.

Similarly, I have not found Euroamerican Earth Firsters pretending to be Indians or Native American spiritual leaders, as has occurred within the New Age movement. The closest thing to this was an occasion when, at an Earth First! women's gathering, a Euroamerican woman led a sweat after asserting that she was in training under a Native American spiritual leader. Given the controversial nature of such occurrences, the desire by Earth Firsters to build an alliance with Indian traditionalists and activists and recent confrontations about sweat lodges, this occurrence would be less likely today.

A somewhat similar case involves the few Earth Firsters who consider themselves to be shamans and who engage in what they take to be Shamanic practices. Such claims are greeted with suspicion and even derision by some within the movement. Nevertheless, those experimenting with Shamanic ritualizing can plausibly argue that no ethnic group can claim sole ownership of such spiritual practice. This is amply documented in ethnographic literature.

Although there have been examples of borrowing within Earth First! that are insensitive to or ignorant of native concerns, thoughtful reflection on these phenomena, and the effort to construct mutually respectful relations between Indian and non-Indians, requires more than demanding that people abstain from practices that some (or many) find offensive. An effort to resolve these issues also requires that those most hostile to cross-cultural borrowing acknowledge, among other things, that the blending of myth, symbol and rite is a common and rarely escaped dimension of religious life—especially in the modern period—since few societies today remain insular.⁵¹

The academic study of religion has focused significant attention on syncretic processes. The emerging consensus suggests that syncretism (the blending of elements of two traditions) and bricolage (the amalgamation of many bits and pieces of diverse cultural systems) are prevalent in the production of religion, and that often these processes are contested and subject to negotiation.⁵² David Chidester puts vividly such an understanding when says that conflict over the ownership of sacred symbols is so common that religion may be seen as 'that dimension of culture involving the stealing back and forth of sacred symbols', when stealing is understood as a 'short-hand designation for complex negotiations over the ownership of symbols'.⁵³ Many studies attend to status and power relations in such contestations over the ownership of sacred symbols. Simon Harrison describes how in Melanesia deities and the rituals related to

them are treated 'as a category of property or wealth' and are safeguarded 'from misappropriation from covetous outsiders' even occasionally by violence. Nevertheless, he notes, such rituals may for a price be divulged (either for exclusive use or as a performance entitlement)⁵⁴ and in diverse places ethnographers have found transfers of 'property rights in rituals across cultural or ethnic boundaries', including among Native Americans.⁵⁵

André Droogers shows that opponents of syncretic processes are often resisting threats to their own hegemony over religious production.⁵⁶ In another provocative study, Harrison overviews diverse contests over rituals, likening them to prestige goods in gift economies whereby rituals 'symbolize their owner's identities and function to establish and maintain social relationships', thereby revealing the relative prestige and legitimacy of political actors.⁵⁷ Harrison believes that focusing on the process of ritual acquisition, preparation, and staging, can 'make the current state of a complex and shifting network of power relations apprehensible'.⁵⁸

Charles Stewart and Rosalind Shaw suggest that, while it is important to attend to power differentials in these processes, it is not only colonizers and the relatively powerful who exercise agency in syncretic processes. Arguing from studies of

religious synthesis in contexts of colonialism and other forms of . . . exploitation, . . . syncretism may be . . . a form of resistance because hegemonic practices are never simply absorbed wholesale through passive 'acculturation', at the very least, their incorporation involves some kind of transformation . . . which converts them to people's own meanings and projects. In colonial contexts syncretism on the part of colonial subjects [can] have particularly subversive consequences.

In many such contexts, the penetration of Western forms of capitalism and cultural hegemony has been—paradoxically—both subverted and promoted through syncretism. . . . [Indeed] the appropriation of dominance and the subversion of that dominance may be enacted at the same time, in the same syncretic act. Subversion may even be an unintended consequence of a syncretic process. . . .⁵⁹

The studies Stewart and Shaw summarized suggest that syncretism neither exclusively subverts nor reinforces a dominant order.

Taken together, the academic study of syncretic processes and of ritual as intellectual property provide helpful background for considering arguments about the appropriation of elements from Native American religion. Specifically, these studies suggest that assumptions underlying some antipathy to appropriation are unfounded. Some critics of appropriation seem to assume, for example, that cultural traditions can or should be immutable and geographically enclosed. Such assumptions are historically naive and contain logic that would relegate all religion to the 'dustbin of history', unable to adapt to cultural and evolutionary developments.

But what of the legitimate fear, described previously, that the appropriation of Native American spirituality threatens and destroys Native American cultures by diluting or blending them into new forms? Based on such concerns, Native American scholar-activist Ward Churchill condemns as 'misplaced and sacrilegious' a series of pan-Indian Sun Dances (originating within Lakota culture but recently held on Navajo land in Arizona). Because Churchill views Native American ritual as 'both culturally and geographically specific', he allows little if any room for new cultural work involving such pan-Indian ceremony.⁶⁰ (Churchill's critique is especially ironic since he has recently been accused, in bitter dispute with other prominent AIM activists, of not even being a Native American.)⁶¹

I have found few native voices to be as categorical as Churchill's. A much more common view among native activists is that it is the *non-Indian* appropriation of elements from native cultures that functions in a genocidal way, eroding cultural foundations and thereby fostering cultural disintegration and eventually, cultural annihilation. Such borrowing is thus, according to this perspective, a *camouflaged* form of mass killing.⁶² This claim poses a crucial empirical question, but should not be accepted without compelling evidence. Although such views are provocative, little empirical evidence has been provided to demonstrate that these phenomena are as destructive as claimed.

Providing clear empirical evidence, however, is difficult. It is hard enough for social scientists to tease out the variables that cause cultural decline.⁶³ Arushinabe intellectual and activist Winona LaDuke, however, describes social processes whereby appropriation and even pan-Indian religious practice can threaten a native culture: When members of Indian nations that are at risk of losing their culture get distracted from their own tradition by the traditions of others—whether by the traditions of non-Indians or other Indians—they may well fail to learn the language and practices that constitute their own culture. Consequently, LaDuke explains, many Indians do not want their people participating in outside ceremonies, including pan-Indian ritual, and do not want non-Indian observers or participants either. LaDuke believes that some Indian nations are strong enough to participate in pan-Indian ceremony, but others are not.⁶⁴

George Tinker, an Osage/Cherokee and Professor at the Iliff School of Theology in Denver, agrees with LaDuke that the New Age interest in Indian spirituality has 'become a major destructive force in our Indian communities'. Tinker identifies several dynamics unleashed by the appropriation process that he believes are destructive: (1) The exposure of young Indians to the deep cultural individualism of Euroamericans leads them to misapprehend their own traditions by 'learning their own ceremonial traditions through increasingly individualist eyes'.⁶⁵ (2) By tempting 'many Indians to convert their spiritual tradition into career and economic development opportunities' as they 'cater . . . to the individualist needs of white New Age aficionados'.⁶⁶ and (3) By subtly changing the thinking of traditional people as they 'accommodate the participation of white . . . alien culture in ways that can be more easily understood and appropriated (or rather, misappropriated)'.⁶⁷ Tinker concludes that 'this meeting of cultures is in the final analysis harmful to Indian peoples and their tribal traditions' because it erodes the 'cultural value of community and group cohesion that is important to virtually every indigenous people'.⁶⁸

LaDuke and Tinker have advanced plausible arguments about how the processes of cross-cultural borrowing and blending might erode the cultural integrity of a native nation. Keeping such social processes in mind, and the legitimate fears they engender, it is still possible to raise cautions about the logic that may underlay these concerns, and critically examine whether such critiques are sometimes over broadly applied.

