

School of Media Communication and Culture
Murdoch University

**The New Age and Indigenous
Spirituality:
Searching for the sacred**

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Bachelor of Arts
with Honours in Australian Indigenous Studies, Murdoch University.

June, 2010

DECLARATION

I, Claire Farley, declare that this thesis is my own account of my research and contains as its main content work which has not previously been submitted for a degree at any tertiary educational institution.

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the New Age spiritual movement in its relationship with Indigenous cultures. Indigenous spiritual traditions have been appropriated to support relevant New Age theories. It critiques New Age perceptions of Indigenous cultures as misinformed and argues this misinformation is proliferated through certain New Age practices. It argues that the New Age can achieve a sustaining, earth-based spiritual practice without resorting to the appropriation of Indigenous traditions. Neo-paganism holds many of the qualities that New Agers seek in Indigenous traditions and is a potential alternative avenue of spiritual solace to the appropriation of Indigenous culture. The embodiment of New Age goals can be understood within the context of environmental ethics philosophies. Alternative festivals that operate with a spiritual ethic are explored as evidence that the New Age can and in some areas, does operate in a positive, life-affirming manner. Importantly, the thesis argues that re-interpretation of Indigenous culture by the New Age is neither welcome nor necessary.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Declaration	ii
Copyright acknowledgement	iii
Abstract	iv
Acknowledgements	viii
Introduction	1
Chapter One: The New Age	7
Introduction	7
What is the New Age spiritual movement?	7
New Age history.....	14
Conclusion	21
Chapter Two: Mutated Messages	22
Introduction	22
Disregarding the local	22
Misrepresentation and misinformation	26
<i>Going Native</i>	27
<i>The Pan American Indian Association</i>	28
<i>Marlo Morgan</i>	29
Neo-shamanism.....	31
<i>The sweat lodge</i>	33

<i>Entheogens</i>	35
New Age Natives and snake oil salesmen	37
Conclusion	39
Chapter Three: Neo-Paganism	41
Introduction	41
What is neo-paganism?	42
History of neo-paganism	47
Contemporary neo-paganism	52
Conclusion	57
Chapter Four: Ethics, Celebration and Action	58
Introduction	58
Environmental ethics	59
Alternative festivals as sites of New Age education	64
<i>ConFest</i>	64
<i>Rainbow Serpent</i>	66
<i>Rainbow Gatherings</i>	67
<i>Earthdance</i>	70
<i>Electronic dance music culture</i>	72
<i>Neo-tribalism</i>	74
Conclusion	76
Conclusion	77

References.....83

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INTRODUCTION

In the past fifty or so years, the New Age and Neo-pagan spiritual movements have incorporated many aspects of Indigenous spiritualities into their beliefs and practices. This thesis examines cases in which this incorporation culminates in a negative experience, which does not benefit Indigenous people and their cultures today. I argue that a mutually satisfactory relationship encompassing spiritual understanding can exist between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples.

Historically, most people have ascribed to one or other formal religion¹; today, a growing number of people are moving away from formal religions and are looking for spiritual nourishment that is more appropriate to postmodern sensitivities. Popular spiritual paths include atheism, agnosticism, and religions that were not previously as accessible, especially religions from Asia and the Middle East. Two intersecting paths, which transcend many religious boundaries, are the New Age movement and neo-paganism.

The New Age borrows many spiritual ideas from ancient cultures and applies them to contemporary Occidental life. Wade Clark Roof argues:

¹ Australian Bureau of Statistics. 1301.0 - Year Book Australia, 2008: Culture and Recreation: Cultural Diversity. Latest issue [online] c2008 [cited 2009 Feb 6]. Available from: AusStats. <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/bb8db737e2af84b8ca2571780015701e/636F496B2B943F12CA2573D200109DA9?opendocument>.

Religious symbols, teachings, and practices are easily “disembedded,” that is, lifted out of one cultural setting, and “re-embedded” into another. [In this process] ...depth to any tradition is often lost, the result being thin layers of cultural and religious meaning.²

This practice of “disembedding” spiritual traditions is problematic, both for the consumer of the eclectic spirituality that emerges and for the cultures from which they have been appropriated. Many within the New Age spiritual movement admire Indigenous cultures and attempt to incorporate aspects of Indigenous spiritualities into their lives despite lacking the history and connection to that spirituality which Aboriginal people themselves hold.

There are many cases where a member of the New Age has inappropriately utilised spiritual symbols from an Indigenous culture^{3,4,5}; I discuss examples throughout the thesis. Such behaviour by New Agers is not respectful to Indigenous people.

² Clark Roof W. *Spiritual marketplace: baby boomers and the remaking of American religion*. Princeton: Princeton University Press; 1999. p73.

³ Garvie E. *The medicine wheel: a journey of transformation and spiritual development*. Adult Education, Masters [thesis]. Antigonish (Nova Scotia): St Francis Xavier University; 2007.

The Four Winds Society, operated and founded by a Californian takes New Age seekers on trips to Peru to perform an ‘Incan medicine wheel’ ritual. The medicine wheel symbology comes from North American traditions, most documented in Cheyenne lands.

⁴ Sulak J, Vale V. Greg Stafford. *Modern pagans: an investigation of contemporary pagan practices*. San Francisco: Re/search publications, 2001. p44-46.

Stafford is the President of the Board of Directors of the Cross Cultural Shamanism Network that publishes the widely distributed magazine *Shaman’s drum*. *Shaman’s drum* advocates neo-shamanism that appropriates aspects of Native cultures including vision quests, use of ‘medicine plants’ and sweat lodges.

⁵ *Ibid.* Starhawk. p6-16. Starhawk critiques the use of the word ‘shaman’ in a neo-pagan sense. She is concerned that the utilisation of psychedelic plants by neo-shamans to summon spiritual insights is out of context and less meaningful than in traditional societies. She advocates the use of other techniques to attain ecstatic consciousness such as meditation.

Indigenous people regard these New Age followers, who are generally part of the European coloniser class in North America and Australia⁶, as disrespectful to their heritage and traditions⁷. I argue that these practices undermine the integrity of the New Age spiritual movement.

In order for Indigenous people to feel comfortable in granting non-Indigenous people access to a deeper comprehension of the lands we live in, there must be a balanced exchange. Indigenous people in the Americas, Australia and elsewhere continue to struggle for survival. Land rights are continuing to be restricted in some nations^{8,9}, and are yet to be recognised in others¹⁰. Lack of access and rights to homelands is central

⁶ Nasel DD. 6.13: Demographic characteristics of New Age followers. In: Spiritual orientation in regard to spiritual intelligence: a consideration of traditional Christianity and new age/individualistic spirituality. PhD [dissertation]. Adelaide: University of South Australia; 2004.

The New Age movement is primarily based in the USA in the middle class elite of all age groups; contains many followers who have rejected Christian religion; and is predominantly made up of women.

⁷ Our Red Earth Organization. New age frauds plastic shaman. Plastic shaman [homepage on the internet]. 2001 [cited 2009 May 22]. Available from: <http://www.geocities.com/ourredearth/plastic.html>.

⁸ Fay D, James D. Chapter one: Restoring what was ours. In: The rights and wrongs of land restitution: restoring what was ours. Taylor and Francis e-Library; 2008. p1-24. The Mexican government began a policy of ending land restitution in the 1990s in favour of allotting Indigenous people private properties.

⁹ Poirier R, Ostergren D. Evicting people from nature: Indigenous land rights and national parks in Australia, Russia, and the United States. Natural Resources Journal [serial online]. 2002 [cited 2010 May 4];42(1):350. Available from: Law Journal Library. www.aallnet.org/products/pub_journal.asp.

...[n]ative access to the resources of national parks throughout the world remains essentially prohibited. National parks in the United States, Australia, and Russia fundamentally adhere to the Yellowstone model of securing a land and protecting its "pristine" quality by not allowing traditional land uses and permitting access for visitors under carefully controlled conditions.

¹⁰ Yarraga M. Land rights. Indigenous Australia. FrogandToad Travel [homepage on the internet]. No date [2010 May 4]. Available from: <http://www.indigenoustralia.info/land/land-rights.html>.

"Tasmania is the only State in Australia not to have enacted some form of Aboriginal land rights legislation."

to Indigenous peoples being able to practice their traditional religions as they are inextricably tied to the land in which they were formed¹¹. These issues need to be addressed; personal spiritual growth can be combined with practical political action to create the change we want to see in the world.

As the fields, which I cover in this thesis, are many and the room to discuss them is limited, I draw on many authors rather than a few key writers. Some of the writers I acknowledge as having had a significant influence on my work include Vine Deloria, Jr for Indigenous critiques of the New Age; Monica Sjöö, Starhawk, Jenny Blain and Robert Wallis on neo-paganism; Karen Warren and Carol Adams on ecofeminist theory; and Graham St John for critique of alternative festival culture.

I begin this thesis by providing an overview of the New Age with a discussion of its aim to save the planet through individual self-enlightenment. I discuss the New Age's connections with astrological movements in the development of spiritual evolution theory and provide examples of some key texts that have progressed this theory.

In the second chapter, I argue that some members of the New Age reinforce myths about Indigenous people through misappropriation of Aboriginal spirituality. I discuss how this attempt to embody Native spiritual traditions is related to the disconnection that

¹¹ Warren K. Chapter 8: With justice for all. In: Ecofeminist philosophy: a western perspective on what it is and why it matters. Lanham (Maryland): Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Inc; 2000.

many people in Occidental society feel between self and nature. I argue that this motivation drives non-Indigenous people who are misinformed about Aboriginal spirituality to proliferate incorrect stereotypes. I discuss how some such people in the New Age movement have misused the term 'shaman', which both adds to stereotypes and is misleading for those who are customers of mercenary spiritual leaders. I argue that Native people who profit from the sale of their spiritual traditions abuse and disrespect their cultures by doing so.

My third chapter focuses on neo-paganism as potentially providing a sustaining earth-based spirituality as a viable alternative to the inauthentic borrowing from other cultures that occurs in some aspects of the New Age. I discuss aims and motivations of neo-paganism and explore how it has come to be in its present forms. I explain how contemporary neo-pagan communities are actively engaging in nourishing, relevant forms of spiritual practice.

In the fourth and final chapter, I argue that environmental ethics are an example of how the New Age operates in the world. Environmental ethics can provide a forum for examining our spiritual and physical relationships with the rest of nature, informing how we address the current ecological and spiritual crises. I describe several New Age counter-culture festivals that attempt to embody environmental ethics principles. I argue that these events initiate dialogue between Native and non-Native people on spirituality and social issues. I conclude that it is possible for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people

to share a spiritual dialogue, albeit one that respects the diverse collective cultural and individual histories we have each experienced; and that it is necessary to do so in order to work together to circumvent ecological crisis.

CHAPTER 1: THE NEW AGE

Introduction

In this chapter, I argue that the New Age spiritual movement aims to improve the state of the planet through individual and collective enlightenment. I explain what the movement embodies and its motivations. I give a brief account of some of the history and key texts of the New Age as necessary for a contextual understanding of the relationship between the New Age and concern for the future of the planet.

What is the New Age spiritual movement?

In this section, I discuss the premises of the New Age movement, and introduce the relationship between astrological movements and the New Age as a way of supporting the claim for spiritual evolution.

The New Age movement encompasses many ideas, theories and practices of spirituality. It is comprised of eclectic beliefs borrowed from the world's religions and cultures, as well as maverick and inventive forms of spiritual expression¹². Keith Gebers, a book critic for a local Sacramento County newspaper in California, states that New Age literature can range from being about “anti-gravity and free energy to ancient

¹² Gebers K. New Age in words and reality. Elk Grove Citizen [serial on the internet]. 2007 [cited 2009 Feb 6] Oct 23. Available from: <http://www.egcitizen.com/articles/2007/10/24/lifestyles/lifestyle06.txt>.

science and secret societies”¹³. The New Age movement is not a centralised organisation with prescribed rules about what it is and does. Values and beliefs held by those associated with the movement involve “political, economic, ecology and even health and religion beliefs, sometimes far different from other New Age devotees ... current trends are spiritual, ideological and social”¹⁴. The New Age umbrella is undoubtedly broad.

As Gebers states in online newspaper *Elk Grove citizen*, much New Age literature is concerned with a ‘paradigm shift’^{15,16}, or a change in “a set of assumptions, concepts, values, and practices that constitutes a way of viewing reality for the community that shares them, especially in an intellectual discipline.”¹⁷ He is referring to the New Age as presenting spiritual alternatives to societal axioms, seeing a lack of spiritual interconnectedness as the primary cause of our collective suffering. I argue that the New Age movement presents paradigm shifts in spiritual understanding and suggest

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Wade, N. Thomas S. Kuhn: Revolutionary Theorist of Science. *Science, New Series* [serial online]. 1977 [cited 2009 Feb 6];197(4299):143-145. Available from: JSTOR. www.jstor.org.

Thomas Kuhn originally used the term ‘paradigm shift’ in 1962 to describe scientific advancement as a “series of peaceful interludes punctuated by intellectually violent revolutions” wherein “one conceptual worldview is replaced by another”¹⁶.

¹⁷ The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language. Paradigm. Fourth Edition [on the internet]. No date [cited 2009 Jan 31]. Available from: Dictionary.com website.

<http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/paradigm>.

that these are useful for people who desire to alter the disastrous ecological direction in which our planet is headed¹⁸.

Some use the term 'New Age' to refer to an astrological shift, which is upon us at this time. Western astrology recognises that Earth is moving from the Piscean Age to the Aquarian Age¹⁹. The Piscean Age is characterised as "violent, selfish and materialistic" while the Age of Aquarius will bring out more cooperative, wise and harmonious traits²⁰. Societal paradigm shifts in these directions will be useful in improving the current ecological and social crises.

¹⁸Butler CD, Harley D. Primary, secondary and tertiary effects of eco-climatic change: the medical response. *Post Graduate Medical Journal* [serial online]. 2010 [cited 2010 Jun 7];86(1):230-234. Available from: BMJ Journals. <http://journals.bmj.com>.

Ceballos G, Garcia A, Ehrlich PR. The sixth extinction crisis: loss of animal populations and species. *Journal of cosmology* [serial online]. 2010 [cited 2010 Jun 7];8(1). Available from: Journal of Cosmology. <http://journalofcosmology.com>.

Peck SL. Death and the ecological crisis. *Agriculture and human values* [serial online]. 2010 [cited 2010 Jun 7];27(1):105-109. Available from: SpringerLink Journals. www.springerlink.com

In case any readers need convincing that our planet is experiencing ecological crisis, here are some articles that touch on the subjects of climate change, species extinctions and pollution.

¹⁹ Hand Clow B, Clow G. *Alchemy of nine dimensions: decoding the vertical axis, crop circles, and the Mayan calendar*. Charlottesville (VA): Hampton Roads Pub.; 2004.

²⁰ Berg MC. New age advice: ticket to happiness? *Journal of Happiness Studies* [serial online]. 2007 [cited 2010 May 20];9(3):361. Available from: ProQuest 5000 International. www.proquest.com.

Recent channelled information from popular New Age sources supports this theory of spiritual evolution. In *Alchemy of the Nine Dimensions*, Barbara Hand Clow²¹ writes that Pleiadean extra-terrestrials told her that in the Age of Aquarius, the global power elite plan to control the planet in the New World Order. Hand Clow argues that the elite are creating a dualistic paradigm of good against evil, through such methods as war. If we are to create a more positive future for the New Age we need to become more spiritually evolved²² despite the Illuminati's skilful attempts to keep the vibration of the planet down through fear mongering and undermining the validity of New Age concepts as well as wisdom from other spiritual traditions^{23,24}.

²¹ Hand Clow B. Chiron: rainbow bridge between the inner and outer planets [e-book]. 2nd ed. St Paul (MN): Llewellyn Publishing; 2004 [cited 2010 Jun 4]. Available from: Google books.

Barbara Hand Clow, MA, is an internationally renowned astrologer and spiritual teacher who has led ceremonies at sacred sites since 1987. She is the author of nine books, including the bestselling *The Pleiadean Agenda*.

²²Hanegraaff WJ. New age spiritualities as secular religion: a historian's perspective. *Social compass* [serial online]. 1999 [cited 2010 May 21];46(2):150. Available from: Sage Journals Online Premier Sage 2010.

Hanegraaff writes about a channelled entity named Seth who spoke through the body of a science fiction author, Jane Roberts in the 1970s:

The core of his teaching is that we all "create our own reality", in a process of spiritual evolution through countless existences on this planet as well as in an infinity of other dimensions. Few New Agers realize how many of the beliefs which they take for granted in their daily lives have their historical origin in Seth's messages.

I would challenge his statement that this idea really began with Seth and Jane Roberts; however this explanation of spiritual evolution is succinct enough to suffice here.

²³ Hand Clow B, Clow G. Op cit.

