

Plastic Shamans and Astroturf Sun Dances

New Age Commercialization of Native American Spirituality

LISA ALDRED

CONSUMING NATIVE AMERICAN SPIRITUALITY

Commercial exploitation of Native American spiritual traditions has permeated the New Age movement since its emergence in the 1980s. Euro-Americans professing to be medicine people have profited from publications and workshops. Mass quantities of products promoted as “Native American sacred objects” have been successfully sold by white entrepreneurs to a largely non-Indian market. This essay begins with an overview of these acts of commercialization as well as Native Americans’ objections to such practices. Its real focus, however, is the motivation behind the New Agers’ obsession and consumption of Native American spirituality. Why do New Agers persist in consuming commercialized Native American spirituality? What kinds of self-articulated defenses do New Agers offer for these commercial practices? To answer these questions, analysis from a larger social and economic perspective is needed to further understand the motivations behind New Age consumption.

In the so-called postmodern culture of late consumer capitalism, a significant number of white affluent suburban and urban middle-aged baby-boomers complain of feeling uprooted from cultural traditions, community belonging, and spiritual meaning. The New Age movement is one such response to these feelings. New Agers romanticize an “authentic” and “traditional” Native American culture whose spirituality can save them from their own sense of malaise. However, as products of the very consumer culture they seek to escape, these New Agers pursue spiritual meaning and cultural identification through acts of purchase. Although New Agers identify as a countercultural group, their commercial actions mesh quite well with mainstream capitalism. Ultimately, their search for spiritual and cultural meaning through material acquisition leaves them feeling unsatisfied. The community they seek is only imagined, a world conjured up by the promises of advertised products, but with no history, social relations, or contextualized culture that would make for a sense of real

belonging. Meanwhile, their fetishization of Native American spirituality not only masks the social oppression of real Indian peoples but also perpetuates it.

THE RAINBOW TRIBE: NEW AGERS IDENTIFYING
WITH NATIVE AMERICAN SPIRITUAL TRADITIONS

The term *New Age* is often used to refer to a movement that emerged in the 1980s. Its adherents ascribe to an eclectic amalgam of beliefs and practices, often hybridized from various cultures. New Agers tend to focus on what they refer to as personal transformation and spiritual growth. Many of them envision a literal New Age, which is described as a period of massive change in the future when people will live in harmony with nature and each other. Only in this New Age will they realize the full extent of human potential, including spiritual growth, the development of psychic abilities, and optimum physical health through alternative healing. Most New Agers contend that this transformation will not take place through concerted political change directed at existing structures and institutions. Rather, it will be achieved through individual personal transformation.

The New Age is only a movement in the loosest sense of the term. There is no circumscribed creed or defined tenets in the New Age movement. Nor are there any requirements for membership, although studies show most tend to be white, middle-aged, and college educated, with a middle- to upper-middle-class income. Estimates of people identifying with the New Age movement tend to run from ten to twenty million. Exact numbers are difficult to ascertain, however, because many New Age books have seeped into the mainstream and have influenced the views of people not consciously identified with the movement. The New Age is thus not a strictly defined community headed by formally recognized leaders with an articulated dogma. Rather, it is a term that is applied to a heterogeneous collection of philosophies and practices. There is a wide and burgeoning number of practices associated with the New Age, including interests in shamanism, goddess worship, Eastern religions, crystals, pagan rituals, extraterrestrials, and channeling spirit beings. “Native American spirituality” is among the most popular interests.¹

It is my contention that the New Age is primarily a consumerist movement. There are a minority of adherents who live together and try to incorporate New Age philosophies and practices into all aspects of their lives. Some incorporate these practices into part of their lives by taking workshops and engaging in New Age practices in their spare time. However, the majority of those who identify themselves as New Age (or who could be reasonably labeled as such by others) participate primarily through the purchase of texts and prod-

ucts targeted for the New Age market. Native American spirituality is one of the most popular and profitable sectors of this New Age commercialism.²

In this essay, the term *New Agers* is used to refer to the sector that is interested in Native American spiritual traditions. Certainly, not everyone involved in the New Age movement is interested in Native American spirituality. Moreover, there is diversity among those interested New Agers. A small percentage constructs their essential identity around Native American religion. A number of those who identify themselves as members of “the Rainbow Tribe” arguably fit into this category. Some Rainbow Tribe members spend time in communities they form, engaged in their own version of Native American rituals. However, many New Agers interested in Native American spirituality participate only through commercially run seminars or the purchase of texts and products. This article is primarily concerned with New Agers whose interest in Native American spirituality is expressed through commercial pursuits. Although entrepreneurs will be discussed in the overview of New Age commercialization of Native American spirituality, their motivations are not the subject of this analysis (arguably, they are shrewd businessmen and women who know how to tap into lucrative markets). Rather, this essay seeks to explain why New Age consumers seek spiritual meaning through purchase.

PLASTIC MEDICINE MEN FOR HIRE

A number of “Plastic Medicine People” have surfaced in the New Age movement, typically Euro-Americans claiming mentorship by “authentic Native American medicine people.” These “Shake and Bake Shamans,” as some Native American activists have dubbed them, write best-selling books and lead expensive workshops claiming to teach their consumers “how to practice Native American spirituality.”

By far, the biggest business in New Age appropriation of indigenous spirituality transpires in the publishing industry where plastic medicine authors are big sellers. Perhaps the most successful, not to mention notorious, is Lynn Andrews. Andrews has been dubbed the “Beverly Hills Shaman” by some of her New Age supporters and the less flattering epithet “Beverly Hills Witch” by a number of Native Americans criticizing her commercial exploitation of indigenous spiritual traditions. Controversy aside, she is a best-selling author, having made *The New York Times* and *Los Angeles Times* best-seller lists on numerous occasions. Andrews claims that her books are true accounts of her mentoring experiences with two Canadian Cree medicine women—Agnes Whistling Elk and Ruby Plenty Chiefs. In the first two books, these two elderly women supposedly teach Andrews Native American shaman techniques to help

her battle an evil sorcerer. In subsequent books, the trio encounters a flying horse capable of turning into rainbow colors and dolphins, who transmit Australian aboriginal dream visions via a eucalyptus tree antenna.