Some of the hostility to the appropriation of Native American Spirituality, as well as to pan-Indian movements and ritualizing, is based on understandings and assumptions about syncretism that need qualification. We might ask, for example, Is some of this antipathy based on simplistic assumptions that, in cross-cultural syncretic encounters, the cultures of dominant peoples prevail while 'pure' and 'authentic' traditions are destroyed? Are such views incompatible with current anthropological views of syncretic processes which speak 'less about culture as syncretic than about culture as collage, as creolized, as fragmented . . . [and even] as subversive hybrid invention?'⁶⁹

Stewart and Shaw urge attention to the agency of colonized and otherwise oppressed peoples because 'synthesis, adaptations, assemblages, incorporations or appropriations are renegotiated and sometimes denied and disassembled'.⁷⁰ Moreover, they further problematize understandings of authenticity and purity which underlie much anti-syncretism.

Anti-syncretism is frequently bound up with the construction of 'authenticity', which is in turn often linked to notions of 'purity'...

'Yet authenticity' or 'originality' [do] not necessarily depend on purity. They are claimable as 'uniqueness', and both pure and mixed traditions can be unique. What makes them 'authentic' and valuable is a separate issue, a discursive matter involving power, rhetoric and persuasion. Thus both putatively pure and putatively syncretic traditions can be 'authentic' if people claim that these traditions are unique and uniquely their (historical) possession. It could [even] be argued... that syncretic blends are more unique because [they are] historically unrepeatable.⁷¹

By recognizing the potential for agency among diverse social actors and by recognizing that more unamalgamated traditions not inherently more valuable than relatively 'pure' ones, we can see that caution is needed when moving from descriptive to normative reflection about syncretic processes.

Certainly no one should intrude unwelcome into religious societies—whether borrowing from them or introducing innovations. Yet too often understandings of syncretism have embedded within them a simplistic anti-syncretistic ideology that assumes that, with syncretism, pure- and authentic religious forms become amalgamated into impure and unauthentic constellations.⁷² Such an understanding of syncretism, however common, is dangerous.⁷³ When people believe in pure, authentic forms of religion, lurking in the shadows are tendencies to repress the unauthentic and impure forms. Religious history is replete with examples where the logic of religious purity devolves into the repression of 'impure' religious practice. It is reasonable to wonder if assumptions about the inherent dangers of syncretism underlie recent threats to physically disrupt the ceremonies of those engaged in appropriating native ritual practices.

Some native activists (unlike some intellectuals) recognize that the idea of a 'pure' culture is problematic. For example, at the meeting described previously addressing the Earth First-native alliance, Angel Salazar, after mentioning the prophesies regarding a coalition of peoples coming together to reharmonize life on earth, noted that,

The Aztec came from here, [they were] related to [the] Anasazi, they took lots of things from the Maya and Toltecs... nothing is pure... [unlike how many Europeans believe]... we just take from the Earth and everything is mixed, our bodies, and any instrument you play or any food you mix in, that's what we're about. We're mixing in with a lot of people who are trying to fight the same thing [industrial society], and it [the prophesied unity] is coming about.

Salazar's comments are especially suggestive in the light of the previous discussion of agency and negotiation in syncretic processes. His view about the blending of cultures, linked here to a prophesied alliance, may reflect both agency and reveal a form of negotiation. It may be that this prophesied alliance and Salazar's perspective on cultural amalgamation represent a strategic appeal for solidarity and reciprocity from the assembled Euroamerican activists.⁷⁴ Indeed, many of the reactions by Native Americans to the appropriation of elements from their cultures described in these pages could

represent strategic negotiations designed to guide syncretic processes and/or gain compensation, in the form of political solidarity, for such appropriation.

The preceding considerations lead me to agree with Angel Salazar, that we should be reluctant to accept notions that contrast 'pure-authentic-unblended' with 'impure-unauthentic-blended' religion. It is difficult to conceive of how the logic of syncretism understood as a deviation from purity and authenticity can promote Native American cultural survival, let alone the freedom of religious practice generally.⁷⁵ There are better arguments to defend specific cultural traditions against unwelcome influences, such as those based on the right to self-determination or upon the value of preserving diversity in contestations about truth and virtue. There are also better strategies for defending cultural integrity than threatening to disrupt offensive syncretic ritualizing.

For example, Vine Deloria, a prominent Native American scholar with advanced degrees in theology and law, whose 1972 book *God is Red* is a classic account of Native American religious life and the threats to it,⁷⁶ recently explained how, in response to increasing Euroamerican appropriations of Native American Spirituality, traditional Indians have increasingly withdrawn from ceremonies that have been appropriated by non-Indians.⁷⁷ Combined with strategies to secure access to the lands essential to their cultural survival (usually the more important and difficult endeavour), this strategic withdrawal takes responsibility for preserving traditions in a way that can be effective even in the face of persistent and offensive non-Indian behaviour. Such a strategy recognizes that offensive behaviour will never be completely eliminated, even by militancy and threats.

Whatever arguments and strategies are developed to defend the integrity of Native American religious practice, recognizing the dangers of contrasting pure and impure religion underscores the need for a careful, case-by-case assessment of claims that syncretic amalgamation threaten free religious practice.⁷⁸

In addition to rooting an assessment of appropriation within a broader discussion of syncretic processes, it is equally important to acknowledge the diversity of opinion about these phenomena among Indians themselves. If one relies exclusively on published essays about these phenomena it would be easy to conclude that Indians strenuously object to virtually all such religious blendings. The descriptions in these pages, however, suggest that, at least among those activists and traditional Indians who have forged links with Earth First!, there is more tolerance for at least some forms of appropriation than there may be among those who usually write about it.⁷⁹ It is also possible to wonder if some of the opposition to Euroamerican appropriation might represent efforts by a cultural-religious elite to control religious production and either guide syncretic processes or destroy disapproved of forms of popular religion.⁸⁰

In any case, at the popular level, there is often less resistance to borrowing, blending, and shared ritualizing than there is an expectation that non-Indians—especially those acting in solidarity with a native community—will participate respectfully in certain Native American religious practices. One Euroamerican attorney representing a group of Native American traditionalists in a lawsuit against the desecration of a sacred-site, for example, was expected (not asked) to go through purification ceremonies before entering court. His clients believed that the battle was not only legal but spiritual and therefore the attorney's participation was essential. Although uncomfortable, the attorney chose to participate rather than risk offending his clients.⁸¹

Often Euroamericans are expected to participate in ceremony led by Native Americans, particularly in contexts where environmentalists and Native Americans

gather. At a recent university conference focusing on grassroots environmentalism, for example, Walter Bresette, the Anishinabe leader who has done much to promote native-environmentalist alliances, 'hijacked' the conference.⁸² As he shut the doors telling people to sit in a circle he jested that he did not want any one to escape. Assisted by Scottish and Irish activists playing instruments from their homeland, Bresette burned sage and performed a purification rite. He then ceremonially absolved the assembled Euroamericans for the crimes committed by their people against this land and its first peoples, and then welcomed them to his homeland. He concluded urging the Euroamerican participants to defend this land and its native peoples.⁸³

Again in this example, shared ceremony can be viewed as a strategic negotiation for a specific form of compensation, in this case reciprocity and solidarity in ongoing eco-political struggles and again, at the popular level, participation was not really optional. Similarly on Mt. Graham, there was an expectation among some Indians that their non-native allies would respect and venerate the mountain—the veneration and consecration of sacred places being a part of their tradition—not in every way that the Indians would themselves, but at least by refraining from the desecrating act of alcohol consumption.⁸⁴ Such examples underscore my point that sometimes Native Americans are more worried if others do not participate in religious practices encouraged or sponsored by them than they are worried about the possible negative impacts of cross-cultural borrowing and blending.⁸⁵

Another reason why popular religiosity is relatively receptive to appropriation processes can be found in the idea expressed by some Indians and shared by many in the Deep Ecology movement (such as Lou Gold) that Native American symbols and practices are especially good at evoking a proper perception of the value of the natural world. Native and non-natives alike share the view that Indian spirituality may promote a re-harmonization of life on this planet and that consequently, the widespread extension of such spirituality is precisely what the world needs.⁸⁶

Vine Deloria, however, is suspicious of such extensionist ideals. In a well nuanced essay he contends that any such missionary impulse is 'contrary to every known tenet of any tribal tradition' because 'no demand existed . . . for the people to go into the world and inform or instruct other people in the rituals and beliefs of the tribe'. Nevertheless, he acknowledges that there 'may be a new revelation given at the end of this world'. But he remains sceptical and worried about the trivialization of native spiritual practices, suggesting 'we should examine the nature of the [various] teachings and practices' that are emerging.