²⁴ Prada L. Twelve spiritual principles and laws: as applied to the Aquarian Age or Heaven on Earth and or the liberation of Planet Earth. Brother Veritus' website [homepage on the internet]. 2005 [cited 2010 Jun 4]. Available from: http://www.luisprada.com/Protected/twelve_spiritual_principles_and_laws.htm.

"The Matrix"... is the planned scheme of the Illuminati Dark Forces and their Overlords.... The Dark Forces have experts that know spiritual hermetic laws since they penetrate good mystic and

The Central American Mayan calendar is also important for the New Age movement. According to this ancient calendar, on December 21, 2012 the world will end a time cycle of thousands of years and begin another. Academics, New Age writers and Indigenous Mayans dispute the exact time that the calendar begins again^{25,26,27}. In August 1987, Harmonic Convergence events took place all over the world during what is considered to have been the beginning, of the end of time relating to the Mayan calendar. Tens of thousands of people gathered at 'Earth's "acupuncture points"'²⁸, or places of natural and spiritual significance²⁹ such as the Golden Gate Bridge and Mount Shasta in California, Sedona in Arizona³⁰, Chaco Canyon in New Mexico and Mesa

esoteric organizations such as the Masons and Rosicrucians, to study those laws and to make use of this occult science for their selfish purposes—to create "The Matrix"— although they make you believe they are atheist and materialistic in thinking and that all that esoteric "garbage" of the New Agers is but hocus-pocus, but among their peers they know better. They gather intelligence of the plans and moves of the Forces of Light from channeled material and take certain channels very seriously.

²⁵ Sewell Ward D. Mayan Calendar. Library of Alexandria [homepage on the internet]. 2003 [cited 2009 Feb 6]. Available from: <http://halexandria.org/dward417.htm>.

²⁶ Rahelio. 2012 signs of the times: is it the end or a new beginning? Hunab Ku: The Galactic Center [homepage on the internet]. Sedona (AZ): The Center; 2008 [cited 2009 Feb 7]. Available from: <http://rahelio.homestead.com/2012.html>.

²⁷ Hand Clow B, Clow G. Op Cit.

²⁸ Krupp EC. The great 2012 scare: your 2010 defense kit. Sky and telescope [serial online]. 2009 [cited May 21];118(5):25. Available from: Academic OneFile. www.gale.cengage.com/AcademicOneFile.

²⁹ Santino J. Introduction: searching for holidays. In: All around the year: holidays and celebrations in American life [e-book]. 2nd ed. Chicago (IL): University of Illinois; 1994 [cited 2010 May 21]. Available from: Google books.

³⁰ Ivakhiv A. Red rocks, "vortexes" and the selling of Sedona: environmental politics in the new age. Social Compass [serial online]. 1997 [cited 2010 May 21];44(3):367-384. Available from: Sage. www.sage.com.

Verde, Colorado³¹, Mayan and Egyptian ruin sites, Central Park in New York and Hawaiian volcanoes³² to pray for the salvation of the planet³³. Similar but likely larger events to celebrate the end of the calendar are being planned globally, such as those at Death Valley in Nevada, Chichen Itza³⁴ and Palenque³⁵ in Mexico.

The Arizonan Hopi prophecies suggest that we are currently in the fourth world; each world has been destroyed based on mistakes that people have made. Some predict that this world will end due to the changing magnetism of the earth's poles³⁶. Diné (Navajo), also from the 'four corners' region of the United States, have prophecies

³¹ Finn C. 'Leaving more than footprints': modern votive offerings at Chaco Canyon prehistoric site. *Antiquity* [serial online]. 1997 [cited May 21];71(271):169-179. Available from: ProQuest. www.proquest.com.

³² Ballvé M. Meditating on the Maya calendar for 2012: a profile of José Argüelles. Marcello Ballvé: selected articles and reporting [homepage on the internet]. 2009 [cited 2010 May 21]. Available from: <http://marceloballve.wordpress.com/2009/09/02/meditating-on-the-maya-calendar-for-2012-a-profile-of-jose-arguelles/>.

³³ Wojcik D. Apocalypticism and millenarianism. Partridge, C, editor. In: *New religions: a guide: new religious movements, sects and alternative spiritualities*. 2nd ed. New York (NY): Oxford University Press, 2004; p388-395.

³⁴ The Pakalian Group of Mexico. December 21, 2012 Maya gatherings around the world. Lord Paka Ahau's Maya diaries [homepage on the internet]. No date [cited 2010 May 21]. Available from: <http://pakalahau.wordpress.com/2008/12/27/december-21-2012-maya-gatherings-around-the-world/>.

³⁵ Roadjunky. Rainbow gatherings 2010 in Europe, US and the rest of the world. Road Junky Travel [homepage on the internet]. 2010 [cited 2010 May 22]. Available from: <http://www.roadjunky.com/article/2299/rainbow-gatherings-2010-in-europe-us-and-the-rest-of-the-world>.

³⁶ Simpson J. The world upside down shall be: a note on the folklore of doomsday. *The Journal of American folklore* [serial online]. 1978 [cited 2009 Feb 24];91(359):559-567. Available from: University of Illinois Press. www.press.uillinois.edu.

predicting that the world may end around this time³⁷. The Mexican Aztecs predicted that Quetzalcoatl would return to them around the time that the Spanish invaded, and it is said that the 'white brother' was meant to return from his travels across the world and peacefully reunite with the red race. This failure signifies the end of the world³⁸.

Llewellyn Publications describes the New Age as "a major change in consciousness found within each of us as we learn to bring forth and manifest powers that humanity has always potentially had"³⁹. Whether or not a participant is concerned with astrology, those involved in the New Age generally consider a unique leap in spiritual evolution is emerging in this moment of history. The most common thread between individual New Ager's spiritual beliefs is the idea that the Earth is entering a New Age wherein our goal as humans is to become more spiritually aware or suffer through the demise of the planet⁴⁰. According to the New Age movement, acting from this higher level of awareness will cause us to make more sustainable, life affirming choices for our communities, the environments we live in and for ourselves.

³⁷ Sjö M. Op cit.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Llewellyn Publications. About Llewellyn's New Age series. In: Stein D. Stroking the python: women's psychic lives. St Paul: Llewellyn Publications; 1988.

⁴⁰ Hand Clow B, Clow G. Op cit.

New Age history

In this section, I provide a brief history of publicised events and popular literature that show the development of the New Age theory of spiritual evolution. As 'New Age' is an ambiguous term and there is not a centralised institution, there is not a definitive history of the movement chronicled. Further, each individual's own experience of the New Age would vary according to their interests and the resources they access.

Walter Russell's 1944 essay, "Power Through Knowledge", provides one of the first known uses of the term 'New Age'. He discussed "...New-Age philosophy of the spiritual re-awakening of man..."^{41,42}. Russell followed Richard Maurice Bucke's theory that human consciousness is evolving. Bucke argued that:

...not only the human body, but also human consciousness, has evolved in stages. Human consciousness periodically makes progressive leaps, such as that from animal awareness to rational self-awareness many millennia ago. Russell believed with Dr. Bucke that humankind is now on the brink of making another such extraordinary -- yet evolutionary -- leap in consciousness.

The next cycle of human evolution, said Bucke, will be from rational self-consciousness to spiritual super-consciousness on the order of that experienced by the great sages, religious figures, and mystics of the past 2,500 years and on up to today.⁴³

⁴¹ Russell W. Power through knowledge. Philosophy [document on the internet]. The University of Science and Philosophy; no date [cited 2009 Feb 7]. Available from: https://www.philosophy.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=4&Itemid=75.

⁴² Webb M. The origins of the term [homepage on the internet]. 2003 [cited 2009 Feb 7]. Available from: <http://www.ascension.net/articles.asp?Category=23&Article=351>.

⁴³ Ibid.

Russell predicted that when this spiritual evolution is academically recognised, measured and documented religion and science would converge, as “[t]he love-principle of giving which dominates the God-Mind will rule the world in the coming new age”⁴⁴.

Another key aspect of the New Age movement is spiritual ‘ascension’ or evolution of the planet. George King, an extra-terrestrial channel⁴⁵ and yoga master⁴⁶ since the 1950s, was one of the first in the contemporary Occidental world to discuss spiritual ascension publicly. He founded the Aetherius Society⁴⁷ to play out the wishes of the ‘Cosmic Masters’ with who he was in contact. While in a Yogic Samadhi trance, King would channel extra terrestrial beings for audiences in the hundreds. On May 21 1959, King channelled extra-terrestrial information live on the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) television channel. King describes having entered alien spacecraft and being

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Channelling refers to the body acting as a ‘channel’ for something other than that which normally resides within it. Here I refer to extraterrestrial entities utilising a human body and its functions in order to express a message. The entity is able to project itself into the physical human body with its consciousness.

⁴⁶ The Aetherius Society. Dr. George King, our founder. The Aetherius Society [homepage on the internet]. 2010 [cited 2010 May 23]. Available from: http://aetheriusmi.org/dr_king.html.

King practiced Raja, Gnana and Kundalini yoga eight to twelve hours a day.

⁴⁷ Saliba JA. The Earth is a dangerous place – the world view of the Aetherius Society. Marburg Journal of Religion [serial online]. 1999 [cited 2010 May 23];4(2):1-10. Available from: <http://archiv.ub.uni-marburg.de/mjr/saliba.html>.

The Society was founded in the mid-1950s. It is named after a Venusian being who had contacted King. Members work towards achieving world enlightenment and universal peace by the direction of the Cosmic Masters (also referred to by some as the Ascended Masters, these are enlightened beings who have been incarnated on Earth and shared their wisdom, such as Jesus Christ, Akhenaton, Buddha etcetera).

shown the Initiation of Ascension⁴⁸, which he describes⁴⁹. King also described meeting Jesus, who appeared as an extra-terrestrial being and gave him an extension of his Sermon on the Mount. He believed Jesus gave him “[t]he most important single Metaphysical task ever undertaken upon Earth...”⁵⁰ which was to perform a series of spiritual initiation rituals on eighteen mountains around the world. There is now a large community of people who openly describe their encounters with aliens, and many who claim to channel messages from other planets^{51,52,53}.

In 1967, Robert Coon published *The rainbow serpent and the holy grail – Uluru and the planetary chakras*⁵⁴. Coon writes of a series of planetary chakras, just like the chakras ancient eastern religions recognise as energy centres in the body. These chakras follow the path of two intertwining snakes, one female – the Australian Aboriginal

⁴⁸ Daley P. *Metaphysics and the new age: truth is stranger than fiction* [e-book]. Charleston (SC): Booksurge Publishing; 2009 [cited 2010 May 24]. p78. Available from: Google Books.

After the enlightenment of soul consciousness, there follows a train of lives in unselfish service, then there is the final Initiation of Ascension and freedom from rebirth. This becomes the threshold of Interplanetary existence.

⁴⁹ King G. *The nine freedoms*. Los Angeles: Aetherius Society; 1963.

⁵⁰ King G. *Op cit*. Introduction to the Author. p9.

⁵¹ Grunschloss A. *Ufology and UFO-related movements*. Patridge C, editor. In: *New religions: a guide: new religious movements, sects and alternative spiritualities*. 2nd ed. New York (NY): Oxford University Press, 2004; p.372-376

⁵² Dvir A. *ETmedical.com* [homepage on the internet]. No date [cited 2009 Feb 7]. Available from: <http://etmedical.com/>.

⁵³ No author. *Alien abduction, how to prevent* [homepage on the internet]. No date [cited 2009 Feb 7]. Available from: <http://www.abductions-alien.org/>.

⁵⁴ Coon R. *Books by Robert Coon* [homepage on the internet]. Glastonbury: 2008 [cited 2010 Jan 17]. Available from: <http://members.multimania.co.uk/glastonbury/books.html>.

rainbow serpent – and one male – Quetzalcoatl, the plumed serpent from the Mexican Aztec region. According to Coon, as individuals ascend consciousness by activating our Omega chakra, we assist in the Global Omega Point (which is currently in Glastonbury Tor, England) being simultaneously activated, contributing to the evolution of Gaia (planet Earth as a conscious being)⁵⁵. Tor Webster from Glastonbury in England recently made a film, *Rainbow Serpent project*, about these energy centres. Webster travelled to each of these sites and interacted with local custodians, performing rituals to keep these chakras open and balanced⁵⁶. This process is similar to ‘healing’ a person in such modalities as Reiki⁵⁷ and my own practice, LUXOR Light⁵⁸. Coon and Webster recognise that Indigenous knowledge keepers need to play a central role in planetary ascension.

⁵⁵ Coon R. A commentary on the invocation of the omega point. Immortality essays [homepage on the internet]. 2009 [cited 2010 May 25]. Available from:

http://www.angelfire.com/in4/alchemy2084/commentary_omega.html.

⁵⁶ Webster T. Info and shop. Rainbow serpent project – spiritual feature documentary film [homepage on the internet]. Glastonbury: 2009 [cited 2010 Jan 17]. Available from:

<http://www.rainbowserpent.co.uk/page/2318250:Page:11245>.

⁵⁷ Reiki.nu. Reiki and the main chakras [homepage on the internet]. 2009 [cited 2010 Jan 17]. Available from: <http://www.reiki.nu/treatment/chakra/chakra.html>.

⁵⁸ Farley CJ. Me, you and LUXOR Light. Ning [homepage on the internet]. 2010 [cited May 2010 25]. Available from: <http://meyouandluxorlight.ning.com/>.

In LUXOR Light, when performing a healing on an individual, major chakras are checked to determine if they are ‘open’ or ‘closed’, and if they are ‘balanced’. Imbalanced chakras can cause or be caused by physical and emotional problems, and blockages to spiritual growth. Any chakras that are not operating at an optimum level are adjusted by sending energy into these points with the use of the LUXOR Light sacred geometry symbol.

A cornerstone publication for the New Age in the United States is Marilyn Ferguson's *The Aquarian conspiracy*, published in 1987^{59,60}. This book was published prior to the common use of the term 'New Age'. Ferguson coined the term 'Aquarian Conspiracy' to describe the growing number of people who were gathering momentum in this new spiritual movement. According to Ferguson:

Broader than reform, deeper than revolution, this benign conspiracy for a new human agenda has triggered the most rapid cultural realignment in history. The great shuddering, irrevocable shift overtaking us is not a new political, religious, or philosophical system. It is a new mind – the ascendance of a startling worldview...⁶¹

The Aquarian reference is in regards to the Age of Aquarius, because Aquarius, in the zodiac, represents “flow and the quenching of an ancient thirst”⁶². The book contained the first acknowledgement and description of the movement to reach a mainstream audience⁶³.

⁵⁹ Blair-Ewart A. Newage history: The Aquarian Conspiracy. No date [cited 2009 Feb 7]. Available from <http://www.ablairewart.com/SPIRITUALREALISM/Aquarian%20Consp.asp>.

⁶⁰ Marilyn Ferguson, 70, dies; writer's 'The Aquarian Conspiracy' was pivotal in New Age movement. Los Angeles Times [serial online]. 2008 [cited 2009 Feb 7] Nov 2. Available from: http://www.latimes.com/news/printedition/california/la-me-ferguson2-2008nov02_0,997088.story.

⁶¹ Ferguson M. *The Aquarian conspiracy: a personal and social transformation in the 1980s*. 2nd ed. Los Angeles: J.P. Tarcher; 1987. p23.

⁶² Ibid. p9.

⁶³ Marilyn Ferguson, 70, dies; writer's 'The Aquarian Conspiracy' was pivotal in New Age movement. Op cit.

The Celestine prophecy, written by James Redfield and published in 1993 was the bestselling American hardcover book in the world for two years⁶⁴. The parable's narrative follows the story of an American man searching for nine scrolls recently discovered in Peru, each one containing a spiritual insight or prophecy. The insights describe a mass spiritual awakening that is to take place in our time; that the world is full of sacred energy and how to utilise it; and the importance of synchronicity and following your "spiritual mission"⁶⁵. Redfield claims the book was so successful because it expressed a spiritual experience that people were already having⁶⁶. The New Age is well symbolised by *The Celestine prophecy*, as an awakening of consciousness that people are becoming more and more aware of all the time, though don't necessarily always know how to express with clarity.

Lee Carroll has been the primary channel for Kryon, a prominent teacher "entity"⁶⁷ since 1993⁶⁸. Carroll has channelled for the Society for Enlightenment and Transformation at

⁶⁴ Redfield J. *The Celestine prophecy: an adventure*. 2nd ed. New York: Time Warner Books; 1997.

⁶⁵ Redfield J. *The Celestine insights* [homepage on the internet]. c2008 [cited 2009 Feb 7]. Available from: <http://www.celestinevision.com/>.

⁶⁶ Bain B, Collis T, Camhe B. and Merrill Redfield S, producers; Mastroianni A, director. *The making of The Celestine Prophecy* [motion picture]. United States: Celestine Films LLD; 2006.

⁶⁷ Kryon. Chapter One: meet Kryon. In: *The end times (new information for personal peace): Kryon book 1*. 9th ed. Del Mar (CA): The Kryon Writings; 1996. p8.