Another plastic shaman author, Mary Summer Rain, has a lucrative career, having published over fifteen books based on Native American spiritual themes and her mentor, a blind Indian woman she calls No-Eyes.³ Interestingly, one of Lynn Andrews's mentors, Ruby Plenty Chiefs, is also blind. In *Phantoms Afoot: Helping the Spirits Among Us*, Summer Rain claims that No-Eyes entrusts her with a mission to help lost spirits find their way to the afterworld. In a stereotyped Tonto Speak, No-Eyes tells Summer Rain, "No-Eyes gonna be speakin' 'bout spirits who be stupid-dumb."⁴

Native American activists have greatly castigated these works for their trivialization and commercialization of Native American spirituality. Nevertheless, the number of plastic shaman authors, not to mention their commercial success, continues to swell. Jamie Samms is a former country-western singer who claims to channel Leah, an entity supposedly living on Venus six hundred years in the future. Samms later seized on Native American spiritual themes. Samms claims that she was taught by the "thirteen clan mothers" who took human form during the Ice Age and then disappeared, leaving the "thirteen crystal skulls," one of which Samms claims to have seen. Samms teaches her readers how to call up the thirteen clan mothers by focusing on them, each of whom has her own shield and her own special abilities.⁵ Don Le Vie Jr., who writes about Iron Thunderhorse, is supposedly of Algonquin heritage. Thunderhorse's teachings are a mishmash of Native American religion and other New Age favorites, such as Tibetan Buddhism, Taoism, and Ancient Druidism.⁶ Mary Elizabeth Marlow writes about Beautiful Painted Arrow, a Picuris Pueblo-Ute who tells Marlow he has seen two kachinas landing in a space machine and explains his philosophy through allusions to *Dances with Wolves*.⁷ Doug Boyd has written on two Native American medicine men, Rolling Thunder and Mad Bear, both affiliated with the New Age.⁸ Taisha Abelar is a former anthropologist who encountered a Mexican sorceress while wandering through the mountains of Tucson in the 1960s. She traveled to the woman's home in Sonora, Mexico, to live with this woman who turned out to be from the same family of sorcerers that instructed Carlos Castaneda.⁹

Not all those designated as "plastic" by Native American activists publish books. There are quite a number who run workshops, seminars, or centers claiming to teach Native American spiritual practice. For example, one non-Native American woman who calls herself Mary Thunder runs a New Age center in Texas where she conducts sweats, pipe ceremonies, and talks with space aliens through Max, the crystal skull. Another woman referred to as Oceana, or sometimes O'Shinna, claims to have been born in a crystal spectrum in Colo-

rado; she mixes Native American teachings with references to Atlantis, Tibetan Buddhism, and theosophy. Some “plastics” produce videos explaining their philosophies and offering “do-it-yourself” instructions for Native American ceremonies such as sweats.¹⁰ There are also a number of New Age “channelers” who claim to channel Native American spiritual entities. If paid the requisite sizable fee, these channelers access the wisdom of their Indian guides for their clients. One woman claims to channel a Hopi Indian named Barking Tree (as well as Bell Bell, a giggling six-year-old from Atlantis, and a being named Aeffra from Western Europe). A New Ager in Tampa, Florida, claims to channel an entity named Olah, who is supposed to be a reincarnation of both Edgar Cayce and the revered Lakota spiritual entity White Buffalo Calf Woman.

Many Native Americans have been offended by the mockery these bastardized versions make of their sacred ceremonies. Some of the incidents denounced as most offensive include Sun Dances held on Astroturf, sweats held on cruise ships with wine and cheese served, and sex orgies advertised as part of “traditional Cherokee ceremonies.” A typical advertisement for such a workshop promises an introduction to “core shamanism—the universal and basic methods used by the shaman to enter non-ordinary reality for problem solving, well-being and healing.”¹¹ Others make even more specific promises; for example, one workshop guarantees that you will retrieve your own personal power animal in a trance.¹² These workshops are also incorporated into theme adult camps, wilderness training programs, and New Age travel packages.¹³ Native American activists have been greatly angered by the commercial exploitation of their spirituality represented by these workshops. A weekend vision-quest workshop, for instance, can currently run anywhere between \$250 to \$550 (accommodations and meals not included). In 1988, Singing Pipe Woman of Springdale, Washington, advertised a two-week pilgrimage that included study with a Huichol woman and was priced at \$2,450. Native Americans have commented on the bitter irony of these plastic shamans profiting from the degrading, twisted versions of Native American rituals while many indigenous people still live below the poverty level.¹⁴ New Age interest in Native American cultures appears more concerned with exoticized images and romanticized rituals revolving around a distorted view of Native American spirituality than with the indigenous peoples themselves and the very real (and often ugly) socioeconomic and political problems they face as colonized peoples.

PURCHASING SPIRITUAL POWER THROUGH PRODUCTS

New Age interest in Native American spirituality has spawned numerous products over the years. Some products claim to assist the dabbler in Native American spiritual practices. For example, those who do not want to take the time

and trouble of building their own sweat lodges can call 1-800-36-SWEAT to order a “sweat tent.” Or the following kit can be ordered to obtain a more “total experience” of Native American spirituality:

YOUR PERSONAL NATIVE AMERICAN EXPERIENCE . . . *Sage and cedar smudge sticks come with holy herb tea. The Spirit of Native America book, and the Desert CD or tape*—all collected in a specially designed green box, made from recycled materials, honoring Mother Earth and providing you the opportunity to experience Native American ritual and wisdom.¹⁵

Note that the catalog description promises the consumer “the experience” of Native American ritual and wisdom through multisensory consumption. The purchaser can drink up the sacredness of Native American spirituality while creating the right ambiance with the scent of sage smudge sticks and the proper New Age music evoking the proper locale. Meanwhile, he or she can read the kit’s book *The Spirit of Native America*, which the catalog asserts is amplified by Anna’s authoritative text so that the “‘spirit voices’ of her people speak clearly to you.” The catalog promises that, through purchase and consumption of this product, the consumer can have a direct experience of Native American ritual and wisdom without ever leaving their armchair. Moreover, they are relieved of any guilt over their indulgent feast since the box is made from recycled materials and “honors Mother Earth.”