Taking his own advice, Deloria arrives at different conclusions about different practices: 'I cannot find much real disrespect and exploitation in the way the pipe is prayerfully passed between Indians and non-Indians', suggesting that such ceremony may even erode individualism and greed.⁸⁷ He argues that sharing a sweat ceremony is probably a minor violation since it is often used as a purification before 'ceremonies which have a deeper significance'. Yet he opposes the extension of other ceremonies, such as the Sun Dance, outside their original tribal context.⁸⁸ Deloria's case by case approach provides a better basis for constructive dialogue about how to develop mutually respectful relations between Indian and non-Indian people than do blanket condemnations of cross-cultural borrowing and blending.

The present reflections are also based on a case study approach. One plausible reading of these data is that Native American myth, symbols, and ceremonies do have an ecologically salutory effect by motivating Indians and non-Indians alike toward deeper ecological commitments. The view that Native American cultures may embody insights

and practices that, if extended widely, could promote ecological sustainability, is a view held by many Indians and non-Indians and ought not be dismissed a priori.

A more constructive dialogue could ensue if critics of appropriation would at least entertain the possibility that some extension of Native American cultural practices might promote, in perhaps unexpected ways, the well being of native communities and their wider relations in nature. One reason such shared and blended ritualizing might promote cultural survival is, as we have seen, that the Indians involved in such practices often exercise agency and demand reciprocity in such multicultural encounters.

The possibility that blended and appropriated forms of Native American spirituality might have a salutory effect for native cultures is, however, a little addressed empirical question. But if we are to assess the overall impact of such borrowing, it is as important to discern the possible positive impacts as it is to illuminate negative ones. Too few of those who condemn such appropriations and blending consider the possibility that there could be positive dynamics that might offset or mitigate the negative ones they perceive.⁸⁹ It may be that some appropriation of Native American myth and rite by non-Indians does increase tolerance of and sympathy for Native Americans in U.S. culture, perhaps with concrete but difficult to measure political benefits to them.⁹⁰

To even raise this possibility will seem counter intuitive to some and pernicious to others. Such a suggestion will understandably raise suspicions, since one of the major complaints about 'borrowers' is that they take and rarely give back—and most grievously of all—do nothing to defend American Indians and their religious practices from commercial and governmental acts of desecration. Yet I have observed that, at least within radical environmental subcultures, there are usually a number of activists who have been moved by rites inspired by Native American cultures and are actively engaged in solidarity work in defense of native communities.⁹¹ Sometimes Indian activists have come to respect the sincerity of such non-Indians and, as a result, have become more tolerant of Euroamerican interest in Indian ritual.⁹² Perhaps the interest of activist Euroamericans in native American spirituality (even if they portray an imperfect portrait of it) causes other Euroamericans to entertain the possibility that native cultures have value. Perhaps the images of Indians that are consequentially conveyed are stereotypical and pernicious.⁹³ In either case—more likely, in both cases—the overall impact remains unanswered, empirical question that deserves further inquiry. But the possibility that some contemporary spiritual combinations are adaptive, promoting the long-term survival of native cultures, should not be dismissed out-of-hand.⁹⁴

As we have seen, plausible arguments have been voiced describing social processes that may well harm native American cultures. This possibility alone is enough for many to abstain from such borrowing. But since the social impetus producing such appropriation is apparently quite strong, it appears likely that people will continue to produce such cross-cultural amalgamations. Compelling calls for abstention from such ritualizing would more clearly demonstrate that such practices are unambiguously, or on balance, destructive. Only then will it be possible to convince all well meaning people to abstain.

Rather than threatening to repress newer religious forms in the cause of free religious practice, a dubious proposition even if evaluated charitably, it makes more sense to respect, or at least tolerate, diverse expressions of religion.⁹⁵ It would be better to reserve condemnation for those cases where it can be clearly demonstrated that religious practices threaten humans and/or their wider relations.

It is also important to recognize that at least some of what is happening is perfectly human and to be expected. Many Earth Firsters are essentially home-grown nature mystics.⁹⁶ Since a sense of connection and kinship with non-human nature is a relatively infrequent spiritual perception in North America today, it is unsurprising that those with such perceptions and experiences should seek out each other. Not surprisingly, Euroamerican earth mystics often feel affinity with and reach out to Native Americans, whom they often perceive, sometimes accurately, to share similar religious and moral sentiments. And since Native American religion has been suppressed in diverse ways, severing many Indians from their lands and traditional religions, it is no surprise that some Indians who reverse nature would find some common ground, at least in the area of spirituality, with certain Euroamerican earth activists.⁹⁷ Thus are such people drawn together, sometimes sharing their spiritual understandings and ceremonies. When observing and reflecting on such dynamics I find it hard to pass categorical judgments upon those wrapped up in them.

Many if not most critics of appropriation recognize that these dynamics are fuelled by real human needs, by the emptiness of materialistic industrial culture, and that they occur because, as Wendy Rose puts it, 'it is the Indian way to try to help'.⁹⁸ Nevertheless, the often stated preference, even among those more tolerant of borrowing, is for non-Indians to find their spirituality alone in nature or by recovering their lost traditions. Many non-Indians have taken this preference to heart, schlewing borrowing and looking to nature and their own heritage for their spirituality. Within Earth First, there has been increasing discussion about reviving European paganism.⁹⁹ Yet a constructive dialogue will acknowledge the difficulty faced by those drawn to native American spirituality. Some who have found meaning in such myth and rite now agonize over whether to continue such practices, but are reluctant to abandon them. Further dialogue will also profit from the recognition that confusion about what constitutes respect in this area results, in part, because of the incompatible beliefs about such borrowing found among native Americans themselves.

Hopefully this essay has provided a fair-minded analysis of a variety of perspectives about the controversial practices in question. One thing seems clear: there is no easy answer to the conflict analysed in these pages. Nevertheless, it is possible to view the various opinions as a continuum in which some forms of borrowing and blending are viewed as extremely offensive by most, while other forms are judged harshly by fewer still, and yet other forms are relatively uncontroversial. Those unwilling to abstain from appropriated rites would be wise to steer their participation toward the least controversial practices. At least they should clearly understand that intrusive invasion of privacy and commercial exploitation of such practices are considered the greatest offenses, along with the physical desecration of the ritual sites and objects that are essential to the free exercise of native American religion. They should avoid the tendency to project a 'superior attitude' or any pretence that they 'know all about Indian religion'—attitudes which Vine Deloria blames for much of the conflict in this arena.¹⁰⁰ They should exercise reciprocity by joining in solidarity with the native communities fighting commercial and governmental plans and laws that threaten to displace them from their remaining lands and ceremonial sites. The path of least offense would be for them to accept and support native leadership in these battles for sovereignty and simply wait for invitations to ceremonies from the communities with whom they are working. Of course, native communities have no obligation to provide such invitations, but in these political struggles, it is not uncommon for allies to come together in prayer.¹⁰¹

Conclusions

The conundrums presented in these pages paint a morally muddy landscape and leave me with significant ambivalence. Nevertheless, I suggest several conclusions the first three of which revisit the three broad perspectives about appropriation set forth at the outset.