The term "entity" is regularly used in New Age circles to specify a spirit being whose body most humans are unable to see but whose energy field can influence our own.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

the United Nations⁶⁹ seven times, more than any other channel⁷⁰. Through the publication of his first book with Jan Tober, *The Indigo children: the new kids have arrived*⁷¹ in 1999, he was heavily involved in the popularising of the 'Indigo children' theories. Carroll and Tober assert that:

Indigos... share traits like high I.Q., acute intuition, self-confidence, resistance to authority and disruptive tendencies, which are often diagnosed as attention-deficit disorder, known as A.D.D., or attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder, or A.D.H.D.... the indigos [are] a leap in human evolution.⁷²

Psychologist Nancy Ann Tappe first documented the Indigo children in the early 1970s⁷³. Tappe perceived⁷⁴ the new indigo 'life colour' or aura of these children who arrived on the planet with a higher evolution in consciousness than most other humans on Earth at this time⁷⁵. This idea of evolutionary consciousness continues to be the central and most active concept in the New Age movement.

⁶⁹ Carroll L. Kryon at the UN 2006. In the Kryon spirit [homepage on the internet]. 2006 [cited 2010 May 25]. Available from: <http://www.kryon.com/inspiritmag/scrapbooks/sb-UN-06.html>.

"The Society for Enlightenment and Transformation (SEAT) is part of the United Nations Staff Recreational Council (UNSRC). This is a group of clubs that is sanctioned by the UN for members, guests, employees and delegates of the United Nations."

⁷⁰ Kryon. Kryon: United Nations 2009 [homepage on the internet]. 2009 [cited 2009 Jan 16]. Available from http://www.kryon.com/k_channel09_UN2009.html.

⁷¹ Carroll L and Tober J. *The Indigo children: the new kids have arrived*. Carlsbad (CA): Hay House; 1999.

⁷² Leland J. Are they here to save the world? *New York Times* [newspaper online]. 2006 Jan 12 [cited 2010 May 25];1. Available from: ProQuest. www.proquest.com.

⁷³ Ibid. Chapter One: what is an Indigo child?

⁷⁴ In regards to being able to 'perceive' one's 'life colour', see: Tappe NA. *Understanding your life through color*. Carlsbad (CA): Starling Publishers; 1982.

Tappe has been medically diagnosed with synesthesia. I was not able to access this text but it is referred to in the Carroll and Tober work.

⁷⁵ Carroll L and Tober J. *Op Cit*. Chapter three: spiritual aspects of indigos.

Conclusion

Members of the New Age movement are interested in stepping away from formalised religion towards a spirituality that aims to improve the current state of the world. New Agers are concerned with raising the spiritual vibration or enlightenment of everyone on the planet to smooth the transition into the Aquarian Age or the end of the Mayan calendar. New Age spiritual paths are critical of the current state of humanity, believing humans to be destroying our world through selfishness and greed. Our current planetary crises have resulted from a lack of connection to the sacred, they say. These new spiritualities allow individuals to access the God experience for themselves; each person is their own channel to the Divine.

CHAPTER 2: MUTATED MESSAGES

Introduction

In this chapter, I argue that some members of the New Age misappropriate Indigenous spirituality as a way of reinforcing their own beliefs. In the first section, I argue that some New Age people generalise about Aboriginality thus failing to recognise the differences in values and religious beliefs between tribal nations in Australia, North America and elsewhere. I follow with a discussion of the misrepresentation of Aboriginality in the New Age, which I argue devalues and undermines contemporary Aboriginal cultures. I then discuss how the term 'neo-shamanism', which has grown popular with the rise of the New Age movement, is utilised by individuals in a manipulative and mercenary manner. In the final section, I discuss how similar behaviour is performed by some Aboriginal people in the sale of culture to non-Native consumers. These examples exemplify how generalisations and misrepresentation of Indigenous cultures occurs in the New Age movement.

Disregarding the local

...I understand the complexities and difficulties experienced by white young Americans who are on a spiritual quest. They feel that they are aliens and without real roots in the land where they grew up, a land in which all the places of power and sacredness belong not to them but to the indigenous peoples.⁷⁶

⁷⁶ Sjö M. New age and Armageddon: the goddess or the gurus? Towards a feminist vision of the future. London: Women's Press; 1992. p232.

In this section, I argue that some members of the New Age appropriate aspects of Indigenous cultures in an attempt to engage in a spiritual relationship with the natural environment. While doing this, some individuals misinterpret Native culture and propagate these myths within New Age communities. The misuse of Aboriginal tools and rituals ignores and disrespects existent, authentic engagement with these in contemporary cultures.

Non-Indigenous people living in colonised states face a quandary concerning spiritual connection to place. According to Peter Read⁷⁷:

The problem which [the book *Belonging*] confronts is this: those places which we loved, lost and grieved for were wrested from the Indigenous people who loved them, lost them and grieve for them still. Are such sites of our deep affections to be contested, articulated, shared, foregone or possessed absolutely?⁷⁸

In many places throughout the world, people are “disembedded”⁷⁹ from our homelands and spiritual cultures. Some people are now searching for spiritual nourishment from the people whose lands they or their ancestors have conquered or migrated to. These people use aspects of Indigenous cultures to formulate new beliefs that the originators did not intend. Further, those seeking spiritual insights from Indigenous cultures often do not have direct contact with the people whose traditions they are appropriating.

⁷⁷ University of Sydney. Professor Peter Read. Department of History [homepage on the internet]. 2010 [cited 2010 May 27]. Available from: <http://www.arts.usyd.edu.au/history/staff/profiles/read.shtml>.

Read is Professor of History at University of Sydney.

⁷⁸ Read P. *Belonging: Australians, place and Aboriginal ownership* [e-book]. Oakleigh (Vic): Cambridge University Press; 2000 [cited 2010 May 27]. Available from: Google Books.

⁷⁹ Roof WC. *Spiritual marketplace: baby boomers and the remaking of American religion*. Princeton (NJ): Princeton University Press; 1999. p73.

Some participants in the New Age thus continue to fuel stereotypes that serve to generalise Aboriginality.

For New Agers the combination of prophecies culminating in an 'end of time' period around the millennium, as discussed in Chapter One, is confirmation of the transformation of the planet. However, they have taken these prophecies out of their cultural context. Only knowledgeable people from within the appropriate Indigenous nations can properly interpret them. The re-telling of the stories between non-Indigenous people, further facilitated by the Internet, has allowed for unscrupulous untruths and a deluded game of Chinese whispers being played out⁸⁰. While the Internet can be a valuable tool for Indigenous communities to record and distribute knowledge⁸¹, much of what is published online is done so by unreliable sources that are not held accountable for the information they make available to anyone with an Internet connection.

Misappropriation of Indigenous culture occurs in some New Age practices that utilise props including 'medicine cards'⁸², with a tarot-like purpose, or daily wisdom books such

⁸⁰ Johnson W. Contemporary Native American prophecy in historical perspective. *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* [serial online]. 1996 [cited 2009 Feb 24];64(3):575-612. Available from: Oxford University Press. www.oup.com.

⁸¹ Wemigwans J. Indigenous worldviews: cultural expression on the world wide web. *Canadian Woman Studies* [serial online]. 2008 [cited 2010 May 27];26(3-4):31-39. Available from: Gale Cengage General OneFile. www.gale.cengage.com.

⁸² No author. Jamie Sams. Medicine cards [homepage on the internet]. No date [cited 2009 Feb 24]. Available from: <http://www.jamiesams.com/medicinecards.html>.

as *Native Wisdom for White Minds* by Anne Wilson Schaef⁸³. One popularised Native American ‘tool’ is the “Medicine Wheel”. Marilyn Ferguson writes about the “Indian Medicine Wheel, or the Cheyenne Wheel of Knowledge”⁸⁴ in *The Aquarian Conspiracy*. The term ‘Cheyenne wheel of knowledge’ refers to an ancient stone formation in Cheyenne lands in Wyoming⁸⁵. Anthropologists and other researchers⁸⁶ call similar stone formations with ceremonial uses that exist in other Native American lands, ‘medicine wheel’. When New Age practitioners apply these terms to something other than these physical ceremonial spaces, they are taken out of context, misinterpreted and disrespected^{87,88}.

⁸³ Schaef AW. *Native wisdom for white minds: daily reflections inspired by the native peoples of the world*. New York: Ballantine Books; 1995.

⁸⁴ Ferguson M. *The Aquarian conspiracy: personal and social transformation in the 1980s*. 2nd ed. Los Angeles: JP Tarcher; 1987.

See reference in Chapter One.

⁸⁵ Weimer M. The enduring quest for a clear vision of the past: interpreting Aboriginal stone features on two archaeological sites in South Park, Colorado. *Plains Anthropologist* [serial online]. 2009 [cited 2010 Feb 23]; 54(212): 333-347. Available from: ProQuest.

⁸⁶ Grinnell GB. The medicine wheel. *American Anthropologist* [serial online]. 1922 [cited 2009 Feb 24]; 24(3): 299-310. Available from: Blackwell Publishing.

⁸⁷ The term ‘medicine wheel’ is clearly an English term and does not specify the purpose of each stone formation to which the title is applied by anthropologists or other researchers. I do not mean to imply that these medicine wheels indeed have similar purposes or that the title is one which is suitable for them; I simply wish to point out that these formations do have a place in some Native American tribes’ ceremonial lives and that the ambiguity of the term fuels and exemplifies its misuse by the New Age.

⁸⁸ Donaldson LE. On medicine women and white shame-ans: new age Native Americanism and commodity fetishism as pop culture feminism. *Signs* [serial online]. 1999 [cited 2010 May 27]; 24(3): 677-696. Available from: JSTOR. www.jstor.org.

Cherokee activist Andrea Smith criticises North American feminist publications for appropriating medicine wheel insignia. Such practices are attributed to Native cultures being perceived as less patriarchal than dominant society by non-Indigenous feminists.

Each tribe that utilises a 'medicine wheel' is a nation with unique spiritual belief systems that have developed over thousands of years. If a tool such as this medicine wheel is appropriated into the non-Indigenous community, it would not be appropriate to name it the Indian Medicine Wheel. 'Indians' exist all over the Americas and each nation has their own spiritual belief system, some may incorporate something akin to the medicine wheel, but certainly not all or even most tribes would be familiar with it. It is a broad generalisation to call something Indian or Native simply because it is utilised within one cultural group. Misappropriation of aspects of Indigenous culture such as the medicine wheel is a common occurrence within New Age circles and devalues authentic, contemporary, and traditional Aboriginal spiritual practices.

Misrepresentation and misinformation

In this section, I argue that non-Indigenous people who have been misinformed about the nature of Aboriginal religions, and subsequently assist the proliferation of incorrect stereotypes misrepresent Indigenous cultures. In some instances, non-Native people emulate Indigenous culture to such an extent that they believe they are part of it. This practice of 'going Native' is perceived as legitimate by gullible New Agers who are invited to participate in the reinterpretation of cultural practices of those claiming Aboriginal heritage. I argue that false claims of experience with Indigenous culture that are publicised by non-Native New Agers are damaging to public contemporary Aboriginal cultures.

Going Native

In an effort to identify with the Native people of a land, some non-Indigenous people attempt to 'turn Indian' or 'go Native'⁸⁹. Popular films such as *Dances with Wolves*⁹⁰ and *The Last Wave*⁹¹ portray white men who discover that their identities are destined to be 'Indigenous'. Author Shari Huhndorf asserts that this is a common fantasy of non-Indigenous people occupying another's lands⁹². In the 1960s, Vine Deloria Junior wrote that while Executive Director of the National Congress of American Indians, he witnessed a surge of white Americans claiming Native American blood. While there are many Indigenous people worldwide with mixed ancestry whose Aboriginality is not obvious in their appearance, Deloria was suspicious of the vast majority of people claiming Indian descent. Most people claimed to be from a well known tribe such as Cherokee, Mohawk or Sioux; these people rarely knew where their ancestral lands were; and all but one person claimed their ancestry on their grandmother's side, which

⁸⁹ Huhndorf SM. *Going native: Indians in the American cultural imagination*. Ithaca (NY): Cornell University Press, 2001. 2.

"Over the last century, going native has become a cherished American tradition, an important - even necessary - means of defining European-American identities and histories."

⁹⁰ Wilson J, Costner K, producers; Costner K, director. *Dances with wolves* [motion picture]. Burbank (CA): TIG Productions; 1990.

In this film, a white soldier is posted to the Lakota frontier in South Dakota. He forms a friendship with the Lakota, marrying the white adopted daughter of the medicine man, and thereby becoming a member of the tribe.

⁹¹ McElroy H, producer; Weir P, director. *The last wave* [motion picture]. New York: Janus Films; 2001 (1977).

A white lawyer representing a group of Aboriginal men in a Sydney murder case learns that he has magical powers. By disobeying Aboriginal law, he causes a tidal wave to engulf the men's sacred cave.

⁹² Huhndorf SM. *Op cit*.

Deloria attributed to them not wishing to identify with a male 'savage' Indian⁹³. Deloria concluded, "Whites claiming Indian blood generally tend to reinforce mythical beliefs about Indians."⁹⁴ We can see this practice continuing to occur with the proliferation of the New Age.

The Pan American Indian Association

The Pan American Indian Association (PAIA) was founded in 1984⁹⁵ by a masseuse named Skyhawk Ojala⁹⁶ for the membership of "those who have tried to enroll [sic] into their ancestral tribe and for whatever reason have been denied and individuals who have felt the calling of the Ancient Turtle Lodge. All are welcomed into the Pan American Indian Association, as Brothers and Sisters."⁹⁷ The association has appropriated Native American terms and rituals. Although some people in PAIA may actually have Indigenous heritage, members need not have spent time within their claimed tribes⁹⁸ and therefore would not know the protocols within which religious

⁹³ Deloria Jr V. Custer died for your sins. 2nd ed. New York: Macmillan; 1988.

⁹⁴ Ibid, 3.

⁹⁵ Pan American Indian Association (PAIA). All Business [homepage on the internet]. 2009 [cited 2009 May 5]. Available from: <http://www.allbusiness.com/personal-services/miscellaneous-personal-services/4028281-1.html>.

⁹⁶ Macy T, Hart D. White shamans: plastic medicine men [television broadcast]. United States: Native Voices Public Television; 1995.

Skyhawk calls herself "A Metis medicine woman of Blackfoot and Ojibwe heritage".

⁹⁷ Church of Loving Hands. Pan American Indian Association: Thunderbird clan of the Redwood River lodge [homepage on the internet]. 2007 [cited 2009 Apr 30]. Available from: <http://www.lovinghandsinstitute.com/htm/paia.htm>.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

knowledge is shared⁹⁹. I posit that members of PAIA participate in inauthentic rituals without the context of kinship and tradition within which their claimed tribes operate. PAIA has formed a religious culture that takes Native American symbology and ritual without permission, adjusting and moulding ceremonies such as the sweat lodge, which are alive in Native American groups today. Behaviour in this vein by people who claim to have Native heritage could be perceived as validation for others who “have felt the calling of the Ancient Turtle Lodge”¹⁰⁰ to do the same.

Marlo Morgan

The epitome of inappropriate New Age literature on Australian Aborigines is Marlo Morgan's *Mutant message down under*¹⁰¹. This novel is the fictional account of an American woman who a group of traditional Aboriginal people unexpectedly whisked away to the middle of the bush. The story follows their 'walkabout' from the eastern interior to the west coast of Australia. Morgan embellishes her narrative with contemporary and ancient Aboriginal history as well as pearls of Indigenous wisdom demonstrated to her for her learning purpose. Morgan claims that the story is true, and that she has only sold it as fiction to protect the tribe in question. This tribe, she says, is the last remaining group of traditional Aboriginal people in Australia, who are currently in hiding in a remote area of the desert awaiting their own demise. The story has however

⁹⁹ Macy T, Hart D. Op cit.

¹⁰⁰ Church of Loving Hands. Op cit.

¹⁰¹ Morgan M. *Mutant message down under*. New York: HarperCollinsPublishers; 1994.

been proved entirely false, although Morgan continues to be adamant that this journey really did occur.

Mutant message down under reeks of New Age rhetoric and a lack of knowledge of the Australian environment and Aboriginal cultures. Comments such as “My suggestion is that you taste the message, savor what is right for you, and spit out the rest; after all, that is the law of the universe”¹⁰² are suspiciously akin to those that often materialise in the New Age movement, suggesting that she has manipulated her characters to conform to her preconceived notions of Indigeneity. She patronises Aboriginal people, particularly the urban youth with whom she apparently had strong bonds. *Kansas City Star* journalist Elaine Adams discovered that Morgan had never been involved in any such small business venture; in fact, she had worked voluntarily in a pharmacy in Brisbane¹⁰³. Morgan’s business apparently relied on the sale of fly screens that she believed she had introduced to Australia¹⁰⁴. She said that, “Working with urban-dwelling, half caste Aboriginal adults who had openly displayed suicidal attitudes, and accomplishing for them a sense of purpose and financial success, was bound to be noticed sooner or later”¹⁰⁵. Such condescending statements belie Morgan’s lack of experience with Aboriginal people. Although the book was not popular in Australia,

¹⁰² Ibid. p.xv.