Entrepreneurs have found ways to blend American Indian spiritual themes with other New Age objects, such as “Native American Tarot Cards.” They have even tapped into new markets, such as “care crystals” for domestic pets. Medicine shields have been turned into earrings and the sacred figure of Kokopelli now serves as a wall clock. The advertisement asserts that “Southwest Native America’s playful ‘Spirit Guide to the Fourth World’ adds a touch of almost-eriee immortality to home or office!”¹⁶ Perhaps the eeriness stems from the unsettling irony of imperialist nostalgia. In “Interrupted Journeys: The Cultural Politics of Indian Reburial,” Pemina Yellowbird and Kathryn Milun refer to these types of objects and attitudes toward them as “imperialist nostalgia,” which they define as a romanticization that assumes a pose of innocent yearning thus concealing its complicity with often brutal domination.¹⁷

NATIVE AMERICAN RESISTANCE, NEW AGE DEFENSES

Many Native Americans are outraged at the commercialization of their spiritual traditions. At least two intertribal groups of Native American elders have issued proclamations warning the public that the teachings of these commercial profiteers may harm them.¹⁸ As stated in the Resolution of the Fifth Annual Meeting of the Traditional Elder Circle, “[M]edicine people are chosen by

the medicine and long instruction and discipline is necessary before ceremonies and healing can be done . . . profit is not the motivation.”¹⁹ Some Native Americans have taken a harder stand. Leaflets denouncing the commercialization of Native American religion have been distributed at lectures given by “plastics” and their workshops disrupted by confrontations instigated by Native American activists.²⁰ The Southwestern American Indian Movement (AIM) Leadership Conference held in Window Rock in the Navajo Nation condemned those who profited from American Indian spirituality. The document noted the “dramatic increase in the incidence of selling sacred ceremonies, such as the sweat lodge, and the vision quest, and of sacred articles, such as religious pipes, feathers and stones.” These acts were denounced as “constituting . . . insult and disrespect for the wisdom of the ancients.” They characterized the commercialization of Native American spiritual traditions as follows: “[T]he attempted theft of Indian ceremonies is a direct attack and theft from Indian people themselves.” In this denunciation, a number of “plastics” were listed by name. The document concludes: “[W]e condemn those who seek to profit from Indian spirituality. We put them on notice that our patience grows thin with them and they continue their disrespect at their own risk.”²¹ The National Congress of American Indians went a step further, issuing what they term “a declaration of war against ‘wannabees,’ hucksters, cultists, commercial profiteers, and self-styled New Age shamans.”²²

Although some New Agers interested in Native American spirituality may not be aware of Native American protests, a significant number have heard the objections. Why would New Agers continue to consume Native American spirituality when so many Indian people have expressed their reprehension of this commercialization?²³ I set out in my fieldwork to find out how New Agers rationalized their misappropriations and consumption of Native American spiritual traditions. A brief note on my research methods might prove elucidating here. I first encountered New Agers while working as an attorney on the Manybeads case for the Big Mountain Diné in 1986. This initial encounter raised a number of questions that could not be answered by the usual ethnographic methods delineating a specific cultural group in a particular locale. It became increasingly clear to me that the New Age was a national movement whose membership and participation was largely defined by consumption. Therefore, the usual ethnography conducted among a sociocultural group of people in a given area would not be enough to unpack the myriad manifestations of the New Age Movement. My ethnographic research then led me into places I had not anticipated, such as New Age bookstores across the country, weekend workshops led by New Age “gurus,” and even to cyberspace New Age chat rooms. My investigative methods extended well beyond the usual participant-observation and interview techniques. My “informants” were no longer lim-

ited to New Age individuals, but extended to New Age publications, such as self-help books, advertising catalogs, and products.

In my ethnographic fieldwork, as well as other resources, the most frequent defense New Agers made to Native Americans' objections against misappropriation of indigenous traditions was couched in First Amendment terms. New Agers consistently argued that their right to religious freedom gave them the "right" to Native American religion.²⁴ Andy Smith, Native American scholar, activist, and former president of Women of All Red Nations (WARN) refutes the New Age claims that they have a "right" to Native American religion through their "right to freedom of speech." In "For All Those Who Were Indian in a Former Life," Smith aims her attack specifically at New Age practices and misappropriation of Native American spirituality among white feminists arguing:

Many white feminists have claimed that Indians are not respecting "freedom of speech" by demanding that whites stop promoting and selling books that exploit Indian spirituality. However, promotion of this material is destroying freedom of speech for Native Americans by ensuring that our voices will never be heard. . . . Feminists must make a choice, will they respect Indian political and spiritual autonomy or will they promote materials that are fundamentally racist under the guise of "freedom of speech"?²⁵

Smith's argument is compelling. Given a history and continued social structure in which Native Americans' voices are often overpowered by dominant white discourse, is "freedom of religion" as egalitarian as New Agers suggest? Moreover, white New Agers' claim to freedom of religion must exasperate Native Americans in light of the history of suppression of Native American spiritual practices by the U.S. government. Even recent Supreme Court decisions interpreting the First Amendment and the American Indian Religious Freedoms Act have made it clear that protection of Native American religious freedoms and practices is a low priority in this country.²⁶