(1) There are serious threats to Native American cultural integrity and survival. At least with regard to smaller and weaker native Nations, it is likely that the appropriation of native American spirituality can contribute to cultural decline (the first view). The most serious threats, however, continue to be found in the relentless Euroamerican thirst for land, usually backed by Federal and State power, which threatens to further erode the land base upon which Indians depend for their cultural survival and free religious practice.

(2) Appropriation does lead to something new and different (the second view), but there are reasonable arguments and evidence to the effect that not all of what results is destructive, in no small measure because often times the Native Americans who witness or are actively involved in these processes exercise agency and demand reciprocity.

(3) Some cross-cultural borrowing reciprocal influencing, and blending is an inevitable aspect of religious life—thus at least some of the hand-wringing over appropriation and syncretic processes is misplaced and over broad (the third view).

Finally, I add a fourth suggestion, that it may be (and my own research provides some evidence for the proposition) that at least some of such borrowing promotes respect for and concrete political solidarity with Native Americans. Such a dynamic may play a role in mitigating the possible negative impacts of appropriations from native American religions.

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Notes

- 1 Jerry Mander, *In the Absence of the Sacred* San Francisco: Sierra Club, 1992.
- 2 Ward Churchill 'Another dry white season', *Z Magazine* 6:10, October 1993, pp 43–48; reprinted in *Indians Are Us? Culture and Genocide in Native North America*, Monroe, Maine: Common Courage Press, 1994, pp. 139–165.
- 3 Mander, *Absence*, 1992, p. 382.
- 4 Churchill, 'Dry' Hot Season', pp. 43, 46.
- 5 Many terms are currently employed to refer to North America's native peoples. As no consensus term has emerged I ask the reader's forbearance as I use several of the terms in common use today, including Native American, American Indian, Indian, and Indigenous peoples.
- 6 For a recent discussion and important references see Wendy Rose, 'The Great Pretenders: Further Reflections on Whitchamanism'. In Annette M. James (ed.), *The State of Native America: Genocide, Colonization, and Resistance*, Boston: South End, 1992, pp. 403–21.
- 7 See Wendy Rose, *ibid.*, for examples of such ethnocentric insensitivity and for a typical and provocative argument against cultural appropriation. For another thoughtful native perspective that is less categorical in its judgments than Rose or Churchill, see Vine Deloria Jr., 'Is Religion Possible? An Evaluation of Present Efforts to Revive Traditional Tribal Religions', *Wicazo Sa*

- Review, 111: 1, 1992, pp. 35–9. Anthropologist Dr. Diane Bell (who is the Henry Luce Chair of Religion, Economic Development, and Social Justice at Holy Cross College, Worcester, MA 01610, U.S.A.) is developing a comprehensive bibliography documenting examples and discussion of the appropriation of Native American cultural practices, and has important work in progress critical of this trend, including a book on the New Age movement, and a paper delivered in November 1992 meeting of the American Academy of Religion, Eric, Edc. Other: Feminist Perspectives and the Postmodern Turn.
- 8 Such threats to Native American religious freedom are discussed extensively elsewhere: for a good start, see Annette M. James (ed.), *The State of Native America: Genocide, Colonization and Resistance*, Boston: South End, 1992, and Christopher Vecsey (ed.), *Handbook of American Indian Religious Freedom*, New York: Crossroad, 1991.
- 9 In this paper I intend that 'appropriation' and 'borrowing' be taken as synonyms, and that no *a priori* pejorative sense be read into either term. The purpose of this paper is to provide concrete information to help the reader judge for herself whether the phenomenon of appropriation is pernicious, beneficent, or something in between.
- 10 This essay represents a compromise between scholarly and activist objectives. Such divided loyalties exacerbates the difficulty of writing a coherent analysis. The resulting genre will likely satisfy neither the scholar nor the activist, but I hope will profit both.
- 11 These three views emerged in interesting discussions with Richard Grounds, Ann Brande, and Matthew Glass at the 1992 meeting of the American Academy of Religion, and led to a panel in 1993 in which we discussed these views more publicly. The pain and anger that emerged during this 1993 meeting convinced me of the importance of continuing the discussion in a forum (writing) that allowed time for a more nuanced argument.
- 12 I have vacillated over whether to divulge my own levels of participation in the phenomena discussed in this paper. But reviewer comments on earlier versions of this paper indicate significant interest in my personal experiences in this regard. (Some of this interest is based on curiosity regarding whether I am personally involved with some of the described practices and have a personal stake in defending them.) I was reluctant to say that I am not personally attracted to ceremonies inspired by Native American cultures because I did not want to leave open an interpretation that I feel superior to those who are so attracted.
- As a young man, however, after receiving an invitation by an Indian friend, I almost attended a sweat lodge ceremony. I felt honored and hoped to attend, but these sweats were held on short notice and I never did. At that time (the early 1980s), I was unaware of the controversy surrounding such ceremonies. I have never had, however, a burning desire to participate in such ceremonies. I feel awkward at virtually any religious ceremony where some participation on my part is explicitly or implicitly expected. I am, however, curious enough about ceremonies, like the sweat lodge, that I would like to attend one. Nevertheless, given the feelings of many Native Americans about the participation of non-Indians in such ceremonies, I have decided to pass up such opportunities. Thus, the motive behind the analysis in these pages is in no way a personal 'apologetic'.
- 13 Although originating in North America around 1980, in recent years Earth First! has increasingly—been developing an international profile, see Bron Taylor, 'Earth First! and Global Narratives of Popular Ecological Resistance', In Bron Taylor (ed.), *Ecological Resistance Movements: The Global Emergence of Radical and Popular Environmentalism*, Albany, New York: State University of New York Press, 1995.
- 14 See Bron Taylor, 'Earth First!'s Religious Radicalism', In Christopher Chapple (ed.), *Ecological Progress: Scientific, Religious, and Religious Perspectives*, Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994, pp. 185–209; or 'Earth First!: from Primal Spirituality to Ecological Resistance', in Roger Gotlieb (ed.), *This Sacred Earth*, New York and London: Routledge, 1995.
- 15 See Bron Taylor, 'Earth First! and global narratives...'
- 16 New York: New Directions, 1969.
- 17 *Praxis of the Wild*, San Francisco: North Point, 1990, p. 40.
- 18 Gary Snyder, *The Real Work: Interviews and Talks 1964–1979*, New York: New Directions, 1980, p. 33.
- 19 This how an interviewer, in Snyder's *Real Work*, summarized the objections of several Native American intellectuals to Snyder's *Turtle Island*, including Leslie Marmon Silko, 'An Old-Time Indian Attack Conducted in Two Parts: Part One, Imputation, Poems; Part Two, Gary Snyder's *Turtle Island*', In Geary Hobson (ed.), *The Remembered Earth*, Albuquerque, New Mexico: Red Earth, 1978, pp. 211–216. (See also Hobson's contributions to this volume.) For a contrasting view see Gloria F. Orenstein, 'Toward an Ecofeminist Ethic of Shamanism and the Sacred', In Carol Adams, (ed.), *Ecofeminism and the Sacred*, New York: Continuum, 1993, pp. 172–180. She is critical of the ethics of some practitioners of neo-shamanism (especially Michael Harner, *The Way of the Shaman*, San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1990), arguing that by reducing these phenomena to an essential core, Harner erases many forms of indigenous religion. For more on Harner and shamanism see Paul C. Johnson, 'Shamanism From Ecuador to Chicago: A Case Study in New Age Ritual Appropriation', *Religion*, 25:2, 1995, pp. 163–178.
- 20 Snyder, *Real Work*, 1980, pp. 154–155. Snyder ultimately roots his own spiritual authority in his personal experiences in the wild.
- 21 Interview with Gary Snyder, 7 June 1993, Davis, California. For a criticism of such rationales, see Wendy Rose, 'The Great Pretenders', esp. pp. 404–405. She argues that, although white shamans often argue for the universality of shamanism by appealing to the 'Siberian' origin of the term, this is 'obfuscatory', since their writings are 'uniformly designed and intended to convey conceptions of "Indian-ness" to their readers', p. 405. She concludes, 'the whitishaman reader/performer aspires to "embody" the Indian, in effect, becoming "the real" Indian... Native reality is thereby subsumed and negated by imposition of a "greater" or "more universal" contrivance', p. 404.
- 22 Amanda Porterfield, 'American Indian Spirituality as a Countercultural Movement', in Christopher Vecsey (ed.), *Religion in Native North America*, Moscow, Idaho: University of Idaho Press, 1990, p. 152.
- 23 *Ibid.*, p. 154.
- 24 Bron Taylor, 'Evoking the Ecological Self', *Peace Review*, 5:2, June 1993, pp. 225–230, cf. Bron Taylor, 'Earth First!'s Religious Radicalism', and John Seed, et al., *Thinking Like a Mountain: Towards a Council of All Beings*, Philadelphia: New Society, 1988.
- 25 Telephone interview with Jean Crawford, 5 November 1993.
- 26 For a published example, see Andy Smith, 'For All Those Who Were Indian in a Former Life', in Carol Adams (ed.), *Ecofeminism and the Sacred*, New York: Continuum, 1993, pp. 172–180.
- 27 Earth Firsters generally wish to support indigenous nature peoples wherever they are found, believing they provide the remnant human knowledge and spirituality needed for the rehumanization of humans and sacred natural processes.
- 28 Several months later during an interview in the Angeles National Forest in Southern California (10 February 1994), Davies expressed confusion, 'Some Indians think that the red road can save the world'. Some think its 'cultural genocide'. I'm really confused'. I'm trying to prevent the conflict by 'moving to neo-pagan sweats [and because they] correlate well with my Celtic ancestor's beliefs'. Organizers of many neo-pagan sweats are trying to eliminate overt copying of what they consider to be the most 'orthodox' Indian forms. Davies explained, but he acknowledged that at home in Santa Cruz, he performs a more traditional Indian-style lodge.
- 29 For a detailed discussion of such acts in the Mt. Graham campaign, see Bron Taylor, 'Resacralizing Earth: Pagan Environmentalism and the Restoration of Turtle Island', in David Childerster and Edward Linenthal (eds.), *American Sacred Space*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995.
- 30 In July 1992, after the national Earth First! Rendezvous in the San Juan mountains of southwestern Colorado, a young Diné (Navajo) man attended the demonstration. He indicated to me that the elders were prophesying that a group of Caucasians would join with them to defend all their relations and help rehumanize life on earth. During the May 1994 Transpersonal Association conference in Killarney Ireland, Marilyn Tewa, a spokeswoman for the traditional Hopi elders, mentioned Hopi prophecy about a fair skinned one who would come and be the leader toward the fourth world, and that they were to welcome him. But the wrong one came, she said, implying that a fair skinned people may yet come and act in solidarity with native people. But she urged caution about borrowing Indian ways, 'when you use Native people's ways to try to regain your spirituality you could be, you know, seriously damaging yourself, because you don't know how to do it. And you could destroy the elements too'.
- 31 As identified by his business card.
- 32 When reviewing an earlier version of this paper, Catherine McHale pointed out that there is a rule against alcohol at the Sun Dance and also at Lodges.