¹⁰³ Ellis, C. Helping yourself: Marlo Morgan and the fabrication of Indigenous wisdom. In: Nolan M, Dawson C, editors. *Who’s who? Hoaxes, imposture and identity crises in Australian literature*. St Lucia: University of Queensland Press; 2004, p149-150.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid. p3.

many overseas readers, especially American university students¹⁰⁶, refer to her novel as a factual account of the lives and teachings of Aboriginal Australians¹⁰⁷.

Robert Eggington and the Dumbartung Aboriginal Association in Western Australia have conducted a concerted campaign to prove Marlo Morgan's work fictitious. Eggington argues that works such as these are damaging to Aboriginal culture. He asserts, "This distortion of cultural understanding in the future will lead to greater difficulties for our future generations to identify and relate to ancestral knowledge within each tribal area"¹⁰⁸. Thankfully, the work of Dumbartung has been able to publicly disprove Morgan's fantasy. However, the novel continues to be published with Morgan's declaration of truth, and some readers will likely take up her invitation to "savour what is right for you, and spit out the rest".

Neo-Shamanism

It is fashionable in the New Age to label others or be labelled a 'shaman'. Members of the New Age have misused this label. Bob Gustafson, Native American activist, states "the current vague, and often erroneous, articles and discussions of Shamanism in the

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ Korff JU. Marlo Morgan – Mutant Message Down Under: reader review analysis. Creative spirits [homepage on the internet]. No date [cited 2009 Apr 6]. Available from: http://www.creativespirits.info/resources/books/mutantmessage_readerreviews.html.

¹⁰⁸ Eggington R. Mutant Message Down Under campaign. Dumbartung first report [document on the Internet]. No date [cited 2009 Mar 5]. Available from: <http://www.dumbartung.org.au/report1.html>.

non-Indian Pagan community are the most recent and disturbing manifestations of this [cultural] takeover.”¹⁰⁹ In this section, I argue that acts performed under the misnomer of ‘shaman’ are misrepresentative of Indigenous cultures, both contemporary and traditional and that these acts can be harmful to those who take part.

‘Shaman’ is a Tungus (Siberian) word for “specialist in the sacred”¹¹⁰. It is now used to describe Indigenous spiritual experts the world over. Monica Sjöö, a Swedish pagan feminist critic of the New Age, wrote in her book *New age and Armageddon* that:

the shaman is a healer, transformer, artist, soul guide and mediator between the seen and unseen worlds, the living and the ancestors/the dead... a ‘wounded healer’, who usually has gone through terrible illness or psychic breakdown similar to mental illness, and who has gone to the ‘lower and upper worlds’ emerging from this initiatory experience healed.¹¹¹

Sjöö calls the appropriation of ‘shamanism’ a form of “spiritual imperialism”¹¹². Sjöö suggests that when non-Indigenous people call themselves shamans and charge money for receipt of their services, if they are not willing to cease these practices, they should donate some profits from these enterprises to the Indigenous cultures from whence the teachings came. She explains that shamans spend years developing their understanding of spiritual matters; therefore it is not possible in a weekend course, no

¹⁰⁹ Gustafon B. Some thoughts on shamanism in the pagan community [homepage on the internet]. 1985 [cited 2009 Feb 24]. Available from: <http://www.book-of-thoth.com/archives-printpdf-5883.html>, p1.

¹¹⁰ Sjöö M. Op cit. 1992. p217.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² Ibid. p231.

matter how much you pay, to become a shaman over night¹¹³. I agree with Sjöö, that as poverty and illness are rife throughout most Indigenous groups today, and governments continue to encroach on native lands, non-Aboriginal people should assist with alleviating these social issues rather than attempting to take more from people who continue to suffer under the weight of continuing colonialism.

The sweat lodge

The incorrect, uninformed use of Native rituals in a neo-shamanic sense can prove dangerous. Those in Lakota/Dakota/Nakota (Sioux) traditions must earn the right to lead a sweat over a four year period of training and initiation¹¹⁴. An untrained person leading a sweat lodge ceremony out of context is a recipe for disaster. Chief Arvol Looking Horse, Keeper of the Sacred White Buffalo Calf Medicine Bundle in the Great Plains, voiced his concerns over the misuse of the sweat lodge ceremony. He says the exchange of payment before the ceremony diminishes its potency¹¹⁵. He insists that this method of sweat is “not our ceremonial way of life, because of the way they are being conducted” and asks for “all Nations upon Grandmother Earth to please respect

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴Chief Arvol Looking Horse speaks out concerning Sedona sweat lodge deaths. Native News/Daily Headlines in Indian Country [newspaper on the internet]. 2009 Oct 15 [cited 2010 Feb 8]. Available from: <http://ndnnews.info/news/2009/10/chief-arvol-looking-horse-speaks-out-concerning-sedona-sweat-lodge-deaths/>.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

our sacred ceremonial way of life and stop the exploitation of our Tunka Oyate (Spiritual Grandfathers)”¹¹⁶.

James Arthur Ray once had clients who would spend up to sixty thousand dollars a year attending his self help workshops¹¹⁷. Much of Ray’s success has been attributed to his part in the popular New Age book and film on manifestation¹¹⁸, *The secret*¹¹⁹, which teaches audiences how to reach goals, specifically financially, through visualisation. On October 9th, 2009, three people were killed and eighteen injured during a Native American style sweat lodge in Sedona, Arizona. Ray, as the leader of the lodge, has been charged with manslaughter¹²⁰. There are other instances documented where people have died after a non-traditional sweat lodge, such as the case in South Australia in 2004¹²¹. Navajo senator Albert Hale has proposed legislation to prevent

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ Gross MJ. James Ray defends himself. News and features [document on the internet]. New York Magazine; 2010 Jan 24 [cited 2010 Feb 8]. Available from: <http://nymag.com/news/features/63259/>.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ Byrne R. The secret. New York: Atria Books. 2006.

¹²⁰ James Ray arrested in Sedona sweat lodge deaths. American Broadcasting Company [newspaper on the internet]. 2010 Feb 3 [cited 2010 Feb 8]. Available from: <http://abcnews.go.com/GMA/spiritual-leader-james-ray-arrested-sweat-lodge-deaths/story?id=9741781>.

¹²¹ Alert after sweat lodge ritual death. Sydney Morning Herald [newspaper on the internet]. 2004 Nov 4 [cited 2010 Feb 8]. Available from: <http://www.smh.com.au/articles/2004/11/04/1099362283876.html?from=storylhs>.

non-Native persons from charging money to partake in “traditional and authentic Native American practices”¹²².

Entheogens

Entheogens are “mind-altering plants used in sacramental contexts”¹²³. There are New Age leaders who explore the use of psychedelic plants as an aspect of neo-shamanism. In South America, where many tribal people use psychedelic plants such as ayahuasca for medicinal purposes, non-Indigenous people regularly engage in ‘rituals’ with these drugs, which can be dangerous for the psychological wellbeing of users¹²⁴. According to Winkelman, who writes about the experiences of ayahuasca ceremony participants, these rituals are often inauthentic “staged dramas”, run by mestizos from nearby towns rather than local Indigenous spiritual leaders¹²⁵. The people facilitating the ceremonies usually have a travel agent in developed nations representing them and charging up to

¹²² Sedona sweat lodge deaths prompt legislation to restrict Native American practices off reservation. Verde Independent [newspaper on the internet]. 2010 Feb 25 [cited 2010 Feb 26]. Available from: <http://verdenews.com/main.asp?SectionID=1&SubSectionID=1&ArticleID=34631>.

¹²³ Shanon B. Biblical entheogens: a speculative hypothesis. *Time and Mind* [serial online]. 2008 [cited 2010 May 28];1(1):51-75. Available from: Academic OneFile. www.gale.cengage.com/AcademicOneFile/.

¹²⁴ Gale RS. Risk assessment of ritual use of oral dimethyltryptamine (DMT) and harmala alkoids. *Addiction* [serial online]. 2007 [cited 2010 Feb 8];102(1):24-35. Available from: Wiley InterScience. www.interscience.wiley.com.

¹²⁵ Winkelman M. Drug tourism or spiritual healing? Ayahuasca seekers in Amazonia. *Journal of Psychoactive Drugs* [serial online]. 2005 [cited 2010 Feb 8]; 37(2):209-219. Available from: ProQuest. <http://il.proquest.com>.

ten thousand dollars for a short trip to South America¹²⁶. Most people ingesting the drugs would have little experience in similar situations, and are therefore in a vulnerable situation. Ayahuasca tourism is also an intrusion into the traditional lifestyles of the Amazon tribes. While I do not deny that valuable, meaningful spiritual experiences can be had by foreign participants at a ritual involving the ingestion of sacraments such as ayahuasca, I feel that the depiction of ceremonies designed for tourists as culturally authentic is potentially harmful and that its commercialisation likely increases the spread of such misinformation.

To me, neo-shamanism is an appropriation of Indigenous spiritual culture. Those involved aim to, and assume they can, comprehend the experiences and abilities of Indigenous religious experts without the context of years of training and preparation within an ancient culture. The sale of this knowledge to misinformed consumers is unethical. More education on contemporary and traditional Indigenous cultures in schools and other institutions would prevent further misrepresentation of Aboriginal spirituality.

¹²⁶ de Rios MD. Drug tourism in the Amazon: why westerners are desperate to find the vanishing primitive. *Omni* [serial online]. 1994 [cited 2010 Feb 8];6. Available from General OneFile. www.gale.cengage.com/onefile.

New Age Natives and Snake-Oil Salesmen

Here I argue that Indigenous people who sell their culture to New Age consumers encourage misinterpretation and perpetuate misinformation of Native culture. It is possible for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people to share meaningful spiritual relationships, if the contexts in which this is attempted is one of respect. The individuals involved must recognise the impact their behaviour has on wider Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities. New Age Natives misconstrue Aboriginal cultures and put people's lives in danger by not following protocols. As Vine Deloria Jr, writing in 1969 explains:

Interest in Indian culture, particularly in Indian religion, has escalated beyond anyone's wildest imaginings in recent years. Initially a product of the participation of medicine men in some of the protests, the expansion of the Indian religious traditions into non-Indian society has now become something of a missionary movement with all its accompanying successes, failures, and dangers. Today Indian shamans, medicine men, and snake-oil salesmen follow the lecture-workshop circuit, holding ceremonies and otherwise performing feats of power for their disciples and fellow practitioners.¹²⁷

Native people who sell their traditions to non-Aboriginal people perpetuate the misappropriation of Indigenous spirituality. As an Australian travelling overseas, I have observed that this practice is prevalent in North America, particularly in the United States in areas such as Sedona, Arizona and throughout California. Usually this sharing of culture is performed without the permission or support of the tribe. Often the rituals or knowledge that is shared is not authentic to that person's tribe. This is problematic as non-Indigenous people regard the person as an authority on Aboriginal

¹²⁷ Deloria Jr V. Op cit. pxi.

spirituality due to their genetic connection to traditional culture and because they are representing themselves in this way. This in turn creates a distorted understanding of Indigeneity by wider society¹²⁸ throughout the world in places where Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people rarely communicate directly, especially regarding spiritual beliefs.

The issue of sharing traditional Aboriginal culture with non-Aboriginal people is a contentious one. Deloria, said on the topic:

...it seems beyond dispute that within the tribal religions is a powerful spiritual energy that cannot be confined to a small group in the modern world. It would be hazardous to predict where this movement is headed, but if it influences people to deal more kindly with the earth and the various life forms on it, then there should be few complaints about its impact on people's lives and practices.¹²⁹

While Deloria felt that this "powerful spiritual energy" should be shared, four years later he expressed deep criticism of how it is done:

In the last decade there has been a deluge of nonsense as non-Indians, along with a few Indians such as Wallace Black Elk and Sun Bear, have developed a curious interpretation of Indian religion that includes crystals, medicine wheels, sweat lodges, prayer circles, and almost any other kind of adaptation of popular non-Indian group dynamics to Indian traditions. The deluge of books on tribal religions is simply an appropriation of external Indian symbols to meet the

¹²⁸ Aldred L. Plastic shamans and Astroturf sun dances. *The American Indian Quarterly* [serial online]. 2000 [cited 2010 May 31]; 24(3):345. Available from: Academic OneFile. www.gale.cengage.com/AcademicOneFile.

"The Native American, as an exoticized Other, an abstracted image, has become an open image onto which Euro-Americans could project their anxieties and desires.... The Noble Savage in New Age garb is a recent incarnation responding to a significant minority of the dominant population who have found mainstream culture lacking in meaning. What has changed is that this particular Noble Savage has been quickly snapped up by consumer capitalism and mass-marketed."

¹²⁹ Ibid.

emotional demands of the age and has no relationship whatsoever to what traditional Indians did religiously even several decades ago.¹³⁰

Cultural exchange is positive when it is done respectfully. Indigenous religions do not proselytise or welcome converts¹³¹. Non-Indigenous people can instead look to our own heritages to discover life-affirming, earth-based spiritual sustenance.

Conclusion

Young white kids come to me and say, “Oh, Janet, please, please, you got to help me. I’ve got to get back to nature.” I say, “do you need a laxative, or what?” That’s crazy, how can you get back to nature? We *are* nature.... “give me a pill, give me a chant, I need to be spiritual, right now.” I say you have to learn to be a human being first. If you don’t know how to be a human being, you’ll never be spiritual.¹³²

Janet McCloud, Washington Tulalip¹³³ activist who often spoke¹³⁴ about the appropriation of Indigenous culture by New Age practitioners¹³⁵, touches on the

¹³⁰ Deloria Jr V. The Indians of the American imagination. God is red: a native view of religion. 3rd ed. New York: Putnam Publishing; 2003. p43.

¹³¹ Macy T, Hart D. Op cit.

¹³² Marker M. Going native in the academy: choosing the exotic over the critical. Anthropology and Education Quarterly. 1998 [cited 2009 Feb 24];29(4):473-480. Available from Blackwell Publishing.

¹³³ Clements WM. “A continual beginning, then an ending, and then a beginning again”: Hopi apocalypticism in the new age. Journal of the southwest [serial online]. 2004 [cited 2010 May 31];46(4):643-661. Available from: Gale Cengage Academic OneFile.

www.gale.cengage.com/AcademicOneFile.

¹³⁴ Janet McCloud, 69; helped Indian tribes win ‘fish wars’. Los Angeles Times [newspaper on the internet]. 2003 Nov 30 [cited 2010 Feb 24]. Available from:

<http://articles.latimes.com/2003/nov/30/local/me-passings30>.

McCloud died in 2003.

¹³⁵ Sjö M. My life story – page 5 [homepage on the internet]. 2005 [cited 2009 Feb 24]. Available from: <http://www.monicasjoo.org/bio/autobiography5.htm>.

frustration native people experience when non-Indigenous people look to them for spiritual solutions. Aboriginal people do not want to be stepping stones on the way to Occidental society's spiritual enlightenment. The idea that Indigenous people hold the solutions to our evident ecological and perhaps spiritual crises is a romantic one. Non-Aboriginal people looking to Indigenous religions for an alternative paradigm through which to experience the world need to take into account the unique differences between Native cultures, rather than rendering them invisible.

For the non-Indigenous person living in the land of another, a strong spiritual basis can be hard to find. This is particularly the case for people who reject dominant interpretations of Christianity in its mainstream forms because they regard it as contributing to these crises. It is understandable that some people will turn to the original people of the lands for guidance. However, it is no one's place to take another's culture out of context. Looking to each person's own heritages and ancestors for guidance at this time will provide a stronger basis for spiritual integrity. All of us are able to participate in an experiential spiritual relationship with the planet that will assist us in navigating the ecological crisis. In the following chapter, I discuss neo-paganism as offering an earth-based spirituality based in one's own ancestry and cultural history as an alternative to appropriating those of another.

CHAPTER 3: NEO-PAGANISM

Introduction

When non-Indigenous people look towards the Native custodians of the lands in which they live for spiritual nourishment, they are searching for two things: a sense of place connected with self-identity; and a relationship with spirit that encompasses a sacred view of the earth. Rather than “ripping off”¹³⁶ other cultures’ spiritual identities, non-Indigenous people may turn to nature, which plays a central role in our own ancestral religions. Most cultures stem from a nature based spiritual history. I argue in this chapter that neo-pagan avenues of sustainable spirituality are a viable alternative to the appropriation of Indigenous cultures; that they can provide sustenance in similar forms to Aboriginal religions; and I explore how some people are achieving this in contemporary society. I support my argument by discussing the centrality of nature in pre-Christian pagan religions¹³⁷. I then discuss the burgeoning neo-pagan movement¹³⁸.