Some New Agers have based their claim of a right to Native American religion on the reasoning that spirituality and truth cannot be owned. "No one has the right to own the Truth," stated one of the New Agers I interviewed. Gary Snyder, who has won literary awards for poetry written from the self-proclaimed persona of a Native American shaman, makes a similar argument: "Spirituality is not something which can be 'owned' like a car or a house. Spiritual knowledge belongs to all humans equally."²⁷ Snyder's argument implies that something has to be a "property right" before someone's request that it be respected as private can be recognized. More ironically, it overlooks the fact that through Snyder's profiting from a claimed Native American shaman persona, work that is copyrighted, he is "owning" at least a piece of Native American

spirituality. The commercialization of Native American spirituality in both books and products also suggests that consumers “own” Native American spirituality in some sense. This point is made even clearer by the fact that some entrepreneurs have incorporated Native American ceremonies, copyrighted material on Native American spirituality, and sought trademark protection of Native American spiritual themes. The Southwest AIM Resolution observed that a group of non-Indians operating under the name Vision Quest, Inc. were “stealing the name and attempting to steal the concept of one of our most spiritual ceremonies.”²⁸

New Agers have other defenses against Native American objections to consumption of their spirituality. Some deny this commercialization altogether. Others mask it. For example, in an introduction to a book he coauthored, one plastic shaman claims, “We offer you this book to you now as our giveaway.”²⁹ A giveaway is a practice in tribes where material goods are given away to others; there is no exchange, only the gift. However, this “giveaway book” is a commercial publication for profit. Other New Agers defend their commercial exploitation by arguing that they are “good people” who “give to Native American charities and support their causes.” Consider, for example, the following excerpt from the owner of a New Age Native American bookstore:

Eight years ago, I started a “New Age” bookstore with very limited funds and an enormous amount of faith in God. A little over a year ago, adjacent to the store, I opened a Native American book and gift store. Both fit very well together, just as we people can work well together. . . . I have donated large amounts of food and money to Native Americans and hold continuous clothes drives through my New Age store. At Thanksgiving and Christmas, I have food and toy drives which are distributed to four different reservations. I subscribe to Native American newspapers and pray so your struggles will cease. I support Native Americans by buying and selling your crafts, so you are able to help yourselves.³⁰

This defense seems to rely on the old Puritanical standby that “good intentions” and “charitable acts” somehow absolve someone from the political implications of their actions for an oppressed group.

In addition, a significant number of people defend the commercialization of Native American religious practices with an argument that is characteristic of many New Agers’ views toward money. They argue that it is “good medicine” to make money or that “money is just spiritual energy anyway.” A good example of this kind of argument is found in the following excerpt from Sun Bear. Of Native American descent, Sun Bear, now deceased, wrote a number of plastic shaman texts and attracted a large following of white New Agers who have legally incorporated themselves into a “tribe” with stock offerings. Shawnodese,

referred to in the following passage, is a white New Age entrepreneur in the Sun Bear tribe.

Shawnodese, who is now my subchief, and director of the Apprentice Program, came here in 1979, with a background in about every new-age philosophy available. He had some progressive ideas that have helped us in many ways. For one thing, even though I had, at various times in my life, been an operator (such as selling real estate or men's clothes) in order to survive, I still had some reservations about being tainted by having a little extra cash. I felt that money was somehow bad. Shawnodese had the idea that money was just energy, and it was how you used it that counted. He took over the bookkeeping for a while and started writing affirmations on everything having to do with money.³¹

New Agers' own statements defending objections against commercialization of Native American spirituality shed light on the rationalizations in their own psyches. However, to understand more fully the consumerist nature of their obsession with Native American spirituality, an analysis of their actions in a larger social and economic framework is needed.

SEARCHING FOR SPIRITUAL SATISFACTION IN THE SHOPPING MALL

The New Age movement is part of the larger context of consumer culture. A number of social theorists have proposed that, increasingly, lifestyles, identity, cultural, and even spiritual meaning have become commodities for purchase. As Frederic Jameson argued in his influential essay "Postmodernism: or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism," images, styles, and representations are no longer mere promotional accessories to economically useful products; they have become the products themselves. Thus, in contemporary consumer culture, a romanticized representation of Native American spirituality can become a product to be purchased and consumed. Grant McCracken explains why consumers find these products capitalizing on an exoticized Other so appealing. McCracken argues that individuals in a consumer society use consumer goods to try to recover displaced cultural meaning. He defines displaced meaning as cultural meaning deliberately removed from the daily life of a community and displaced onto a distant cultural domain by romanticizing another culture.³² Mike Featherstone elaborates that, in modern consumer society, religion is placed squarely in the market place along with other meaning systems.³³ He alludes to the supermarket of lifestyles where individuals are able to select from packaged bodies of meaning systems such as religions. Featherstone concludes that there is a tendency in Western societies for religion to become

a private leisuretime pursuit purchased in the market like any other consumer-culture lifestyle. Indeed, New Agers “practice” their version of Native American religion through commercial purchase. Unfortunately, Native Americans’ spiritual traditions then become products to be playfully sampled through consumption, ignoring Native Americans themselves as three-dimensional people set within historical, socioeconomic, and political relations of oppression.

In “Neon Cages,” Lauren Langman argues that private consumption results in an increased withdrawal of the individual from public realms. As the public sphere becomes increasingly fragmented and less gratifying, individuals are more likely to withdraw into their own private realms to seek self-confirmation, gratification, and even express countercultural practices and desires.³⁴ According to Langman, this search for self-identity is especially problematic in a society in which the stable social networks of kinship and community have broken down. Thus, people flock to the shopping malls seeking an identity to relieve the horrors and loneliness of modernity. There, “proto-communities” of strangers seek clothes, cultural products, and gadgets that promise gratification and recognition through possession and display. This subjectivity produced by consumer culture, what Langman calls “the shopping mall self,” seeks gratification and arguably even “salvation” in consumption by trying to buy more gratifying markers of subjectivity. Yet Langman’s “shopping mall self” is trapped in a lonely maze of desire and expenditure.³⁵ Commercialized gratification only momentarily masks underlying terrors of emptiness and loneliness in consumer society.³⁶

Z. Bauman’s concept of “neo-tribes” may elucidate more specifically how individual quests for identity through purchase can result in consumerist movements such as the New Age.³⁷ This idea of a neo-tribe suggests an anonymous collection of individuals who identify with a subcultural group through conception of a certain style. These are not formally organized “tribes”; in fact, most of their self-identified members have never met one another. Yet the individual gains a sense of identity and belonging through identification with this subcultural consumer group. The concept of a neo-tribe has potential analytic value for analyzing the New Age as a consumerist movement. The New Age movement is a loose collection of individuals. Although small groups may informally meet regionally, the movement as a whole is arguably a consumerist movement on a national scale. A person often identifies with the New Age solely through purchase of commodities marketed under its rubric. Perhaps the most valuable part of the neo-tribe concept is its explanation of why individuals in mass consumer society seek identity through purchase, a theorization that can help explain New Agers’ preoccupation with Native American spirituality.