- 33 As mentioned previously, this preference, that non-Indians first explore their own heritage as a spiritual resource, is widely shared among the Indians I have heard discuss this issue. As far as I can tell, this is the preference even among those who are cautiously optimistic that such cross-cultural sharing could have a salutary effect.
- 34 This is a good example of what bothers critics of appropriation: by mixing the 'dream time' notion (borrowed from the aboriginal peoples of Australia) with the Turtle Island name for this continent (borrowed from American Indians) this statement reveals how the borrowed amalgamations are not site-specific, and thus, have little to do with the traditions they purport to revere.
- 35 Most of the following is from an interview with Dennis Martinez, Sinkyone Wilderness, Northern California, 6 June 1993. A few additional points of information were added during a telephone interview on 28 April 1995, after Mr Martinez reviewed an earlier draft of this paper.
- 36 This applies not just to non-Indians. He mentioned that many young Indians, partly in an effort to resolve crises of identity, are now going to ceremonies like the Sun Dance. Martinez thinks this is good. But he also believes that they could just go and be alone in nature, and 'you don't need Indian ceremonies to do that'.
- 37 Ward Churchill, 'Spiritual Hucksterism', *Z Magazine*, 3:12, December 1990, pp. 94-98. Churchill approvingly quotes Russell Means, 'As to white people who think it's cute, or neat or groovy or keen to hook up with plastic medicine men, to subsidize and promote them, and claim you and they have some 'right' to desecrate our spiritual traditions, I've got a piece of news for you. You have *no* such right. Our religions are *ours*. Period. We have very strong reasons for keeping certain things private, whether you understand them or not. And we have every human right to deny them to you, whether you like it or not' (*ibid.*, p. 98). But in quoting a traditional Indian elder, Churchill shows some ambivalence by assuming that there is an authentic Indian spiritual wisdom of value to non-Indians: 'Oren Lyons, a traditional chief of the Onondaga Nation [complains that] 'Non-Indians have become so used to all this hype on the part of impostors and liars [fake Indian spiritual leaders], that when a real Indian spiritual leader tries to offer them useful advice, he is rejected. He isn't 'Indian' enough for all these non-Indian experts on Indian religion' (cited in *ibid.*, p. 94). Churchill also cites Lyons' proposed solution:
- The bottom line here . . . is that we have more need for intercultural respect today than at any time in human history. And nothing blocks respect and communication faster and more effectively than delusions by one party about another. We've got . . . problems which threaten the survival of the planet. Indians and non-Indians must confront these problems together, and this means we must have honest dialogue, but this dialogue is impossible so long as non-Indians remain deluded about things as basic as Indian spirituality' (*ibid.*).
- 38 Several Native Americans I have interviewed since this gathering spontaneously expressed a similar sentiment, although without the additional statement that it is dangerous to accept money for such involvement. For some Native Americans, the danger of misusing Indian ritual inherits to the abuser: she or he who engages in rituals without proper motivation, training, or connection to the community. (See e.g. the comment by Marilyn Tewa in note 30.)
- 39 Anishinabe is the term this Indian nation generally prefers, but they are better known as the Chippewa in the United States and as the Ojibwa in Canada. For an example of Brettez's work in building alliances see Rick Whaley with Walter Brettez, *Wally's Warriors: An Effortive Alliance Against Racism and for the Earth*, Philadelphia: New Society, 1994.
- 40 In our 28 April 1995 telephone interview, Mr. Martinez said that he did not want to be perceived as taking one side or the other in the controversy over borrowing. He has increasingly heard his Native American colleagues discuss the 'aggressive defense of the ceremonies', and understands their concerns. Although he sees a danger from 'undue influence from non-Indians', however, he remains ambivalent. When he looks at threats to Native American survival he views the market economy with its insatiable desire to consume the land and her creatures as the number one threat to Native American survival. The borrowing of the ceremonies is not much of a threat, he told me, compared to the severing of Indians from their lands and from life itself. Consequently, he views the defense of the treaties as among the most important issues because the treaties represent 'reserved rights' to a land base—the preservation of which is the most critical cultural survival issue. His highest priority is to protect Indian lifeways on their aboriginal land base.