¹³⁶ Willow V. Do witches believe in God? Introduction to witchcraft (FAQ) [document on the internet].

Reclaiming; 2000 [cited 2010 Feb 12]. Available from:

<http://www.reclaiming.org/about/witchfaq/faq.html#Anchor-22962>.

¹³⁷ I recognise that colonialism has taken place in every continent. However, I prefer to speak from experience, and Australia, my country of origin and North America, where I have spent approximately two years, were colonised by British, French and Spanish powers. My own heritage is English, Northern Irish, German and Maori in that order; and I am interested in exploring topics that are relevant to my own ancestry.

¹³⁸ I recognise that I could focus here on other ancestral religions as an alternative to the appropriation of Native cultures. Reinterpreting Christianity with a more earth focused perspective is one possibility that I

What is Neo-Paganism?

In this section, I define neo-paganism and describe what I interpret its main attributes, aims and motivations to be.

Neo-paganism is essentially “the conscious attempt to revive religious attitudes and practices common around the world before the appearance of major religions”¹³⁹. Neo-pagan paths are sometimes referred to as the ‘earth traditions’^{140,141,142} because they are “spiritual paths based upon worship or reverence [sic] towards the Earth”¹⁴³. Paths that come under the heading of neo-pagan include Pan Native American spirituality; neo-shamanism; a variety of Goddess religions; Wicca; witchcraft; Celtic spiritual traditions from throughout Europe; African neo-traditional religions including Santeria,

have not had room to discuss here. In Australia and North America, many people have backgrounds from Asia, Africa and Eastern Europe that hold nature and community in high regard. People with heritage other than Western European are also interested in Indigenous cultures that are not their own. However, because of space restrictions, I concentrate on Western European pre-Christian earth-based spiritualities. This is relative to my own cultural position and therefore I feel I have more authority to speak.

¹³⁹ Peck J. Chapter 8: Neopaganism. In: Enroth R, ed. A guide to new religious movements. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2005; p135-54. p135.

¹⁴⁰ Pearson J. Paganism today: Wiccans, druids, the Goddess and ancient earth traditions for the twenty-first century. Harvey G, Hardman C. London: Thorsons. 1995.

¹⁴¹ Crowley V. A woman's guide to the earth traditions. London: Thorson's. 2001.

¹⁴² Damico D. Language as typography. Masters [dissertation]. 2008. Available from: <http://www.ddamico.net/Thesis%20Final-Damico.pdf>.

¹⁴³ No author. Earth traditions. 1998 [cited 2010 Mar 16]. Available from: <http://pathseven.tripod.com/earth.htm>.

Voodoo and Cadomble¹⁴⁴; Heathen paths from northern Europe such as Asatru, Norse, Odinism, and Vanatru; and Druidism including Welsh Druidism^{145,146,147,148}.

John Peck identifies four characteristics that neo-pagan spiritual paths tend to follow¹⁴⁹:

1. seeing nature as divine;
2. reverence for a Goddess and/or seeing the Earth as Mother; sometimes the Goddess is an equal consort of a God [although these are usually used as symbols of the masculine and feminine aspects of people and the planet rather than seen as actual beings]; also the view that lesser spirits live within the cosmos;
3. a working belief in ritual and symbolism as a means of access to the divine powers of nature; and
4. a prevailing interest in religious and mystical antiquity, especially pre-historical and late medieval.

¹⁴⁴ Crowley. Op cit.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

¹⁴⁶ Partridge C. Indigenous and pagan traditions. In: Partridge C, editor. New religions: a guide: new religious movements, sects and alternative spiritualities. 2nd ed. New York (NY): Oxford University Press, 2004; p268-270.

¹⁴⁷ Robinson BA. Neopagan and pagan religious traditions [homepage on the internet]. c2008 [updated 2008 Oct 18; cited 2009 Feb 7]. Available from: http://www.religioustolerance.org/neo_paga.htm.

¹⁴⁸ Pagan Federation International. The Pagan Federation International information pack. Pagan Federation International Canada [homepage on the internet]. 1996 [cited 2009 May 3]. Available from: http://www.ca.paganfederation.org/pfi_info.php#general.

¹⁴⁹ Peck J. Op cit. p135-136.

Often those who follow neo-pagan spiritual paths are attempting to revive and return to their pre-colonial Indigenous spiritual traditions^{150,151}. Today, little is known about pre-Christian pagan religions in Western Europe¹⁵². Christians, in Europe and elsewhere, converted pagans en masse and eventually persecuted those practicing the 'old religion'^{153,154,155}. Some pagan practices survived in different forms in Christianity, for instance religious festivals including Christmas¹⁵⁶. Many pagans feel that the influence of religions, in particular Christianity, has diminished the connection to land that our ancestors held¹⁵⁷. Occasionally, people will follow a neo-pagan path because they feel an affinity with it although they do not have any genetic connection to that tradition. For instance, there are many people in the United States and other Occidental nations who

¹⁵⁰ Bowman M. Belief, legend and perceptions of the sacred in contemporary Bath. *Folklore* [serial online]. 1998 [cited 2009 Feb 7];109:25-31. Available from: JSTOR. www.jstor.org.

¹⁵¹ Miller-Pogacar A. Varieties of post-atheist spirituality in Mikhail Epstein's approach to culturology. *American Association of Teachers of Slavic and East European Languages* [serial online]. 1995 [cited 2009 Feb 7];39(3):344-356. Available from: JSTOR. www.jstor.org.

¹⁵² O'Dell DP. Anglo-Saxon historical imagination and preservation. *ProQuest dissertations and theses* [abstract]. 2009 [cited 2010 Mar 16];0581:1060. Available from: ProQuest. www.proquest.com.

¹⁵³ Sulak J, Vale V. Margot Adler. *Modern Pagans: an investigation of contemporary pagan practices*. San Francisco: Re/search publications, 2001. p27.

Adler explains that Native Americans are searching for their roots because they "were forced into colonization and Christian beliefs".

¹⁵⁴ Sulak J, Vale V. *Op cit.* Sulak J. Darryl Cherney. p53.

Cherney speaks about the Spanish Inquisition. He quotes from a Catholic friend: "there isn't a Christian on the planet who didn't have an ancestor converted at the point of a sword".

¹⁵⁵ Starhawk (Simos M). Chapter 1: Witchcraft as Goddess religion. In: *The spiral dance*. 3rd ed. New York: HarperCollins Publishers Inc; 1999.

¹⁵⁶ Larsen D. The psychedelic secrets of Santa Claus. *Cannabis culture marijuana magazine* [newspaper on the internet]. 2003 Dec 18 [cited 2010 Feb 17]. Available from: <http://www.cannabisculture.com/articles/3136.html>.

¹⁵⁷ Hartman, P. Social dimensions of occult participation: the gnostica study. *The British journal of sociology* [serial online]. 1976 [cited 2009 Feb 7];27(2):169-183. Available from JSTOR. www.jstor.org.

attempt to follow a Native American spiritual path but who have no blood connection to it and were not raised in that tradition. There are other cultural groups following various neo-pagan paths to which they have no history, such as the Sistahs of the Moon yahoo group, a community of African-American women following a neo-pagan path that encompasses European spiritual traditions as well as neo-traditional African religions¹⁵⁸.

Neo-pagan spiritual paths emphasise spiritual practice, particularly in rituals and magick (spelt archaically so as to separate the idea of real magick from magic 'tricks'). Magickal rituals sometimes stem from ancient traditions, but many groups and individuals create their own rituals. Often the loss of traditions makes it impossible for a person to source an 'authentic' ritual, song or prayer, and instead the inner self is trusted by practitioners to form a ritual which will have meaning and effect for those who take part in it¹⁵⁹.

The neo-pagan movement attributes many of the world's problems to the prevalence of patriarchal societies. Reconnection with the feminine is one of the central goals of contemporary paganism. World religions including Christianity, Judaism, Buddhism and Islam all contain male embodiments of divinity. Patriarchal religions, especially Christianity, according to King, have vilified women and nature in a mutually reinforcing

¹⁵⁸ Yahoo! Groups. Sistahs of the moon [discussion list on the internet]. 2009 [cited 2009 Feb 7].

Available from: <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/SistahsOfTheMoon/summary>.

¹⁵⁹ Starhawk. Op cit.

way which he argues has caused the detrimental state of Earth today¹⁶⁰. For Monica Sjöö, Swedish neo-pagan artist and author, part of the problem is that, “In patriarchy men are sacred and women are profane”¹⁶¹. Neo-pagan spiritualities seek to redress the damage caused by patriarchy by emphasising the Goddess or Earth Mother in order to rebalance the feminine and masculine on the planet and within ourselves¹⁶². Neo-pagans see nature as sacred as it was in pre-religious traditions, rejecting the Christian notion that the Earth was given to us by a male God to ‘use’ as we desire¹⁶³. Neo-pagans believe that reconnecting with these ancestral values will create a more harmonious and compassionate world.

Neo-paganism places an emphasis on the Goddess as an embodiment of the sacred feminine, or “the image of the legitimacy and beneficence of female power”¹⁶⁴. Californian born Jewish Wiccan¹⁶⁵ Starhawk argues that they do this because “the model of the universe in which a male God rules the cosmos from outside serves to

¹⁶⁰ King U. Feminist and eco-feminist spirituality. In: Partridge C, editor. *New religions: a guide: new religious movements, sects and alternative spiritualities*. 2nd ed. New York (NY): Oxford University Press, 2004; p379-384.

¹⁶¹ Sjöö M. My life story page 3 [homepage on the internet]. c2005 [cited 2009 Feb 7]. Available from: <http://www.monicasjoo.org/bio/autobiography3.htm>.

¹⁶² Starhawk. Op cit.

¹⁶³ Sjöö M and Mor B. *The great cosmic mother: rediscovering the religion of the earth*. New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, Inc; 1987.

¹⁶⁴ Starhawk. Op cit. p32.

¹⁶⁵ Schmidt S. ‘Fierce Mother’ vs. global injustice. *Catholic New Times* [abstract]. 2003 [cited 2010 Jun 2];27(19):9. Available from: Academic OneFile (Gale). www.gale.cengage.com/AcademicOneFile.

legitimize male control of social institutions”¹⁶⁶. Witchcraft draws on feminism in recognising that women’s spirituality has historically been oppressed in many cultures. In the ‘Burning Times’, women all over North America and Western Europe were killed under suspicion of being witches¹⁶⁷. Neo-paganism engages with this history to expose it as a deliberate attack on women. An important strategy in doing this is as Starhawk argues to reinvokethe word ‘Witch’ because:

to reclaim the word *Witch* is to reclaim our right, as women, to be powerful; as men, to know the feminine within as Divine. To be a Witch is to identify with nine million victims of bigotry and hatred and to take responsibility for shaping a world in which prejudice claims no more victims.¹⁶⁸

For neo-pagans, the Goddess (divine feminine) is the world; is apparent in everything¹⁶⁹. Seeing the world as sacred necessitates treating it with utmost respect.

History of Neo-Paganism

In this section, I explore some possible origins of neo-paganism, including the Romantic period; geographical origins; gnosticism; and the role of popular media.

According to Gaskill, neo-paganism in its modern form may have originated in the Romantic era of the nineteenth century¹⁷⁰. During this period, some were rejecting the

¹⁶⁶ Ibid.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid. Ten years later: commentary on chapters one through thirteen. p231-261.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid. p31.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid. p32.

Industrial Revolution and romanticising the agricultural way of life in England. Scientific rationalism was also being criticised for lacking spirituality. For instance, the science fiction author Villiers de l'Isle Adam interpreted science to be developing mystical and mysterious qualities, in part due to the rise of spiritualism and discoveries in physics. He characterised scientists as wizards in his novels¹⁷¹. Neo-pagans reject the distinction between objectivity and subjectivity, as they reject the differentiation between sacred and profane, seeing all of nature as sacred.

The origins of neo-paganism are varied. Celtic neo-paganism traces Scottish and Irish origins, whereas Druidism follows Welsh traditions¹⁷². Nature-mystic groups such as the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn and the Ordo Templi Orientis arose during the Romantic period in Europe¹⁷³. The term 'Wicca' was possibly invented by one of the most important figures in Wicca, Aleister Crowley in the 1920s, who was a prominent member of the Ordo Templi Orientis. Three novels posing as historical research on witchcraft by Margaret Murray, published in the 1920s to 1950s, were championed as the foundational texts on ancient Western European paganism until discredited in the

¹⁷⁰ Gaskill M. The pursuit of reality: recent research into the history of witchcraft. The historical journal [serial online]. 2008 [cited 2010 Mar 16];51(4):1069-1088. Available from: Cambridge Journals. <http://journals.cambridge.org>.

¹⁷¹ Bould M. 19th-century sf and the discourses of science. Extrapolation [serial online]. 2008 [cited 2010 Mar 17];49(3):486-490. Available from: Academic OneFile. www.gale.cengage.com/AcademicOneFile.

¹⁷² Ibid.

¹⁷³ Peck J. Op cit.

1970s. Many early Wiccan teachings have likely been influenced by these texts¹⁷⁴. Gerald Gardner, founder of Gardnerian witchcraft, is also credited with playing a large part in the resurgence of paganism¹⁷⁵. Wiccans sometimes but not always refer to themselves as 'witches'. Some prefer the term Wiccan as it does not carry "a history of negative connotations"¹⁷⁶. Some people self identify as witches but do not reference the work of contemporary witchcraft, believing themselves to be intuitively sourcing an inherent, perhaps ancient, spiritual practice¹⁷⁷. These witches would generally be 'solitaries' who practice witchcraft alone rather than in covens or circles.

Gnostic traditions, from whence some believe neo-pagan ritual and magick practice originates¹⁷⁸, began shortly after Jesus Christ's death and the initial proliferation of Christianity. Those who see a connection between neo-pagan beginnings and Gnosticism see the shared goal of Gnostic and neo-pagan rituals as uniting the human with the cosmos; the human soul with the world soul. However, a traditional reading of

¹⁷⁴ Hutton R. Paganism and polemic: the debate over the origins of modern pagan witchcraft. *Folklore* [serial online]. 2000 [cited 2010 Mar 17];111(1):103+[about 16 pages]. Available from: Academic OneFile. www.gage.cengage.com/AcademicOneFile.

¹⁷⁵ Hope T, Jones I. Locating contemporary paganism as late modern culture. *Journal of contemporary religion* [serial online]. 2006 [cited 2010 Mar 16];21(3):341-354. Available from: informaworld. www.informaworld.com.

¹⁷⁶ Yardley M. Social work practice with pagans, witches and Wiccans: guidelines for practice with children and youths. 2008 [cited 2010 Mar 17];53(4):329-336. Available from: EBSCOhost. www.ebscohost.com.

¹⁷⁷ Wigington P. Wicca, witchcraft or paganism? What's the difference, anyway? [homepage on the internet]. About.com guide. 2010 [cited 2010 Mar 18]. Available from: <http://paganwiccan.about.com/od/wiccaandpaganismbasics/a/WWPDiffs.htm>.

¹⁷⁸ Peck J. Op cit.

Gnosticism would appear to be in conflict with the values of paganism, as Gnostics are usually portrayed as devaluing the earth and the body, seeing the world as a prison which the soul must temporarily endure^{179,180,181}. Jeffrey J. Kripal has interpreted some of the Gnostic texts found at Nag Hammadi, Egypt in 1945 as presenting an alternative understanding of early Gnosticism¹⁸². He states that the Gnostics, like Wiccans, value the masculine and feminine equally. His interpretation of these texts has led him to believe that the ancient Gnostics saw that direct access to spiritual truths was possible for the individual, and hence the Church condemned them. The texts found at Nag Hammadi in Egypt suggest that as Gnosticism was necessarily suppressed, its original nature is difficult to identify and thus its relationship to contemporary spirituality and religion.

Fiction has played a large part in forging awareness of neo-paganism, though not often accurate. For instance, the popular American television show, "Buffy the Vampire

¹⁷⁹ Hockenbery J. A philosophical meditation for Ash Wednesday. *Currents in theology and mission* [serial online]. 2009 [cited 2010 Feb 12];36(1):20-26. Available from: Academic OneFile. www.gale.cengage.com/AcademicOneFile/.

¹⁸⁰ The order of the Nazorean Essenes. The fate of the body and soul at death according to Gnostic sources [homepage on the internet]. No date [cited 2010 Mar 18]. Available from: http://essenes.net/index.php?Itemid=657&id=487&option=com_content&task=view.

¹⁸¹ European-American Evangelistic Crusades. *Cults: Gnosticism* [homepage on the internet]. 2009 [cited 2010 Mar 18]. Available from: <http://www.eaec.org/cults/gnostic.htm>.

¹⁸² Bapat J. Do we hear the serpent? Some reflections on Jeffrey J. Kripal's the serpent's gift: Gnostic reflections on the study of religion. *South Asia: journal of south Asian studies* [serial online]. 2008 [cited 2009 Feb 7];31(2):383-387. Available from: informaworld. www.informaworld.com.