Bauman argues that individuals feel increasingly isolated and lonely as social relations in consumer culture continue to break down. People seek neo-tribes in a desperate search for community. Ultimately these neo-tribes do not provide the sense of community sought by New Agers because the purchase of identity through private acts of consumption does not establish the desired social relations. Yet, according to Bauman, these neo-tribes are essential in the formation of identities in consumer societies. Individuals construct their identities based on their individual choice (or, perhaps more accurately, purchase) of lifestyle.³⁸ Bauman's observations on the self-fashioning of identity have relevance for New Age appropriation of Native American spirituality.

New Agers are fashioning an identity for themselves based on a romanticized image of Native Americans and their spirituality. This self-fashioning of identity provides a type of social solidarity with others working from a similar image, no matter how temporary, tenuous, or even anonymous these social relations may be. Frequently, when I visited the Native American section of New Age stores, individuals struck up conversations with me on the basis of our presumed shared interests. I believe individuals engaged in such self-fashioning view themselves as part of an imagined community of like-minded people. Moreover, these imaginings are probably a source of pleasure and entail a feeling of social belonging. And yet, I agree with Langman and Bauman that these imagined communities can never really satisfy such individuals' yearnings for community belonging. These are not communities with shared histories, social ties involving interdependence, and daily interaction. Individuals in these imagined communities seem to grow quickly dissatisfied and imagine new ones.

Jay Rosen applies similar observations specifically to the New Age movement. He claims that the New Age marketers target the desires of people dissatisfied with their lives; he characterizes them as "struggling with the contradiction in contemporary life between the emptiness of daily existence and the desire for a meaningful life."³⁹ Rosen argues that there is also compatibility between the New Age idea of personal transformation through spiritual enlightenment and the "Buy this product and change your life" message underlying most advertising.⁴⁰ As Rosen phrases this similarity: "Whether the product is a book, a tape, a seminar, or a magic crystal, the typical New Age commodity is promoted in exactly the same way as a new car or a new pair of jeans: as an instant, total, and enchantingly easy solution to a deeply-felt personal problem."⁴¹ Rosen concludes that the dissatisfactions produced by consumer culture propel people toward New Age ideas. He alludes to the dislocations of modern capitalism, the scarcity of meaningful work, the strain on marriage and childbearing, and the emptiness at the heart of a culture that values movement and change. Rosen argues that in this uprootedness, identity can only be

gained in the marketplace. However, Rosen believes that the New Age movement offers no relief from this societal malaise. Calling the New Age movement “the unwitting partner of the culture it claims to reject,” he argues that it can only carry the uprooting a little further.⁴² These theorists have done much to shed light on the general subjectivity involved in consumer culture, but what is the New Age preoccupation with Native Americans?

THE NOBLE SAVAGE IN NEW AGE GARB

Although these theorists elucidate the exoticization of the Other in the abstract, why are certain New Agers obsessed specifically with Native Americans and their spirituality in particular? What is it about Native American spiritual beliefs and practices that hold such a fascination for a certain sector of the New Age? There has been a long history of obsession in this society with images of Native Americans. These images have served as Rorschach blots onto which prevailing sentiments, anxieties, and political moods have been projected. The images of Native Americans have changed with the times and in response to historical events and attitudes, but these images have always reflected more about non-Natives’ desires than Native Americans’ lives or cultures. Lakota scholar and activist Vine Deloria Jr. sheds insight into these projections in his article “Pretend Indians.”

Indians, the original possessors of the land, seem to haunt the collective unconscious of the white man and to the degree that one can identify the conflicting images of the Indian which stalk the white man’s waking perception of the world one can outline the deeper problems of identity and alienation that trouble him. A review of the various images and interpretations of the Indian, therefore, will give us a fairly accurate map of the fragmented personality that possesses the American white man. One can start at almost any point and list the collective attributes, attitudes, and beliefs about the Indian and then strip away the external image to reveal the psyche of the American white.⁴³

Throughout the decades, for every stereotype of “the savage Indian,” there has coexisted a Noble Savage image as well. The Noble Savage provides a fantasy for Euro-Americans wishing to escape dilemmas of their own culture. Imitation of Native Americans and other appropriations of their identity have often accompanied this romanticization. In “The Tribe Called Wannabee: Playing Indian in America and Europe,” Cherokee scholar Rayna Green does an excellent job of tracing this historical phenomenon of “playing Indian” from the Boston Tea Party to YWCA sponsored “Indian princess” programs.⁴⁴

Along with these mainstream pretend Indianisms, a number of subcultural groups have appropriated aspects of Native American peoples' identity, from bohemian artists in the thirties to hippies in the sixties.⁴⁵

Prior to the New Age movement, other countercultural groups seeking alternative spiritual experiences sought to appropriate Native American religion. In particular, representations of Indian images played a significant role in nineteenth-century spiritualism. The turn-of-the-century spiritualist movement involved the consultation of mediums who called upon spirit guides from the other world. Rayna Green documents the widespread use of Indian spiritual guides in this nineteenth-century spiritualist movement, especially as evidenced in the diaries, autobiographies, and interviews with practicing spiritualists. Although Green's observations raise interesting questions about possible historical roots of the New Age obsession with Native American spirituality, there is an important difference, as Green herself notes. The New Age movement's appropriation of Native American identities differs from the nineteenth-century spiritualist movement in its widespread mass commercialism of Native American spirituality. Admittedly, the spiritualist mediums charged their clients fees; some would argue that they created hoaxes to con money from gullible subjects. However, nineteenth-century spiritualism did not involve the widespread commercialism readily apparent in the New Age movement.⁴⁶ Green alludes to the increased commercialism of New Agers "playing Indian" in the following descriptive analysis:

Fed by hobbyism, general cultisms (e.g., the "human potential movement"), and by a continuing revitalization of interest in Indians as spiritual healers of European ills, the commercial exploitation by Indian gurus has taken on a new life. In these roles of playing Indian, some who are genetically and culturally Indian, but more who are quite marginal, and others who are neither, have developed a "market" for Indian religious experience.⁴⁷

Although "playing Indian" and the fetishization of the Noble Savage have existed since Europeans first came to this continent, what accounts for this increased commercial consumption of Native American spirituality since the 1980s? Recent consumer capitalism has increasingly appropriated ethnic cultural traditions in the marketing of images of an exoticized Other. Pierre Bourdieu argues that the increasing importance of symbolic goods in contemporary capitalism has increased the demand for "cultural specialists." These cultural specialists ransack various traditions and cultures in order to produce new interpretations and uses that can be consumed.⁴⁸ Certainly plastic shamans, as well as other New Age entrepreneurs, could be viewed as "ransackers" of Native American spiritual traditions in search of ways to market them to con-

sumers. They produce new interpretations by fusing bastardized versions of these traditions with self-help pop psychology, as well as exotic blends appropriated from other cultural traditions.

Baudrillard adds to the understanding of the marketing of non-Euro-American ethnicity. He argues that capitalist institutions are increasingly dependent on the marketing of images and are thus greedy for new and diverse images. Ethnicity thus becomes a source of profit for capitalists in consumer culture.⁴⁹ Baudrillard's analysis yields insight into why publishing companies and other corporations have increasingly tapped into images of Native Americans and their traditions. In addition Baudrillard, and Vizenor's reading of him in relation to Native Americans, can also elucidate the particular romanticized commercialism of Native Americans in the New Age movement.

In *Simulations*, Baudrillard argues that late industrial capitalism is dominated by the reproduction of images, which he calls "simulation." Gerald Vizenor, in his book *Manifest Manners*, extends Baudrillard's notion of "simulation" to representations and images of "the Indian" in dominant discourse, characterizing New Age plastic shamans as "simulations" of the Indian.⁵⁰ Baudrillard believes that the proliferation of reproductions intensifies the desire for the original. Vizenor labels this desire "nostalgia," arguing that the proliferation of plastic shamans grows out of a nostalgic longing for an "authentic" spirituality.⁵¹ I would characterize this phenomenon as follows. Real Native Americans are not a part of most Euro-Americans' lives. Yet non-Indians feel that their own lives are increasingly "unreal" and "inauthentic," so they imagine a pre-industrial, pre-European America where things were "real" and "authentic," not representations but originals. Thus they simulate the original "authentic Native American spirituality" and consume it. Meanwhile, their simulations allow them to ignore real indigenous peoples and the historical and socio-economic relations that tie them together.

Vizenor criticizes these simulated New Age shamans on two fronts. First, he suggests they pose a certain danger because they are stuck in the image of a romanticized Noble Savage that promises an unattainable salvation from boredom and melancholy.⁵² Vizenor appears to be even more bothered by the fact that these plastic shamans and their simulations undermine indigenous peoples' struggles for survival. He believes that the simulated shamans' obsession with the "real" and the "authentic" undermine those he calls "postindian warriors." Vizenor uses the term "postindian warriors" to refer to those who help indigenous peoples survive. He suggests that postindian warriors must embrace the complexities of postmodern culture to help indigenous peoples survive, rather than play into notions of "authenticity."⁵³ Vizenor believes that the dominant discourse has maintained its own racist notions of "authentic" represen-

tations of Native American cultures in its scholarly archives and elsewhere that have proved oppressive of indigenous peoples.⁵⁴ Thus simulated shamanism, preoccupied with the “authentic” Indian, takes its place in this racist dominant discourse of oppression.

Philip J. Deloria provides a different analysis of the New Age obsession with Native Americans. The notion of “playing Indian” is central to Deloria’s book of the same name, which traces this Euro-American practice to this nation’s earliest years. Deloria appears to believe that the notion of Indianness, including all of the contradictory images from brutal savage to Noble Savage, was central to Americans’ quests for identities. Deloria ponders whether the New Age movement set within postmodern culture represents a continuum of this historical “playing Indian” or suggests a unique historical movement.⁵⁵ Overall, Deloria appears to lean more heavily in favor of there being something unique in the New Age “playing Indian” that suggests a break with the continuum. In particular, Deloria notes a change in focus from collective concerns with social justice toward a strong focus on individual freedoms.⁵⁶ Deloria insightfully recognizes that this shift inward coupled with the idealization of Indian spirituality in the abstract has erased the complex history of Indians. As Deloria poignantly phrases it:

The tendency of New Age devotees to find in Indianness personal solutions to the question of living the good life meant that Indian Others were imagined in almost exclusively positive terms—communitarian, environmentally wise, spiritually insightful. This happy multiculturalism blunted the edge of earlier calls for social change by focusing on pleasant cultural exchanges that erased the complex history of Indians and others.⁵⁷

Philip Deloria recognizes that Indianness has been an open idea imbued with a number of meanings, often contradictory, that Americans seeking identities have reconfigured for their own ends for hundreds of years. He astutely points out, however, that “for many, postmodern Indianness had become so detached from anything real that it was in danger of lapsing into a bland irrelevance.”⁵⁸ Deloria is bothered by the fact that authenticity in the New Age is considered a matter of personal interpretation, with very few material or social forms.⁵⁹ Moreover, he believes that the disjointed signifiers used by the New Age weaken the potential power of playing Indian.⁶⁰ As Deloria observes, “it was the social *reality* of authentic, aboriginal Indians that gave Indian play significance and power.”⁶¹ I must note here that I have doubts about Vizenor’s notion of the power of “playing Indian” in general. Given the power imbalance between dominant society and indigenous peoples, any appropriation of Native American culture strikes me as rife with the potential of oppression. I would tend to agree more with Rayna Green’s critique of “playing Indian.” Neverthe-

less, Deloria's analysis lends insight into the New Age phenomenon of "playing Indian."