- One key reason that Martinez is less categorical in his views than are some critics is that he has seen how some of the criticized phenomena help Indian people and contribute to the resurgence of Native American cultures. He personally has participated in ceremonies from many places and considers himself something of a pan-Indian. He told me that eighteen years ago a Lakota sweat lodge led by White Cloud (in Oakland, California, away from the Lakota land base) turned him away from alcoholism and facilitated his return to his Indian roots. Moreover he has seen how sweat lodges in the Lakota tradition that are held in prisons have helped many Indians and are contributing to Indian 'reculturation'. Martinez provides an important assessment of this issue because, unlike the least compromising critics, he is willing to consider the possible positive aspects of the phenomena in question.
- 41 Letter to editor by Gene Lawhorn, *Earth First!* 8:7, 1 August 1993, p. 3.
- 42 See Lone Wolf's response to this letter—'The Native: Of the Earth, With/in the Earth'. In *Earth First!* 13:8, 22 September 1993, pp. 3, 28—and a letter to the editor defending him in the same issue, p. 32. Their arguments resemble those of Gary Snyder described earlier. See also, Lone Wolf Circles, *Full Circle: A Song of Ecology and Earthen Spirituality*, St. Paul, Minnesota: Llewellyn, 1991. Recently, Lone Wolf has begun to publish under his given name, Jesse Hardin.
- 43 *ibid.*, p. 28.
- 44 *ibid.*
- 45 *ibid.*
- 46 Although the organizers originally decided to publish the apology in *Earth First!*, this decision was later reversed and the apology was not published.
- 47 The following summer at the national Earth First! rendezvous in Northern California, sweat ceremonies were back but renamed 'sacred saunas' in an effort to assert a Northern European heritage for them. Yet activists often forgot the new convention and mispoke, expressing embarrassment when they used the newly-taboo 'sweat lodge' term. In January 1996 a traditional elder was recruited to lead the sweat ceremony at the Activist conference near Tucson Arizona, revealing an effort to implement the guideline previously suggested by Guy Lopez.
- 48 Gold explained that his effort is not only to alert people to the scientific information about how we are harming the earth but also 'to alert people to the reality of magic and mystery . . . that they can in fact have a relationship to [the creation]'. Interview with Lou Gold, Madison Wisconsin, 26 March 1992.
- 49 For example, during planning sessions prior to the 1995 Earth First! activist conference, some activists objected to the planned sweats, later regretting they had not done so more assertively.
- 50 Such ritual practices tend to occur among a religious elite. Partly because such practices are not highly regarded by some Earth Firsters, most Shamanic ritualizing and experimentation takes place at times and locations separate from the major Earth First! gatherings, which prioritize activism.
- 51 I have in mind here writers like Ward Churchill (see *Indians Are Us*, especially the chapter by this title, and the notes on pp. 252 and 257) and Native American intellectuals like Rayna Green who, at the 1993 meeting of the American Academy of Religion, in a panel on the themes of this paper, asserted that the 'weight of history', namely, the ongoing theft from Native Americans by Euroamericans, is of such a magnitude that a sincere and permissible form of such borrowing is inconceivable. Such a view, while understandable at an affective level, is so over broad that it provides little help for those trying to work out respectful relations between Indians and non-Indians in the complex social contexts in which these phenomena are found. In my judgement, since some borrowing and cross cultural influence is probably inevitable, it would likely be wiser for Native Americans to do as Dennis Martinez suggests, guiding the process as best they can toward the most acceptable forms. Indeed, this study provides evidence that this is precisely what is occurring at the level of popular religion in certain encounters between European and Native Americans.
- 52 For this definition, see Charles Stewart and Rosalind Shaw (ed.), *Syncretism/Anti-Syncretism: the Politics of religious Synthesis*, New York and London: Routledge, 1994, p. 20 and the other excellent essays about contested religious synthesis. See also Andie Droogers Syncretism: the problem of definition, the definition of the problem', in A. Droogers et al. (eds), *Currents of Encounter: Studies on the Contact Between Christianity and Other Religions, Beliefs, and Cultures*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989, pp. 7-25.