Slayer”¹⁸³ featured sensational depictions of witches and magick in the lives of a group of young people¹⁸⁴. The film “The Craft”¹⁸⁵ featured four high school girls in a ‘coven’ who perform ‘black magic’. Some way into the film one of the girls discovers that she is a ‘real witch’ with magickal powers¹⁸⁶. Although these representations of neo-paganism are not realistic and do not portray the day-to-day experiences of those who follow pagan spiritual paths today, they are successful in highlighting their existence to the masses and are probably somewhat inspired by the burgeoning popular interest in paganism.

Neo-paganism has both an ancient and a contemporary history which continues to evolve. In Britain, Australia, North America and elsewhere¹⁸⁷ neo-pagans are meeting

¹⁸³ Buffy is a vampire slayer, contracted to kill vampires in the evening hours after school. Her friends evolve into similar roles with her best friend Willow becoming a witch with inherent magickal powers.

¹⁸⁴ Alessio D. “Things are different now?": a postcolonial analysis of Buffy the Vampire Slayer. *The European Legacy* [serial online]. 2001 [cited 2009 Feb 7]:6(6):731-740.

¹⁸⁵ In this film, the protagonist, Sarah, moves to a new school. Three misfit girls take her under their wing in order to achieve the necessary fourth member of their coven, The girls proceed to perform rituals together with successful results. Eventually the original three witches turn against Sarah but her power overrules, as she discovers that her mother was a natural witch who transmitted her powers to Sarah genetically. The film ends with one of the characters, Nancy, distraught in an insane asylum apparently disturbed by the intensity of power she experienced when invoking the earth diety (which, interestingly in this film, is portrayed as male).

¹⁸⁶ Nugent G, Tornell L and Wick D, producers; Fleming A, director. *The craft* [motion picture]. United States: Columbia Pictures; 1996.

¹⁸⁷ Nuhyn, Oakwyndhr. Welcome and bright blessings! Pagan Federation International Canada [homepage on the internet]. No date [cited 2009 May 2]. Available from: <http://www.ca.paganfederation.org/index.php>.

up, celebrating the sabbats, forming covens and hand-fasting¹⁸⁸. As neo-pagan communities grow, rituals are formed, and a creative, authentic spiritual culture is moulded from Western European ancestral roots, suited to contemporary lifestyles.

Contemporary Neo-Paganism

Neo-pagan communities are alive and vibrant throughout the world. These spiritual practices which draw on one's own ancestry and religious roots are being brought into the postmodern world with modifications appropriate to the lives of contemporary pagans. In this section, I give the examples of the Reclaiming tradition of Wicca and the use of sacred sites in England as two expressions of neo-paganism. I do this to provide a contemporary example of sustainable spirituality which does not appropriate Indigenous cultures and provides spiritual sustenance.

There are several variations of Wicca practiced today, including Gardnerian, Feri, Eclectic and Alexandrian. Wiccans practice rituals and magick both alone and in groups, including covens. The Reclaiming tradition began in San Francisco in the 1970s. The most publicly known founder is Starhawk who has published several high selling books including *The spiral dance*, which is one of the most referred to texts for many Wiccans¹⁸⁹. Reclaiming arose during a period of heavy direct action in the 1980s

¹⁸⁸ Sabbats are the eight pagan seasonal celebrations; covens are groups of initiated witches who practice magick together; hand-fasting is the practice of marriage for a year and a day, though sometimes longer, by tying the lovers' hands together.

¹⁸⁹ Pearson J. Resisting rhetorics of violence: women, witches and wicca. *Feminist theology* [serial online]. 2010 [cited 2010 Mar 18];18(141):141-159. Available from: Sage. www.sagepublications.com.

in San Francisco with Starhawk and the other founders feeling the need for a spiritual community that was inherently active in political issues. They created rituals around the protest actions¹⁹⁰. This practice has continued, as at the 2002 protest at the World Economic Forum in New York when the main organising cluster requested the pagans who were there to begin the direct action with a ritual. Starhawk claims that this was due to the healing New Yorkers required after the terrorist attack in 2001¹⁹¹. Active community engagement is one of the basic tenets of Reclaiming.

The Reclaiming tradition, as much neo-paganism does, aims for an earth based spiritual practice. Starhawk regards the tools learned in practicing Reclaiming as the basis for “bring[ing] about global economic justice and ecological sanity”¹⁹². Groups of neo-pagans were involved in the large protests against globalisation in the United States in 1999 and 2000¹⁹³. Stewardship of place is advocated in Reclaiming, as witches have a personal relationship with their natural surroundings. For instance, many rituals are held outside in natural settings; witches often grow their own herbs and organic fruit and vegetables; and many tools and props such as wands and altars are found in the local environment.

¹⁹⁰ Vale V, Sulak J. Op cit. Starhawk.

¹⁹¹ Rigoglioso M. Interview with Starhawk. *Feminist Theology* [serial online]. 2005 [cited 2010 Jun 2];13(2):173-183. Available from: Sage. www.sagepublications.com.

¹⁹² Ibid. p16.

¹⁹³ Ibid.

Jenny Blain¹⁹⁴ and Robert Wallis¹⁹⁵ explain that:

...‘sacred sites’ become locations for communion and direct communication with ancestors, land-spirits, otherworld beings, in line with engagements described for indigenes elsewhere ..., and people and identity may be constituted by place and landscape.¹⁹⁶

Neo-paganism in Western Europe attributes importance to sacred sites, their preservation and continued use in ritual. Neo-pagans living on the grounds of their pagan ancestors are fortunate to have connection with the land of their ancestors. Neo-pagans living in North America and Australia have only access to sacred sites that belong to the history and culture of the Indigenous people. Despite this advantage that European neo-pagans experience, conflict has still been apparent. In 1985 over three hundred people who attempted to gather at the sacred site, Stonehenge, in England for summer solstice were arrested. Police were sued by twenty one people involved in the confrontation for wrongful arrest, false imprisonment and damage to property. One police officer was charged with causing bodily harm to one of the festival participants¹⁹⁷.

Since the first open access event managed by English Heritage in 2000 it has been

¹⁹⁴ Sheffield Hallam University. Dr Jenny Blain. Sociology, social policy and politics [homepage on the internet]. No date [cited 2010 Mar 18]. Available from: <http://www.shu.ac.uk/social/staff/blain.html>.

Blain is the Senior Lecturer in Sociology and Applied Social Sciences at Sheffield Hallam University.

¹⁹⁵ Richmond University. Robert Wallis. Richmond, the American International University in London [homepage on the internet]. 2010 [cited 2010 Mar 18]. Available from: <http://richmond-uk.academia.edu/RobertWallis>.

Doctor Wallis is an Associate Professor of Visual Culture at Richmond University.

¹⁹⁶ Blain J, Wallis RJ. Sacred sites, contested rights/rites: contemporary pagan engagements with the past. *Journal of Material Culture* [serial online]. 2004 [cited 2010 Mar 9];9(3):237-261. Available from: <http://www.sacredsites.org.uk/papers/02MCU9-3%20Blain.pdf>. p245.

¹⁹⁷ No author. 1985: hippies clash at Stonehenge. On this day 1950-2005 [homepage on the internet]. BBC; No date [cited 2010 Mar 3]. Available from: http://news.bbc.co.uk/onthisday/hi/dates/stories/june/1/newsid_2493000/2493267.stm.

legal for druids and others to gather at Stonehenge and to hold festivals¹⁹⁸. Approximately 36,500 people gathered at Stonehenge in 2009 for the summer solstice, a figure which has been increasing annually¹⁹⁹. Engagement with sacred sites is essential to neo-paganism practices in Britain.

Pagans, local residents and government agencies continually contest the management of sacred sites in Britain. Some sites, especially the more iconic ones such as Stonehenge and Avebury, are managed by National Heritage²⁰⁰. In the spirit of stewardship of place, contemporary pagans take action to protect their local sacred sites when others may potentially cause harm to such places. However, general tourists and pagan visitors often leave a trail of destruction at sacred sites including vandalism or offerings to the spirits of the place²⁰¹, which become rubbish. Wallis and Blain observe that the appearance of these offerings has increased since the early 1980s²⁰². Participation in pagan celebrations such as summer solstice at Glastonbury can include dancing, ritual performance, voyeurism, playing music, meditation, and

¹⁹⁸ Blain J, Wallis RJ. Stonehenge solstice access, 20-21 June, 2001. Short report submitted to English Heritage [document on the internet]. Sacred sites, contested rights project. 2001 [cited 2010 Mar 19]. Available from: <http://www.sacredsites.org.uk/reports/StonehengeJune2001.html>.

¹⁹⁹ Record crowd greet solstice at Stonehenge. The Independent [newspaper on the internet]. 2009 June 21 [cited 2010 Mar 19]. Available from: www.independent.co.uk.

²⁰⁰ English Heritage Properties. Days out and events [document on the internet]. No date [cited 2010 Mar 9]. Available from: <http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/server/show/nav.855>.

²⁰¹ Blain J, Wallis RJ. Op cit. 2004.

²⁰² Wallis RJ, Blain J. Sites, sacredness, and stories: interactions of archaeology and contemporary paganism. *Folklore* [serial online]. 2003 [cited 2010 Mar 4]; 114(3):301-321. Available from: JSTOR. www.jstor.org.

ingesting drugs including alcohol. Now that the site is open to the general public, as opposed to being only available to those who purchased tickets as in 1999, the pagan, ceremonial element of the festival has been overshadowed by the 'partying' element²⁰³. How engagement with sacred sites is encouraged is central to how they will be and preserved for future generations.

Pagans in Britain are concerned about the appropriation of their local heritage by those whose ancestry is more distant, especially those living in other nations. Blain²⁰⁴ gives the example of an author in the North American magazine 'Shaman's drum' who discusses his own journey in ancestral homelands in Scotland. According to Blain, Frank MacEowen publicises incorrect information about an area of sacred sites with which Blain has been intimately acquainted since childhood. MacEowen believes that he was transmitted 'cellular history' by his pagan ancestors by spending time at these sites and entering trance states. Blain contests the legitimacy of 'remembering' through bloodlines that for hundreds of years would have been practicing Christians rather than pagans performing rituals at sacred sites²⁰⁵. The white spiritual seeker living in Britain's colonies is so displaced that one cannot expect to arrive in the homeland and to have instant understanding of one's cultural heritage. The tourist is not an authority simply for having ancestors in a place that is occupied by a living continuation of that ancestry.

²⁰³ Blain J, Wallis RJ. Op cit. 2001.

²⁰⁴ Blain J. Shamans, stones, authenticity and appropriation: contestations of invention and meaning. In: Wallis RJ, Lymer K, editors. A permeability of boundaries? New approaches to the archaeology of art, religion and folklore [e-book]. Oxford: British Archaeological Reports; 2001. Available from: <http://www.sacredsites.org.uk/papers/02MCU9-3%20Blain.pdf>.

²⁰⁵ Ibid.

Conclusion

Our spiritual worldview is central to how we conduct ourselves in the world, and how we relate to each other and the environment. The resurgence of paganism presents potential alternative paths of spirituality than those that have traditionally been anthropo- and androcentric. While some in the New Age and neo-pagan spiritual movements believe that Indigenous people better comprehend how to live harmoniously with our environment, colonisers, invaders and conquerors must be willing to enter into mutually beneficial relationships with Indigenous people to receive the assistance of Indigenous Knowledge Systems. By misappropriating their sacred cultures, we are continuing the cycle of mistrust and continuing to break protocols. We must first respect other cultures and learn what is expected of us in a mutual relationship; we must work towards healing and reconciliation in order for spiritual and sacred knowledge is to be shared; and we must also respect and recognise our own Indigenous heritage, a spiritual heritage that is connected to our own homelands, in order to understand that we all share in a similar history.

CHAPTER 4: ETHICS, CELEBRATION AND ACTION

Introduction

...[o]ur global environmental and social crises are of our own making and can only be transformed by us. Therefore it is imperative that humanity finds ways of protecting and sustaining the natural environment for our collective survival. This necessarily depends on human beings' ability to co-exist in harmony with other humans and species and to feel connected to and protect nature.²⁰⁶

In this chapter, I argue that the current environmental, social, economic and spiritual crises can be effectively approached within the New Age movement by addressing our relationships with self and the rest of nature. Here I utilise the ethical theories of deep ecology and its feminist counterpart, eco-feminism, as examples of how to achieve this with a New Age spiritual ethic. Environmental ethics are an example of how the New Age operates in the world. I argue that open dialogue and knowledge sharing is essential in comprehending and achieving alternative, life affirming axioms, as is ecstatic spiritual experience. I offer alternative festival subculture's attempts to incorporate environmental ethics as a living example of the New Age in action.

²⁰⁶ Schmid E. An ecological sense of self as a necessary development for an ecologically sustainable future: the contributions of three spiritual or wisdom traditions to constructions of self and other in educational contexts. Masters [thesis]. Canberra: University of Canberra; 2006.

Environmental ethics

In this section, I argue that the New Age and Neo-Pagan movements value nature and have an ethic of care for the environment. I argue that our individual and collective relationships with nature can be effectively addressed by utilising environmental ethics as a platform for understanding the context of our perspectives. I highlight the ways environmental ethics complement New Age and Neo-Pagan values of nature. I then discuss the field of deep ecology and its argument that humans need to see ourselves as part of nature rather than separate from it. I build on this concept with the theory of ecofeminism and its critique of patriarchy as interrelated to the domination of nature.

Clark Roof attributes the evolution of environmental ethics to the new spiritual movements. He argues that:

Metaphysical believers and spiritual seekers have led the way in shaping a new ecological ethic, defining it as spiritual at its core – with emphasis on the connectedness of all creation. ... As older monarchical conceptions of God fade, anthropocentric views of nature and notions of “dominion” over it should likewise give way.²⁰⁷

The New Age and Neo-pagan spiritual movements share characteristics of environmental ethics philosophies. Neo-paganism calls for a less anthropocentric worldview, which would shift values from being human-centred to encompassing the rest of nature in a more balanced way. The New Age looks forward to a time when society has overcome its ills:

²⁰⁷ Roof WC. *Spiritual marketplace: baby boomers and the remaking of American religion*. Princeton (NJ): Princeton University Press; 1999. p303.

[New Agers] share a very negative image of established society as sunk in materialism and heading for disaster. Many of them have intense millennial expectations, viewing the present society as in the last stage of degradation before the dawning of a new era.²⁰⁸

The adoption of environmental ethics such as deep ecology and ecofeminism could be one way to raise this consciousness and bring us into the new era.

Arne Naess coined the term 'deep ecology' in 1973 in an attempt to surpass reformist environmentalism²⁰⁹ and move towards a "comprehensive spiritual and philosophical worldview, an 'ecological consciousness'"²¹⁰. Arne Naess is considered the founder of 'deep ecology'²¹¹, an environmental ethic that stresses the idea that people need to become less anthropocentric; that we need to see ourselves as part of nature as

²⁰⁸ Bellah RN. The new religious consciousness and the crisis of modernity. In: Bellah RN, Tipton SM, editors. The Robert Bellah reader [e-book]. Durham (NC): Duke University Press; 2006 [cited 2010 Jun 4]. Available from: Google books. p275.

²⁰⁹ Devall B. The deep ecology movement. Natural resources journal [serial online]. 1980 [cited 2010 Jun 4];20(1):299-322. p299. Available from: HeinOnline. <http://heinonline.org>.

'One stream [of environmentalism] is reformist, attempting to control some of the worst of the air and water pollution and inefficient land use practices in industrialized nations and to save a few of the remaining pieces of wildlands as "designated wilderness areas." The other stream[, deep ecology,] supports many of the reformist goals but is revolutionary, seeking a new metaphysics, epistemology, cosmology, and environmental ethics of person/planet.'

²¹⁰ Warren KJ. Chapter 4: How should we treat nature? In: Ecofeminist philosophy: a western perspective on what it is and why it matters. Lanham (Maryland): Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Inc; 2000. p84.

²¹¹ Hardin G. The tragedy of the commons. Science [serial online]. 1968 [cited 2010 Jun 2];162(3859):1243-1248. Available from: Penn State University online. www.psu.edu.

Leopold A, Finch R. A sand county almanac: and sketches here and there [e-book]. 2nd ed. New York: Oxford University Press; 1987 [cited 2010 Jun 2]. Available from: Google books.

White L. The historical roots of our ecological crisis. Science [serial online]. 1967 [cited 2010 Jun 2];155(3767):1203-1207. Available from: Rutgers. www.rci.rutgers.edu.