Whereas Vizenor characterizes the New Age as obsessed with "real" and "authentic" Indianness, Deloria is worried about its lack of concern with "authenticity." Vizenor believes "authenticity" to be an oppressive concept as applied to indigenous peoples; Deloria sees "authenticity" as positive and powerful for Native Americans, because it ties into a material world where real indigenous people must be acknowledged. Yet both scholars seem to agree that the New Age movement set within the larger postmodern cultural context represents a distinct rupture from prior Indian simulations as well as "playing Indian," one that is more dangerous to indigenous peoples in terms of cultural survival. I do not find the real danger in either the claim to authenticity that worries Vizenor or the lack of attention paid to it that worries Deloria. To me, the greatest danger in New Age misappropriation of Native American spirituality lies in its commercialization. Commercialization has a way of trivializing that is particularly unsettling with regard to the purchase of spiritual meaning. Once Native American spiritual traditions become part of the entrepreneurial machinery, they are put on a par with every other kind of product. There is something grossly insulting about advertising copy that lures the consumer into buying "Your Own Personal Native American Spiritual Experience" in the same fashion that it promotes the latest food dehydrator. Native American spirituality becomes another fad to be sampled (and ultimately discarded) among a smorgasbord of entertainment options for consumers in a culture that cultivates an insatiable appetite.

I believe that New Agers are fascinated with Native Americans in particular for the same reasons that Euro-Americans have been obsessed with their indigenous predecessors for hundreds of years. Milun and Yellowbird's notion of imperialist nostalgia aptly describes this yearning on the part of Euro-Americans for what their culture has oppressed. I believe this imperialist nostalgia is also fueled by a deeply embedded, unconscious sense of guilt. 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. Both the image of the brutal savage and the Noble Savage have fluctuated over the years, responding to changing politics and social moods in this nation. 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. Moreover, this "spiritually wise Noble Savage" intrudes on a new area of cultural genocide; this plastic shaman is selling off Native Americans' spiritual traditions.

The subjectivities of human experience produced under capitalism leads to feelings of alienation. Yet people increasingly think of themselves and others as akin to commodities. Purchasable lifestyles are mistaken for communities. So, driven by the quest for some kind of community and historical tradition, New Agers fetishize Native Americans and their religio-cultural practices. Yet the only way they know how to achieve the attributes that they project onto Native Americans is through commercialization and purchase. This cycle does not end their alienation. They are still so removed from any recognition of social relations (much less historical conflict) that they cannot understand why Native American peoples themselves would object to their appropriations. The individualism that has become characteristic of both capitalism and American political ideology cannot fathom political and social accountability. Yet the kind of community New Agers so desperately seek to relieve their feelings of isolation would, in my view, not be defined by superficial trappings, but by collective accountability.

Despite the New Agers' professions that they are working toward social and cultural change, their commercialization of Native American spirituality articulates well within late-twentieth-century consumer capitalism. There is strong historical and social evidence that the commercialization of ideas and values, as well as the fetishized image of a social body perceived to be ethnically Other, stems in part from thought and practices produced within the context of recent consumer capitalism. Although the New Age spiritualists identify themselves as countercultural, their uncritical ideas about commercialization and marketing practices appear to have been shaped by the larger capitalist market economy. Moreover, their imperialistically nostalgic fetishization of Native American spirituality hinders any recognition of their own historical and social complicity in the oppression of indigenous peoples.

NOTES

1. According to James R. Lewis in his 1992 study, there had been a recent shift in New Agers' focus from channeling and crystals to American Indian spirituality and shamanism, along with "inner child" work (James R. Lewis and J. Gordon Melton, eds., *Perspectives on the New Age* [Albany: State University of New York, 1992], 10).

2. According to Melody Baker's survey (*A New Consciousness: The True Spirit of New Age* [Duluth GA: New Thought, 1991], 196), a significant number of respondents listed "Native American teachings" as a New Age topic they would like to see more written about. Similarly, when asked to list what New Age products and services they

were interested in, a significant number of respondents indicated that they would like to see an increase in products and services related to “Native American teachings.”

3. These books include *Earthway: A Native American Visionary's Path to Total Mind, Body, and Spirit Health* (New York: Pocketbooks, 1999); *Phoenix Rising: No-Eyes' Vision of the Changes to Come* (Norfolk VA: Hampton Roads, 1993); and *Dreamwalker: Path of Sacred Power* (Norfolk VA: Hampton Roads, 1993) among others.

4. Shortly thereafter, Summer Rain encounters a group of restless spirits from the nineteenth century. These Indian women and children were on their way to meet the men of their tribe when they perished from small pox (spread by intentionally infected blankets given to them by the U.S. Cavalry). Summer Rain tells them to admit they are dead and say they want to get home. The men of their tribe then appear with outstretched arms and the tribe is reunited and returns to the spirit world (Mary Summer Rain, *Phantoms Afoot: Helping the Spirits Among Us* [Norfolk VA: Hampton Roads, 1993]).

5. Jamie Samms, *The Thirteen Original Clan Mothers: Your Sacred Path to Discovering the Gifts, Talents, and Abilities of the Feminine through the Ancient Teachings of the Sisterhood* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1993).

6. Iron Thunderhorse and Don Le Vie Jr., *Return of the Thunderbeings: A New Paradigm of Ancient Shamanism* (Santa Fe: Bear & Co., 1990).

7. Joseph Rael with Mary Elizabeth Marlow, *Being and Vibration* (Tulsa, OK: Council Oak Books, 1993).

8. Doug Boyd, *Mad Bear: Spirit, Healing, and the Sacred in the Life of a Native American Medicine Man* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1994) and *Rolling Thunder* (New York: Random House, 1974). Incidentally the Grateful Dead threw a benefit concert for Rolling Thunder.