- 53 See David Childster, 'Stealing the Sacred Symbols: Biblical Interpretation in the People's Temple and the Unification Church', *Religion*, vol. 18, 1968, pp. 157, 137-62.
- 54 Simon Harrison, 'Commerce of Cultures in Melanesia', *Man*, vol. 28, 1993, pp. 140-41, 136. Harrison found that the pattern was generally 'an exchange of dissimilar goods. Those conferring rights in their rituals were converting their symbolic capital into economic capital, and the recipients were doing the reverse' (p. 147).
- 55 *Ibid.*, 140.
- 56 André Droogers, 'Syncretism: The Problem of Definition, the Definition of the Problem', in *Currents of Encounter . . .*, pp. 7-25.
- 57 Simon Harrison, 'Ritual as Intellectual Property', *Man*, vol. 27, 1992, pp. 225-226.
- 58 *Ibid.*
- 59 Charles Stewart and Rosalind Shaw, 'Introduction: Problematising Syncretism', in Stewart and Shaw (eds), *Syncretism/Antisyncretism . . .*, p. 20-21. This volume contains several case studies focusing on the agency of colonized peoples in syncretic processes. See Wolfgang Kempf 'Ritual, Power, and Colonial Domination: Male Initiation among the Nging of Papua New Guinea', pp. 108-126. Kempf asserts that marginalized and colonized peoples assert their own meanings and resistance within syncretic processes and urges that we reject any notion of 'traditional culture as a fixed, transmissible corpus in favour of that of an open system of ongoing cultural construction' without a fixed point of origin. Birgit Meyer in 'Beyond Syncretism: Translation and Diabolization in the Appropriation of Protestantism in Africa', p. 45-68 argues that anti-syncretists underestimate the agency of the less-powerful involved in these processes, that both mission and independent churches resisted missionary hegemony by inserting traditional religion and their own interests into their religious amalgamations. David Mosse in 'The Politics of Religious Synthesis: Roman Catholicism and Hindu Village Society in Tamil Nadu, India', pp. 83-107, describes a Hindu village society also using the appropriation process to their own ends. Jim Kleinman in 'Variations on a Christian Theme: the Healing Synthesis of Zulu Zionism', pp. 69-84, argues that syncretism involves 'multiple instances of agency and power', pp. 70.
- 60 See Ward Churchill, *Indians Are Us*, pp. 207-281 and especially the notes, pp. 257, 252. Churchill would likely condemn as well a Sun Dance held on the Eastern side of Mt Hood in Oregon for violating his geographic-specificity rule. A multi-nation Indian encampment began in the late 1970s after a Lakota medicine man had vision and sent an emissary to traditional elders of the Tygh band. This band has long considered the Mt. Hood forest to be sacred. But since their own culture had been nearly destroyed these elders endorsed the importing of the Lakota ways as part of an effort to preserve Indian identity. In 1983 the Anpo (a Lakota word for 'daybreak' or 'new day') Native American Cultural Youth Camp and Ceremonial Grounds was established and subsequently has been used for Sun Dances. It has become an important cultural resource for diverse Native Americans in the Portland region, and now serves as a staging area for resistance to logging.
- Churchill might not approve but, according to Irma Ariza, an Apache and Anpo board member, 'This is a prayer site. It is ancestral land to the Tygh Band indigenous people and they have given us their permission and their blessings to conduct our ceremonies and youth camp there'. As I write this (June 1996) the First Nation Survival Network, a group comprised primarily of Euroamerican radical environmentalists, is working with the Native Activists to defend this and other sacred sites in Oregon, such as Etnola Hill, which is located on the other side of Mt. Hood. (I am grateful to Andy Davis and others involved in the First Nation Survival Network for help gathering this information).
- 61 Some even suspect that he is a federal agent provocateur who, through his extremist views, is sowing dissent throughout Native America. For a scathing letter from the national American Indian Movement leadership re-affirming an earlier expulsion of Churchill and accusing him of acting like an agent provocateur, see 'What is Ward Churchill?: Churchill told not to affiliate himself with organization following 1993 AIM convention', *News from Indian Country*, 8:15, 1993, pp. 12, 13. See also Paul DelValle 'AIM supporters convene in Minneapolis for Ceremony', *News from Indian Country*, 8:7, 1994, pp. 2, 3, and David Bradley 'Excerpts from 'The Columbus Syndrome and Ward Churchill, Chief of the Warmoeses: A Tribe of the Master Race', *News from Indian Country*, 8:12, 1994, pp. 8, 9. See also the five part series entitled 'Who is Ward Churchill', in *News from Indian Country*, 8:17-21, 1994, various pages.
- 62 Despite Churchill's problematic status, his views have been influential and thus deserve serious consideration. To do otherwise would be to succumb to an *ad hominem* or genetic reasoning fallacy.
- 63 See 'Bringing the Law Home', in 'Indians Are Us?', pp. 11-63, for Churchill's essay on genocide, esp. pp. 11-15, which lays the foundation for the book's critique of U.S. government policies as well as other cultural practices.
- 64 Although I think empirical assessment is important, we should not underestimate the difficulties involved. Problems such as what is to count as evidence and how the questions should be framed come immediately to mind. I view this paper as an initial step—careful listening can provide working hypotheses, based on anecdotal evidence and the perceptions of those who have closely observed these phenomena. But we must be careful not to jump to hasty conclusions based upon anecdote-based perceptions, e.g., of correlations between cultural decline and the increasing phenomena of cultural appropriation. Nevertheless, anecdote-based perceptions should be taken seriously and, in the absence of adequate empirical data to resolve uncertainties, can reasonably be considered in moral decision making. We often have to make choices with less information or certainty than would be ideal. Hopefully we can remain open and flexible in our judgments and prescriptions as more clarity emerges about causal dynamics.
- 65 This is how LaDuke explained Churchill's objection to pan-Indian ceremony when I asked her about it (interview in Killamey, Ireland, May 1994). She also explained that many smaller native nations view the Lakota (Sioux), whose practices have been influential in pan-Indian circles and borrowed widely by non-Indians, as spiritual imperialists. See also Dennis Martinez's concern about 'other cultural influences' described previously, and Diane Bell's critique and examples of the 'urge to homologize' which can erase the practices of particular cultures. In 'Emitc, Etc, Other'.
- LaDuke regularly criticizes the appropriation of Native American religious practices by Euroamericans. Upon reading an earlier version of this paper, another Native American activist and intellectual who is less hostile to such appropriation urged me to 'problematize' LaDuke's views by mentioning that her own struggle with her identity is influenced by having a Jewish mother and an Indian father, Vincent 'Sun Bear' LaDuke, who during his life was actively involved in extending Native American ceremony to non-Indians. For Churchill on Sun Bear see *Indians are Us?*, pp. 252-253.
- 66 George E. Tinker, *Missionary Conquest: the Gospel and Native American Cultural Genocide*, Minneapolis, Minnesota: Fortress, 1993, p. 122.
- 67 *Ibid.*
- 68 *Ibid.*, pp. 123, 122. These processes are 'equally harmful to those well-meaning white seekers who . . . hope to find themselves on some Indian reservation, just as the conquest has always been spiritually harmful to Euroamericans' (p. 123).
- 69 Stewart and Shaw, 'Problematising Syncretism', p. 2.
- 70 *Ibid.*, p. 6.
- 71 *Ibid.*, p. 7.
- 72 The contributions in Droogers, et al., posit a relevant irony in suggesting that anti-syncretism's deepest roots are in Christian exclusivism
- 73 This discussion of the logic of 'syncretism' is indebted to David Childster in various conversations.
- 74 This suggestion was sparked by Armin Geertz who, in a study of Hopi prophecy, found that for strategic reasons 'the Traditionalist Movement was manipulating its own prophecies' as were other Hopi groups. Geertz reminds us that 'prophecy is tradition that is spoken by someone to someone else for specific . . . moral, ideological, or political reasons'. In 'On Reciprocity and Mutual Reflection in the Study of Native American Traditions', *Religion*, vol. 24, (1994), pp. 1, 2. See also A. Geertz, *The Invention of Prophecy: Continuity and Meaning in Hopi Indian Religion*, Knebel, Denmark, Brunshakke, 1992, and endnote 30 in this paper.
- 75 An equally interesting problem for religious studies scholars who refuse to privilege any particular metaphysical truth-claim is, On what basis can they consistently object to such borrowing? Arguing that such borrowing is pernicious, at least in the absence of compelling empirical evidence, is tantamount to taking sides in battles over religious truth.
- 76 For the updated version, see Vine Delona, *God is Red, A Native View of Religion*, Golden Colorado: Fulcrum, 1994.