I recognise that Naess did not develop this theory on his own. These ideas had been previously discussed, such as in these works by White, Hardin and L Leopold.

opposed to separate from it²¹². Deep ecology attempts to blur the lines between human and other-than-human nature, assisting us to comprehend ourselves as part of our environment, not apart from it. According to Ruether, “[d]eep ecology... examines the symbolic, psychological, and ethical patterns of destructive relations of humans with nature and how to replace this with a life-affirming culture.”²¹³

Some attribute the spiritual aspect of deep ecology is attributed by some to Native American traditions²¹⁴. Naess champions a perception of Indigenous animism when outlying his ‘ecosophy T’. This is Naess’ own eco-philosophical view on which he bases his support of the deep ecology movement. Its primary foundation is to advocate self-realisation for all beings²¹⁵. According to Naess:

It is noteworthy that a ‘democracy of life forms’ is or was characteristic of some primal societies. Their conception of the human situation is more realistic than that offered in our techno-natural scientific education. While we derobe nature as such of all sensory diversity, and assert that it is really colourless, animism moves in the opposite direction.²¹⁶

²¹² Weber T. Gandhi, deep ecology, peace research and Buddhist economics. *Journal of Peace Research* [serial online]. 1999 [cited 2009 Feb 21];36(3):349-361. Available from: Sage Publications, Ltd.

²¹³ Ruether RR. Chapter 1: Ecofeminism: symbolic and social connections of the oppression of women and the domination of nature. In: Adams CJ ed. *Ecofeminism and the sacred*. New York: The Continuum Publishing Company; 1993. p13.

²¹⁴ Jacobsen KA. Chapter 12: Bhagavadgita, ecosophy T, and deep ecology. In: Katz E, Light A, Rothenberg D, editors. *Beneath the surface: critical essays in the philosophy of deep ecology* [e-book]. Cambridge (MA): Massachusetts Institute of Technology. 2000 [cited 2010 Jun 4]. p231-252. Available from: Google books.

²¹⁵ Drengson A. The deep ecology movement. *The Trumpeter* [serial online]. 1995 [cited 2010 Jun 4];12(3):1-7. Available from: The Trumpeter. <http://trumpeter.athabascau.ca>.

²¹⁶ Naess A. *Ecology, community and lifestyle*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989; p175.

Sheridan and Longboat describe Indigenous animism as “the first Deep Ecology”²¹⁷. They use the term “animist realism” which they argue portrays “a planet where everything is alive and sentient... that familiarity [with the land as embodied Creation] confirms a knowledge and faith in Creation’s necessary architecture of ecological and spiritual interrelationships”²¹⁸. The New Age can address the ecological crisis through environmental ethics by undertaking animist realism without appropriating foreign Indigenous culture.

Ecofeminists such as Ariel Salleh critique deep ecology as being too theoretical and lacking a necessary emphasis on the oppression of women which, if overcome, “could provide an immediate ‘living’ social basis for the alternative consciousness which the deep ecologist is trying to formulate and introduce as an abstract ethical construct”²¹⁹. Eco-feminism as an environmental ethic takes a step further than deep ecology, relating the ecological crisis to the oppression of women and nature, which has been ultimately intertwined throughout the patriarchal reign in many societies²²⁰. Eco-feminism contributes a more social interpretation of deep ecology, insisting that the domination of women by a patriarchy is inherently similar to the domination of nature, as is the

²¹⁷ Sheridan J, Longboat RD. The Haudenosaunee imagination and the ecology of the sacred. *Space and culture* [serial online]. 2006 [cited 2010 Jun 4];9(4):365-381. p374. Available from: Sage Journals Online. <http://online.sagepub.com>.

²¹⁸ Ibid. p368.

²¹⁹ Ibid. Warren KJ. Chapter two: what are ecofeminists saying? p25.

²²⁰ McAndrew DA. Ecofeminism and the teaching of literacy. *College Composition and Communication* [serial online]. 1996 [cited 2009 Feb 21];47(3):367-382. Available from: National Council of Teachers of English. www.ncte.org.

oppression of races, cultures, sexualities and anyone else who is deemed 'other'²²¹. According to Andrew Ross²²², whose work focuses on men's relationship to the women's and ecology movements in the early 1990s, although not all neo-pagans identify with eco-feminism (and certainly not all eco-feminists are pagan), the philosophy complements the pagan aim of returning to ancestral animism and provides reasons that nature and the feminine should be revered in our culture in an effort to stay the ecological crisis²²³.

Indigenous cultures have a lived experience with the natural world that many non-Aboriginal people searching for answers to our current crises often look to for guidance; however, ignorance of the realities of Native peoples' perspectives often appears in the fields that these activists are engaged in. Carol Adams argues in *Ecofeminism and the sacred* that while attempting to garner spiritual insights from Indigenous cultures, non-Indigenous people must not ignore the political struggles these cultures face. Such struggles are largely due to the beliefs and actions of the dominant society which eco-feminism aims to critique. Ignorance of current political endeavours of Indigenous peoples affirms the continuation of the colonial project. Participants in the New Age,

²²¹ Adams CJ ed. *Ecofeminism and the sacred*. New York: The Continuum Publishing Company; 1993.

²²² New York University. Andrew Ross. American Studies [homepage on the internet]. No date [cited 2010 April 24]. Available from: <http://americanstudies.as.nyu.edu/object/andrewross.html>.

Ross is an author and Professor of Social and Cultural Analysis at New York University.

²²³ Ross A. Wet, dark, and low, eco-man evolves from eco-woman. *Feminism and Postmodernism* [serial online]. 1992 [cited 2009 Feb 24];19(2):205-323. Available from: Duke University Press. www.dukeupress.edu.

like some of those in the neo-pagan movement, can be aware of and actively involved in these endeavours while simultaneously working on their own self-realisation.

Alternative festivals as sites of New Age education

Alternative culture in North America and Australia is fervently expressed at underground music and lifestyle festivals. As someone who attends these events and associates with others who do, I feel that the festival is a safe environment to express the idealistic manifestation of self one attempts to embody in everyday life, but is significantly more successful in achieving when surrounded by a nurturing and supportive community of like-minded others. At the festival, creativity and openness are valued; spirituality is at the fore of expression. In this section, I discuss the inclusion of indigeneity at alternative festivals in Australia and the United States. I argue that the festival is a powerful convergence for the New Age movement and the stimulation of political ideas within its community; and that a cultural exchange between Indigenous and non-Indigenous can occur here if done correctly.

ConFest

ConFest (Conference Festival) is an Australian event in which education of and by participants is the central goal. Deputy Prime Minister Jim Cairns²²⁴ initiated ConFest in 1976, which has since been held at various rural locations in the Australian Capital

²²⁴ The tribute web site team. Confest: Conference Festival [homepage on the internet]. 2000 [cited 7 April 2010]. Available from: <http://www.confest.org/#top>.

Territory, New South Wales and Victoria²²⁵. The demographics are not published but cultural anthropologist Graham St John²²⁶ suggests that there is a large presence of delegates in their early to mid twenties, mostly Euro-Australian²²⁷. The participants come from diverse professions; predominantly the delegates are from the educated middle class. In the many workshops held at ConFest, “there is an evident increase in the popularity of techniques, myths and rituals attributed to indigenous, Asian or other ethnicities”²²⁸. Workshops are the spaces at festivals that most directly intend to achieve a sharing of knowledge. St John refers to these workshop offerings as a spiritual supermarket where festival goers consume and receive initiations as they desire²²⁹.

Action towards positive change is encouraged at ConFest. For instance, as St John describes, the ‘Forest village’ where political groups are stationed:

...has functioned as a recruitment centre for logging blockades mounted in East Gippsland and anti-nuclear industry activism at Roxby Downs and Jabiluka. Forest features the GECO (Goongerah Environment Centre) organic/vegan kitchen which raises funds for the defence of the Goolengook and Otway Forests. Information about the current state of forest management, boycotts and

²²⁵ The tribute web site team. Op cit. The history of ConFest. Available from:

<http://www.confest.org.au/pages/home/ConFest-History>.

²²⁶ The University of Queensland, Australia. Dr Graham St John: University of Queensland postdoctoral fellow 2002-2005. Centre for critical and cultural studies [homepage on the internet]. 2007 [cited 2010 April 8]. Available from: <http://www.cccs.uq.edu.au/index.html?page=16160>.

²²⁷ St John G. Participants. Part 1: Event foundations. In: *Alternative cultural heterotopia: ConFest as Australia’s marginal centre*. PhD [dissertation]. Melbourne (Vic): La Trobe University; 2000. Available from: http://www.confest.org/thesis_confest_july_1999.pdf.

²²⁸ Ibid. Part 2: Heal thy self – thy planet. Chapter 7: Sacred drama: self, earth and indigeneity.

²²⁹ Ibid.

blockades are disseminated by eco-radical tacticians. One experienced Forest activist, Banyalla, voices his frustration with Down to Earth's (DTE) ecologically quiescent constituency: '[T]he more activists get involved [in DTE/ConFest] the more ... you're gonna get people actually doing something [ie. promoting forest awareness], rather than just believing having seven days walking around in the nude is fuckin' alternative.'²³⁰

Participants may engage in brief interactions with various spiritualities during ConFest, they are also likely to be confronted by challenging political alternatives and invited to build on their inner growth by becoming involved in active social change.

Rainbow Serpent

The Rainbow Serpent festival in Victoria has an Indigenous knowledge sharing component. The name of the festival refers to the rainbow serpent that many Indigenous groups in Australia recognise as an important creator being²³¹. Rainbow Serpent in 2010 included an Indigenous knowledge workshop space where dance, art, cooking, basket weaving, Didgeridoo/Yidaki and healing were taught to festival participants. The Indigenous Liaison for the festival, David Beaumont (Wiradjuri²³²), is

²³⁰ St John G. Alternative cultural heterotopia and the liminid body: beyond Turner at ConFest – analysing Victor Turner's alternative lifestyle research. *Australian Journal of Anthropology* [serial online]. 2001 [cited 2010 Jun 2];12(1):47-66. p50. Available from: Simon Fraser University online. www.sfu.ca.

²³¹ Rainbow Serpent festival. About [homepage on the internet]. No date [cited 2010 April 7]. Available from: <http://www.rainbowserpent.net/index.php/About/about.html>.

²³² MacDonald G. Master narratives and the disposition of the Wiradjuri. *Aboriginal History* [serial online]. 1998 [cited 2010 Jun 2];22(1):162-179. Available from: <http://www.kooriweb.org/foley/resources/pdfs/81.pdf>.

Wiradjuri country comprises approximately eighty thousand square kilometers of central New South Wales.

also a disc jockey who performed an electronic set incorporating didgeridoo. Uncle Phil performed a workshop on preparing a Torres Strait Island feast, teaching participants protocols for taking from the natural environment and accepting responsibility for community²³³. Such workshops provide valuable learning for (largely non-Indigenous) festival participants, and opportunities for Indigenous educators to share in the other workshops and music that is showcased at these events where alternatives to many of society's current paradigms on community, ecology and economy are presented in an uplifting and hopeful manner.

Rainbow Gatherings

The Rainbow Gathering is a unique New Age event. Taking place on international, national, and regional levels in countries all over the globe²³⁴, the Gatherings are grassroots organised meeting places for the 'Rainbow Family' to converge and share an utopian lifestyle for up to a month at a time. Sites are chosen for the Gatherings that are naturally beautiful and void of fences or development. Age demographics at rainbow gatherings are diverse though usually within the twenty to forty age bracket,

²³³ Rainbow Serpent festival. Op cit. Indigenous content. Available from: <http://www.rainbowserpent.net/index.php/Lifestyle/indigenous-content.html>.

²³⁴ No author. Rainbow gathering. Wikipedia: the free encyclopedia [homepage on the internet]. 2010 [cited 2010 April 8]. Available from: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rainbow_Gathering.

Rainbow gatherings are held regularly throughout North America and Europe, and have also been held in Australia, parts of Africa, Asia and Latin America.

Wikipedia is not usually credited with being a reliable resource, but considering the grassroots nature of the rainbow gathering movement, I feel that Wikipedia is more reliable than other websites as it is frequently updated and there are many contributors to the final publication. Literature on the rainbow gatherings is difficult to find as most of it is self-published and distributed within social networks.

with concentration on young single attendees²³⁵. Workshops are spontaneous offerings by anyone who feels they have something to share²³⁶, such as hitch hiking²³⁷, ger or yurt making²³⁸, and the alleged Hopi rainbow prophecy²³⁹. Here the 'Rainbow family of living light' can gather knowledge and strength as skills to help change the world. As the Rainbow Gatherings are void of leadership or 'officialdom'²⁴⁰, history is ambiguous and always contested. Tavory and Goodman describe the change that Rainbow Family members participate in following a Gathering as:

...a shift in the experience of self. On the one hand, it is an expressive journey of self-discovery, complete with a language of individual transformation. But on the other, this change is done by and with others, and has interactional effects which signify the communal, through the dislocation of embodied tie-signs of intimacy.²⁴¹

Living in a temporary community teaches participants tolerance and that their actions affect those around them. These lessons will inform their future behaviour.

²³⁵ Andy. Rainbow demographics. A site about nothing [homepage on the internet]. No date [cited 2010 April 30]. Available from: http://www.asiteaboutnothing.net/pl_rainbow-culture.html.

²³⁶ No author. Rainbow family of living light mini-manual: suggested wisdom culled from years of experience and / or trail and error [document on the internet]. 2004 [cited 2010 April 8]. Available from: <http://rainbowguide.info/PDFs/Mini-Manual2004.pdf>.

²³⁷ ontheroad. Rainbow gathering info for those who will attend. Digihitch [discussion list on the internet]. 2005 Jun 14 [cited 2010 April 30]. Available from: <http://www.digihitch.com/ftopic-3139.html>.

²³⁸ majikfaerie. Australian rainbow gathering. Joyous birth [discussion list on the internet]. 2007 Sept 7 [cited 2010 April 30]. Available from: <http://www.joyousbirth.info/forums/showthread.php?10171-Australian-Rainbow-Gathering&p=141736>.

²³⁹ No author. North America. CircleLetter [homepage on the internet]. 2009 [cited 2010 April 30]. Available from: <http://circleletter.rainbowinfo.net/Links.html#NorthAmerica|table>.

²⁴⁰ Savoye R. Info for focalizers. Rainbow family of living light [homepage on the internet]. No date [cited 2010 April 7]. Available from: <http://www.welcomehome.org/rainbow/index.html>.

²⁴¹ Tavory I, Goodman YC. "A collective of individuals": between self and solidarity in a rainbow gathering. *Sociology of religion* [serial online]. 2009 [cited 2010 Jun 2];70(3):262-284. p279. Available from: Oxford Journals. www.oxfordjournals.org.

Identification with the term 'rainbow' in alternative culture is significant, though its roots are ambiguous. One unofficial website describes the purpose of the name as recognising that:

...it takes the full spectrum of hue-manity to make it happen; it literally 'takes all kinds' ... IOW, many hands make light work. :^) -or- Ya' know (the Rainbow) "it's made up of light". Living Light that is.²⁴²

Another popular reason for the identification with the term rainbow is the myth of a Native American prophecy stating that a rainbow tribe would arrive to save the planet in its time of need. Ethnographer Michael Niman debunked this myth in his published PhD *People of the rainbow: a nomadic utopia* as originating from a book written by evangelical Christians in 1962 called *Warriors of the rainbow*. Niman criticises elements of 'fakelore' that he sees at rainbow gatherings, where Native American culture is taken out of context and relayed as authentic. He believes that borrowing ideas from other cultures is positive; as long as recognition is given that, the knowledge has been removed from its source²⁴³.

²⁴² No author. Circle of light community network: happenings in North America, international and underground. Welcome here [homepage on the internet]. 2010 [cited 2010 April 8]. Available from: <http://welcomehere.org/index.php>.

²⁴³ Tarleton J. Interview with Michael Niman. On the road with John Tarleton [homepage on the internet]. 1999 [cited 2010 April 8]. Available from: <http://www.johntarleton.net/niman.html>.

Earthdance

Earthdance is an international music and New Age spirituality festival that electronic musician Chris Deckker began in 1997. It has taken place in over five hundred locations in eighty countries since its inception²⁴⁴. The central unifying event of the festival is the synchronised prayer for peace conducted in recognition of the United Nations' International Day of Peace²⁴⁵.

The Earthdance hub event in Laytonville, California successfully achieves two way Indigenous/non-Indigenous education, and that there lies potential for this to develop further. The 'Gathering of the elders' is a discussion forum incorporating delegates from local Indigenous tribes, Indigenous elders from other places in the United States and other countries, as well as some non-Indigenous elders.

Examples of the diversity of the delegates in 2009 include²⁴⁶:

- Agnes Baker Pilgrim, a Takelma elder from nearby Ashland, Oregon, who serves on the Council of Thirteen Grandmothers that travel the globe bringing feminine wisdom to such places as the Vatican.

²⁴⁴ Earthdance. About: the history. Earthdance [homepage on the internet]. No date [cited 2010 April 8]. Available from: <http://www.earthdance.org/2009/history.html>.

²⁴⁵ Ibid. Global festival for peace. Available from: <http://www.earthdance.org/>.

²⁴⁶ Earthdance. Gathering of the elders. Earthdance: the global festival for peace [program guide]. 2009.

- Oren Lyons, chief of the Onondaga nation in New York state; traditional Faithkeeper; director of Native American Studies at the State University of New York, Buffalo; and Indigenous rights activist²⁴⁷.
- Nicki Skully, a non-Indigenous American woman who teaches on shamanism and conducts spiritual tours in Egypt, Peru and other “sacred power centres”; Skully says she opened up to spirituality while taking psychedelic drugs with the Californian bluegrass band The Grateful Dead²⁴⁸.
- Leslene della Madre, a non-Indigenous American woman who teaches eclectic shamanism.

These and other delegates answered questions from the audience on topics such as prophecy, conservation and Indigenous health issues.

In 2009 there was a component of the forum entitled “Youth meet the elders”, where a delegation of younger festival contributors²⁴⁹ asked questions of the elders. As part of this forum, one invited speaker, an Australian woman who was teaching yoga at the festival, expressed having seen her Akashic records²⁵⁰ and that she had “walked as a

²⁴⁷ 11th hour action. Oren Lyons. 11th hour action [homepage on the internet]. 2008 [cited 2010 April 8]. Available from: <http://11thhouraction.com/ideasandexperts/orenlyons>.

²⁴⁸ With Nicki Scully. Bridging heaven and earth: episode 174 [podcast on the internet]. 2007 June 19 [cited 2010 April 14]. Available from: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=khTZqGb_gp0&NR=1.

²⁴⁹ Most ‘youth’ delegates appeared to be between the ages of twenty and thirty five.

²⁵⁰ Krippner S. Geomagnetic field effects in anomalous dreams and the akashic field. World futures [serial online]. 2006 [cited 2010 April 14];62(1&2):103-113. Available from: informaworld.com.

Native American". She was quickly shooed off the stage. Despite this being a festival with New Age components, flaky statements of authenticity such as this are not tolerated. I feel that it would be of value to the non-Indigenous New Age youth, particularly in an area such as Northern California where many of the participants come from second or third generation New Age families, to hear from Indigenous Elders their understandings of reincarnation. The idea is prevalent in New Age circles that one could have had many past lives in different cultures. This raises questions as to what kind of authority someone such as this woman may have to speak on Indigenous issues if able to remember their past lives. I believe that dialogue about ideas such as this is necessary in order for us to better understand where each other are coming from. Festivals such as Earthdance are a perfect location for this type of direct communication on spiritual issues between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people.

Electronic dance music culture

Referred to as 'doofs' by those who participate in Australia, Electronic Dance Music Culture (EDMC) parties are similar to the rave but are usually held outdoors. Locations are often in illegal places such as private properties or state parks without permission. Directions to the party are received by word of mouth and text messages in order to ensure that police or people outside the social circles of organisers do not discover the

The Akashic records are a reference in Hindu religion to a cosmic or universal record of all that has ever existed. The concept is present in other spiritual traditions including Christianity and Islam. Information is stored in a similar way to files on a computer, and therefore people can have individual records which they may 'see' in a vision such as those induced by meditation, dream or intoxication.

party. Another important difference between the rave and doof is the type of music played: while raves feature many types of electronic music, doofs focus on trance and ambient styles that allow for more of a spiritual focus at the party, rather than hedonism.

I agree with musicologist Rupert Till²⁵¹ that “EDMC is a process of re-enchantment, of addressing the problem of the [spiritually] homeless self”²⁵². St John describes all night trance dance parties as neo-pagan exercises. According to Krusty, the organiser of a trance dance at ConFest which was referred to in the advertising material as a “tribal rave celebration”:

The all night dance ritual is a memory that runs deep within us all, a memory that takes us back to a time when people had respect for our great Mother Earth and each other. A time when we came together as one tribe united in spirit. We understood the cycles of nature and the power of the elements. We danced around fires, we chanted and we drummed, invoking the great spirit to empower ourselves and our community²⁵³.

Krusty infers that Aboriginal people have been practicing trance dance for forty thousand years, which legitimises its practice at doofs²⁵⁴. He mentions the idea of

²⁵¹ University of Huddersfield. Biography. Dr Rupert Till: Music, humanities and media [homepage on the internet]. No date [cited 2010 April 8]. Available from: <http://www2.hud.ac.uk/staffprofiles/staffcv.php?staffid=432>.

²⁵² Till R. Possession trance ritual in electronic dance music culture. In: Deacy C, Arweck E, eds. Exploring religion and the sacred in a media age. Ashgate Publishing Limited. Surrey: England. 2009. p169-188.

²⁵³ St John G. Op cit. 2000.

²⁵⁴ Ibid.

“Trance Dance, regarded as 'an ancient Shamanic practice which invites Spirit to embody us; to heal us through spiritual ecstasy,' is authorised as a practice employed by indigenous people worldwide 'for over 40 000 years' (and as a means by which 'significant memories of this life, lives past, even those of prehuman form' can be retrieved).”

retrieving ancestral memories through this state, similar to the concept raised by Blain that I discuss in Chapter Three²⁵⁵. St John argues that trance parties are neo-pagan²⁵⁶, contemporary versions of seasonal rites where “the sacra are transmitted”²⁵⁷. By experiencing these ecstatic spiritual events, a direct connection is made to the sacred that is ultimately entwined with relationships between self and nature.

Neo-tribalism²⁵⁸

Related to this effort to reestablish a spiritual relationship with the earth, the word ‘tribe’ is frequently used as a synonym for community in alternative culture^{259,260,261}. Trance disc jockey Ray Castle describes doofs as “tribadelic” in reference to indigeneity:

²⁵⁵ See Chapter Three, p15-16.

²⁵⁶ St John G. Op cit. 2000. Neo-paganism as eco-spirituality. Available from: <http://www.confest.org/thesis/sevenneopagan.html>.

²⁵⁷ Ibid. Part 1: multicultural drama. Available from: <http://www.confest.org/thesis/sevenpartone.html>.

²⁵⁸ I personally take issue with the term ‘tribe’ being used in communities I find myself part of. I understand the term as originating from a colonial perspective on pan-Indigenous ways of life and kinship. Some Aboriginal groups, especially in North America, describe themselves as belonging to a particular tribe. For this reason I prefer to steer clear of the term ‘tribe’ or ‘neo-tribe’ to describe New Age community. However, I respect the right of others who are aware of the vast differences between our community and Native tribes to use it as a postmodern reinterpretation of language.

²⁵⁹ Ibid. Neo-paganism as eco-spirituality.

²⁶⁰ Davis E. Trance planet. Arthur [newspaper on the internet]. 2008 Oct 9 [cited 2010 April 8]. Available from: www.erikdavis.org/chunks.php?cat=the%20analog%20life&sec=articles&file=chunkfrom-2008-10-09-1119-0.txt.

²⁶¹ Eugene ENRG. Chapter 8: psychic sonics: tribadelic dance trance-formation: Eugene ENRG (aka DJ Krusty) interviews Ray Castle. In: St John G ed. FreeNRG: Notes from the edge of the dance floor. Altona (Vic): Common Ground Publishing; 2001. p157-169.

We are like the Australian Aborigines who, for eons, have contemplated the planetsphere with their dreamtime, while beating their sticks and blowing through a hollowed out pipe (didjeridu). These open-air, wilderness, tribadelic, pagan-like parties (rituals), are along this line of primordial communion.²⁶²

The Rainbow Family is often described as a nomadic tribe, traveling the world to set up camp and share with old and new friends.

'Neo-tribalism' is a redefinition of the term 'tribal', which signifies the connection that members of various alternative cultures such as rainbow or EDMC feel with each other; a social network that extends beyond your local neighbourhood. The tribe is sometimes physically present around you, either in temporary autonomous zones such as festivals; in bohemian quarters of a city; or in communal living spaces. There are alternative modes of government being played out; sustainable structures being made; gardens planted and food distributed. Other times the tribe is but a memory or perhaps present on the Internet or radio. Neo-tribalism suggests belonging to a tribe of choice, one that defines itself as other than mainstream. It indicates a willingness to connect with Indigenous values and perceived ways of living.

Activities engaged in by New Agers at festivals are often positive, life-affirming practices that are informed by a nourishing spiritual ethic. Festivals are sites wherein participants are invited to grow their spiritual ideas as well as learn practical skills for building a more environmentally ethical world. Direct, ecstatic spiritual experience is engaged through

²⁶² Ibid. p159.

music, performance, being in a natural environment and by some, through the ingestion of entheogens. At the festival, the New Age community can live its deep ecology utopia, if just for a weekend, a week or a month, and bring this experience with them into their regular lives.

Conclusion

The New Age movement can and does have practical application. Non-Indigenous people can support the efforts of those we, our ancestors and/or culture have oppressed to overcome a grievous number of obstacles: from environmental degradation to deaths in custody; from broken treaties to plastic shamans. We can stop the sacred places, which are really every place²⁶³, from being disrespected. In order to do so, it is necessary to examine our own ethics and relationships with our environment in order to create paradigm shifts firstly within ourselves, and eventually in wider society. Spaces are being created where there is an aim to achieve this, such as subculture festivals. Bringing initiatives into the mainstream is the challenge of those involved. If the dominant colonial societies can take responsibility for what has been done to Native people and Native lands, more authentic spiritual relationships can develop between parties.

²⁶³ Alexie S. Reservation blues. New York: the Atlantic Monthly Press; 1995.

CONCLUSION

The New Age movement represents paradigm shifts in spiritual understanding. Through astrology and prophecy, New Agers predict that the collective spiritual vibration will influence the outcomes of the current transition period in Earth's evolution. If we do not recognise that those who hold the power are working to keep our evolution at bay, and attempt to reverse their influence on planetary operations, life on Earth will suffer.

The New Age is perceived by many to be full of unrealistic, partially formed ideas that are often used in a manipulative, mercenary fashion. However, the theories about conscious evolution are gaining some clout in conventional fields, as seen in the film *What the bleep do we know?*²⁶⁴, which draws on quantum physics, neurology and molecular biology to demonstrate that humans are able to create our own realities. The continued amalgamation of New Age spirituality and science will continue to strengthen the validity of New Age concepts to a wider audience.

Paganism and the New Age often intersect, and I argue that the two fields are well complemented: paganism with its connection to history and with the earth, and the New Age awakening to the larger cosmos and conscious evolution. Unfortunately, New Age authors are not always trained writers; hence, despite having many valid spiritual

²⁶⁴ Arntz W, Chasse B, producers; Vicente M, Chasse B, Arntz W, directors. *What the bleep do we know?* [motion picture]. United States: Lord of the Wind Films; 2004.

experiences, academics often regard them condescendingly. I understand this because, I experience this with my own mother's work: although I know firsthand that she has a great ability to channel intense healing energy, her writing often makes me cringe. She often writes long, detailed explanations of her work that become pages upon pages without paragraph breaks; she makes bold claims of spiritual truth that only she knows the origins of as she rarely cites her influences; and she publishes the most personal details of her life, which are often unnecessary and mundane (sometimes with mention of my own name), on the World Wide Web²⁶⁵.

The New Age aims to be a non-religious spiritual forum. Its philosophies assert that the world is not operating in a balanced state due to peoples' damaging behaviours, which ultimately stem from a separation from the sacred. The New Age movement advocates experiential spirituality that places authority in each person as a sovereign being. By raising our own and others' spiritual consciousness about environmental ethics and strategies for caring for the planet, the New Age contributes to combating the current ecological crisis. Strategies for this include advocating Indigenous knowledge.

Aboriginal people, however, sometimes interpret the appropriation of Indigenous knowledge into New Age theories and practices as disrespectful. Such instances discourage Native people from engaging in open dialogue with New Age members who

²⁶⁵ Much of this critique must be assigned to the fact, that though I love her more than anyone else on the planet and value her as my first and most influential spiritual teacher, she is my mother.

are drawing on this knowledge. In some cases, aspects of Indigenous cultures are appropriated and used out of context, often ignoring the differences between Indigenous cultures. This has a history in stereotypes that generalise Aboriginality. Non-native people who are misinformed about Native cultures spread misinformation through New Age mediums. People claiming to be Native and misinterpreting Native practices also provide validation for others to do the same. Some non-Indigenous people thus create and reinforce myths regarding Native spirituality by re-telling and re-creating them.

Misinformation of Aboriginal spirituality is propagated in the field of neo-shamanism. Acts performed under the misnomer of 'shaman' are misrepresentative of Indigenous cultures, both contemporary and traditional, and these acts can be harmful to those who take part. Workshops that claim to teach shamanism dismiss the years of training it takes within traditional cultures to be considered a spiritual authority. The use of entheogens as a path to spiritual enlightenment is dangerous particularly when the motives of those facilitating their use are largely mercenary. Native people who sell their traditions to outsiders present a distorted view of culture to non-Indigenous people who rarely have direct dialogue with Aborigines. Spiritual authorities in Indigenous cultures rarely accept payment for services aside from donations; anyone demanding large sums of money from their clients for this work are likely involved in charlatanism. Laws to prevent the appropriation of Indigenous culture are a necessary development to prevent harm both to unsuspecting New Age patrons and contemporary Aboriginal cultures.

Neo-paganism broadly aims to revive pre-colonial animistic spiritual traditions. These are usually one's own ancestral traditions, but occasionally people are inspired to research another's history. For instance, some people in North America believe that they practise Native American spirituality despite not being Indigenous themselves or being raised in Aboriginal culture. The lack of recorded information on pagan traditions necessitates a large amount of contemporary pagan practice left to intuition.

As neo-pagans see the earth as sacred, they treat it with respect. Neo-pagans are concerned with the feminist project, and believe that spirituality should encompass the feminine and masculine equally because, for them, doing so will assist in bringing the planet back into balance. Neo-pagans reject the distinction between objectivity and subjectivity, just as they reject the separation of sacred and profane in Occidental society. As neo-pagan communities grow, the spiritual practices are gaining depth and new traditions.

In order to grow healthy relationships between cultures, we must learn relationship protocols to respectfully engage with each other. We must know where we come from, our own heritage, in order to have meaningful connections with people who are strongly connected to land and spiritual cultures. If we believe that our own ancestors had healthy spiritual and practical relationships with the earth, we are urged to ask the questions: what inspired us to turn away from that; what pain have we caused from

making that break, to ourselves and others; what would we prefer our world to look like, and how do we bring that about?

Contemporary pagans are actively involved in their communities and in politics. Engagement with sacred sites is a central tenet of paganism, one that often extends beyond the sacred sites of one's own ancestry to those of other spiritual traditions. Neopagans spend significant time maintaining and protecting sacred sites, both in their ancestral grounds and those of others. Balancing engagement with these sites and their protection for future generations is often problematic.

The New Age spiritual movement inspires impetus for spiritual investigation of our relationships with our environment such as that which is present in the field of deep ecology. This is done through examination of destructive human relationships with nature, and focus on how to reverse these trends. Ecofeminism expands on deep ecology by asserting that the domination of women and nature are entwined. This argument complements neo-paganism's avocation of the divine feminine, embodied as the earth or Gaia. We must ensure that while investigating spirituality, we do not let practical, political action fall to the wayside.

Alternative festivals are powerful places to challenge paradigms and engage in meaningful dialogue. They are well attended by the New Age community as a means of

nurturing and developing their spirituality. Festival workshops can appear consumerist and shallow, as participants can pick and choose from what to learn; however, they can also be effective spaces for exchanging knowledge. Indigenous speakers at these festivals share knowledge on a wealth of topics. Some festivals such as Earthdance engage Indigenous and non-Indigenous participants in working towards a common goal, such as prayer for peace. Festivals, such as the rainbow gatherings, challenge dominant ideas of hierarchy because all participants, rather than a central organiser, are responsible for the organisation and operation of the celebration. Doofs are an alternative to popular rave culture that aim towards spiritual enlightenment and ecstatic experience, seen by some as sacred neo-pagan rites. Some people believe that the appropriation of Indigenous knowledge at festivals can be positive, as long as recognition is given to where it originated and the fact that it is being reinterpreted.

A stewardship ethic is necessary to ensure that sacred places exist into the future. Access and rights to homelands is central to Indigenous peoples being able to practice their traditional religions as they are inextricably tied to the land in which they were formed. Projects that involve Indigenous and non-Indigenous people working in partnership to achieve sustainability are effective when power balance is maintained between those involved. It is vitally important that Indigenous knowledge is shared in ways that respect protocols.

Non-Natives living on stolen land during this period of planetary crisis are attempting to improve comprehension of ourselves in context with the other-than-human world. The New Age spiritual movement is a community of people who recognise the inadequacies of Occidental society and are aiming to address them. Some in the New Age movement look to the Traditional Owners of the lands occupied by our colonial cultures to provide them with a spiritual solution. These relationships are often one-sided and contribute to the continuation of the colonial project. Each person has a rich heritage of spiritual cultures from which to draw. Combining the wisdom of our ancestry with an experiential relationship with people and the rest of nature is a more appropriate method for attuning to our natural selves.

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