- 77 Deloria, 'Is Religion Possible', p. 38.
- 78 This is the advantage of Deloria's thoughtful discussion in 'Is Religion Possible?'—it is based on his own first-hand observations of specific forms that such cross-cultural blending is taking.
- 79 One of the most disturbing aspects of the debate is that some critics of the Euroamerican appropriation of Native American spirituality categorically condemn, as writing or unwitting traitors, those who demur from their blanket condemnations of these phenomena, see for example the previous discussion of the views of Ward Churchill and Rayna Green, including in note 51. See also George Tinker, *Missionary Conquest*, p. 122, for a less strident but still ad hominem dismissal of Indians with differing views tracing such views to 'Indian dysfunctionality—a result of conquest [that] means that Indian people are all too ready to participate in their own oppression and continuing conquest'. Tinker thinks this 'dysfunctionality' is due to Indians craving the approval of white acquaintances and hoping for a broader understanding of and appreciation for the validity of traditional ceremonial life', p. 122.
- 80 This is one way (but not obviously the right way) to view the anti-appropriation efforts of both overly religious elites but also of certain intellectuals and activists such as Churchill, Green, LaDuke, and Tinker. The possibility of such an interpretation was posed by Stewart and Shaw's assessment that 'indigenizing' projects are often elite attempts, imposed from the top down to control the direction of religious synthesis', see 'Problematising Syncretism', p. 12. For a related comment on this dynamic in a different cultural context, Droogers senses that 'exclusive claims are often maintained by a class of religious specialists who monopolize the definition of truth... If, as normally happens, a popular religion succeeds in maintaining itself next to the official religion[s], this is a symptom of the clergy's power being less effective in maintaining exclusive access to the production of religion', see 'Syncretism... ' p. 16.
- 81 This attorney prefers to remain anonymous.
- 82 This was Brezette's amusing description of this ceremonial 'action'. His assistants were Alabair MacIntosh, a professor at the Centre for Human Ecology at Edinburgh University, MacIntosh is also an indigenous rights activist and spiritual leader from the Scottish Highlands who has been involved in fusing liberation theology, paganism, Celtic Christianity, and eco-psychology into a green spirituality akin to deep ecology. Tara O'Leary was the Irish participant in the ritual, is a graduate student at the Centre, and has spiritual and activist interests similar to MacIntosh.
- 83 Afterward he explained that performing such a ceremony is emotionally difficult but important, because people are more likely to care for places if they feel they belong to them. This ceremony occurred at the November 1995 conference entitled *Ecological Resistance Movements: Religion, Politics, Ethics* at the University of Wisconsin, Madison.
- 84 For an in-depth discussion of the controversy over alcohol on Mt. Graham, and how the consumption of it was viewed as a desecrating act by many of the Indians present, see Bron Taylor, 'Resacralizing Earth... '.
- 85 Many examples could be added from activist assemblies when non-Indian activists are instructed by Native Americans on how to properly participate in planned prayer and ceremony.
- 86 See Ed McGa, *Mother Earth Spirituality: Native American Paths to Healing Ourselves and Our World*, San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1990. This controversial book, written by a Lakota Indian and Sun Dancer, justifies the extension of Native American ritual to non-Indians as a way to promote respect for nature and Indian culture. McGa writes, 'Re-creating [the Seven Mother Earth Ceremonies and extending them to non-Indians] in this time of [ecological] crisis will, it is hoped, bring forth a new-found perception and respect for the natural elements', p. 41. See also pp. 44–48 and pp. 208–209. For Churchill's critique of McGa, see *Indians Are Us?*, pp. 283–289. Compare also D. M. Dooling and Paul Jordan-Smith Eds., *I Become Part of It: Sacred Dimensions in Native American Life*, New York: Harper Collins, 1989 and 1992.
- 87 Describing the practice as he has observed it, Deloria writes, 'They light it, say a few prayers, and pass it around the group asking each person to say a prayer or mumble. All my relatives, in some cases this simple set of actions invokes behavior of great respect by the non-Indians'. Deloria concludes that it seems to promote community and work against greed and individualism and 'we should be grateful for what the pipe is able to accomplish' under such circumstances', in 'Is Religion Possible?', pp 35–37. For further reflections, see *God is Red*, pp. 43, 253, including Deloria's qualified optimism that, despite the threats, 'traditional religions in some form will transcend the inroads that contemporary American culture has made', p. 253.
- 88 In 'Is Religion Possible' Deloria concluded his concerns about the trivialization of the Sun Dance by suggesting that, 'Perhaps a clear statement by traditional people as to the seriousness of the ceremony and a disavowal of authorization for people outside the respective tribal traditions to perform this dance is in order', p. 36.
- 89 In the updated *God is Red* Deloria sees a salutary effect of some pan-Indian ritualizing. For example, he thinks that the emergence 'of a national Indian religion... that incorporates major Indian themes' can introduce Indians to a native religious milieu that eventually can lead them to 'the more precise practices of their own tribes', p. 253.
- 90 Analysis ought not preclude the possibility of both positive and negative dynamics at work in syncretic processes.
- 91 For a concrete example a successful alliance between Indians and non-Indians, see Whaley with Brezette, *Walloge Warriors... See also Al Geticks, The New Resource Wars: Native and Environmentalist Struggles Against Multinational Corporations*, Boston: South End Press, 1993, and his article in Bron Taylor (ed.), *Ecological Resistance Movements*.
- 92 A cynical reading might suggest that such concern only occurs when environmental concerns overlap with the Native American interests—but such a reading would be too simplistic. Many of the Deep Ecology activists introduced in these pages, guided by their affinity with Native American spirituality, have made significant sacrifices, even suffering arrest, in defense of places they and their Indian allies consider sacred. Indeed my impression is that at least within the Deep Ecology movement, those most closely aligned with Native American spirituality, those most likely to participate in sweat lodges or other ceremonies inspired by Native American religion, are the ones most likely to engage in environmental activism that defends places considered sacred by Native Americans.
- 93 For example, at Mt. Graham, after watching a demonstration that involved spontaneous grieving, prayer, and rage in front of the telescope site that both the Indians and Earth Firsters considered a desecration, one of the AIM activists who had vociferously objected to a planned sweat lodge and who had been offended by the presence of alcohol stated, 'I used to hate all white people, but today, you people showed me something', see Bron Taylor, 'Resacralizing Earth'.
- 94 Even Ward Churchill perhaps the most trenchant critic of appropriation, drafted and signed a statement of Solidarity with Earth First! (Ward Churchill, Solidarity Statement with Earth First!, *Earth First!* 13:1, 2 November 1992, p. 21.) The statement reads: 'On behalf of the American Indian Movement of Colorado, I would like to take this opportunity to express firm solidarity with the organization Earth First! Although we in AIM have had occasion to express strong disagreement with the racism, sexism, and explicit Eurocentrism imbedded in many of the attitudes and positions articulated by elements of Earth First!'s original icons and theorists—notably David Foreman, George Wuerthner and the late Edward Abbey—we have never disagreed with the organizations guiding concept, 'no compromise in defense of Mother Earth'. To the contrary, we have unwaveringly applauded and supported it. This is all the more true insofar as the past several years have witnessed a strong counterbalancing trend now within Earth First!—perhaps best symbolized by Judy Bar—which first offset and now seems to have generally supplanted the problematic perspectives inherent to the Foreman group. With this in mind, the time seems appropriate to state that Colorado AIM is committed to joining hands with the non-Indians of Earth First! in a common struggle to create a better world, not just for ourselves and our children but for our children's children, and for all future generations'. Churchill may be unaware that many within this movement borrow elements of native American spirituality.
- 95 In re-writing an earlier draft of this paper, Matthew Glass suggested that the images of Indians resulting from the proliferation of borrowed and blended native practices could be harmful to Indians. It is also possible that these phenomena contribute to more positive and diverse portrayals of American Indians. Both possibilities deserve attention.
- 96 One case where it seems this may be true is with pan-Indian religious revivals.
- 97 Some American Indian Movement militants have disrupted the sweat lodges of persons they consider profiteers and have threatened others they consider charlatans with more of the same. But as morally repugnant as such profiteering may be, such a repressive response, suppressing religious practice in the name of the free exercise of religion, is inconsistent. It is difficult to see how such a response is an appropriate antidote to boorish behaviour on the part of some spiritually hungry Euroamericans.

96 This judgment is based on in-depth interviews to be described in a forthcoming Beacon Press book tentatively entitled *Once and Future Primitive: The Spiritual Politics of Radical Environmentalism*. By mysticism I do not imply supernaturalism but rather, a perception about the relatedness, and possibility of relationship, with all living things.

97 In activist circles I have heard many Indian activists lament the divisions within their communities and describing how much of their struggle is against those Indians who have been severed from their own earth-revering traditions.

98 'The Great Pretenders', p. 418.

99 On reading this in an earlier draft, Diane Bell made the interesting comment that perhaps this indicates that the critics might be right, that the Euroamerican interest in American Indian ceremony was just a fad.

100 'Is Religion Possible', p. 7. Such attitudes reinforce 'the message that Indians are indeed a conquered people and that there is nothing that Indians possess, *absolutely nothing*—pipes, land, water, feathers, drums, and even prayers—that non-Indians cannot take whenever and wherever they wish.'

101 See, e.g., Al Gedicks, *New Resource Wars*, pp. 129, 30, for an example of a shared ceremony at a demonstration, and various examples scattered about in Whaley and Bresette, *Walden Warriors*.

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