9. Taisha Abelar, *The Sorcerer's Crossing* (New York: Penguin, 1993). Castaneda has written the preface to her book.

10. See the Bill Elwell Jr. videotape entitled “Native American Indian Sacred Purification Sweat Lodge Ceremony.”

11. Michael Harner workshop advertised in Omega: Institute for Holistic Studies catalog for summer 1994. Harner was formerly a professor of anthropology at the New School for Social Research in New York City.

12. Workshop entitled “Healing the Light Body: The Art of Incan Shamanism” led by Lynne Stewart-White advertised in a brochure for Morning Star: Institute for Holistic Studies in Atlanta, Georgia, and scheduled for summer 1994.

13. In an advertisement flyer, for example, “Camp Four Winds” bills itself as “A contemporary experience in Native American harmony, a family resort and summer camp for children and families. We share the light given by Ea Wah Tah (Hiawatha) 5,800 years ago.” An example of the incorporation of Native American rituals in wilderness training camps is found in the advertisement for “Earth-Heart” in Montana

run by Malcolm H. Ringwalt. Ringwalt leads wilderness-training programs, combined with vision quests, and also conducts psychotherapy as part of these “spiritual retreats.” Keepers of the Earth: Tours of the American Southwest—a tour company—lures consumers with the following advertisement: “Awaken connections with your past. Transform the future, join us to honor and explore the earth. Red Rocks, deep-winding canyons, Native American sacred sites, rituals, and ruins heighten your journey. Guided Meditations Optional.”

14. Andy Smith, “For All Those Who Were Indian in a Former Life,” *Ms. Magazine*, Nov.–Dec. 1991, 44(2).

15. Red Rose Collection Catalog, 1996.

16. *The Pyramid Collection: A Catalog of Personal Growth and Exploration* (Indian Summer, [sic] 1994).

17. Pemina Yellow Bird and Kathryn Milun, “Interrupted Journeys: The Cultural Politics of Indian Reburial,” in *Displacements: Cultural Identities in Question*, ed. Angelika Bammer (Durham NC: Duke University Press, 1994).

18. *Resolution of the Fifth Annual Meeting of the Traditional Elders Circle* (Northern Cheyenne Nation, Two Moons’ Camp, Rosebud Creek, Montana, 5 October 1980) [reprinted in Ward Churchill, *Fantasies of the Master Race* (Monroe ME: Common Courage Press, 1996), 223–225]. Traditional Circle of Indian Elders, Twelfth Annual Conference at Queen Charlotte Islands, British Columbia (quoted in Jon Magnuson, “Selling Native American Soul,” *The Christian Century*, 22 November 1989, 1086).

19. *Resolution of the Fifth Annual Meeting of the Traditional Elders Circle*, 223.

20. Native American activists distributed fliers at Hyemeyohsts Storm’s lecture at a San Francisco worship service that boldly proclaimed, “Our sacred spiritual practices are not for sale, and if you try to steal them from us, you are guilty of spiritual genocide” (Christopher Shaw, “A Theft of Spirit?” *New Age Journal*, July/August 1995, 84–92). Colorado’s AIM chapter undertook a confrontation with Sun Bear in the midst of a \$500-per-head, weekend-long “spiritual retreat” being conducted in Granby, Colorado.

21. Southwest AIM Leadership Conference, AIM Resolution, 11 May 1984, Window Rock AZ, Diné Reservation (reprinted in Churchill, *Fantasies of the Master Race*, 228).

22. National Congress of American Indians, 1993, reprinted in Shaw, “A Theft of Spirit?” 86.

23. In *Playing Indian*, Phillip J. Deloria notes that the Indian-published paper *Indian Country Today* ran a series of articles in 1992 denouncing many New Age “medicine people” as frauds and inviting these plastic shamans’ responses. Most failed to respond to the critiques or give them any validity. Deloria seems even more intrigued with the lack of effect of these articles on the New Age movement as a whole. He observes: “[T]he newspaper’s detailed investigative reporting had no appreciable effect on New Age audiences. Indian presence was noted. Complaints, however, were ignored and suggestions rejected” (Phillip J. Deloria, *Playing Indian* [New Haven CT: Yale University Press, 1998]).

24. It might be noted that the “freedom of religion” clause in the First Amendment protects individuals from government infringement of their right to hold their religious beliefs. It does not guarantee them a right of access to a particular group’s spiritual traditions. Given that Native American reservations are recognized as “domestic dependent nations” by the U.S. government (and some have never conceded U.S. sovereignty at all), this “right of access” is even more unfounded from a legal standpoint.

25. Smith, “For All Those Who Were Indian in a Former Life,” 44(2).

26. For example, in *Lyng v Northwest Cemetery Protective Association*, the Supreme Court held that the First Amendment rights of members of three Indian tribes to religious freedom were not violated by the construction of a state forest road in close proximity to important sacred sites (*Lyng v Northwest Indian Cemetery Protection Association*, 485 US 439 [1988]). In the majority opinion, Justice Sandra Day O’Connor noted: “The Constitution does not, and courts cannot, offer to reconcile the various competing demands on government, many of them rooted in sincere religious belief, that inevitably arise in so diverse a society as ours” (*Lyng v Northwest Indian Cemetery Protection Association*, 485 US 452 [1988]). The *Lyng* decision also concluded that the American Indian Religious Freedom Act of 1978 did not protect tribal sacred sites; they also determined that AIRFA was merely a statement of policy without any means of judicial enforcement.

27. Quoted in Churchill, *Fantasies of the Master Race*, 219.

28. Southwest AIM Leadership Conference, AIM Resolution, 11 May 1984, Window Rock AZ, Diné Reservation (reprinted in Churchill, *Fantasies of the Master Race*, 228).

29. Sun Bear, Wabun Wind, and Edward B. Weinstock, *The Path to Power* (New York: Prentice-Hall, 1987), 30.

30. Letter from a reader to editors of *Wildfire* (Sun Bear Tribe’s magazine) 6, no. 4 (Fall/Winter 1996).

31. Sun Bear, Wabun, and Weinstock, *The Path to Power*, 260.

32. Grant McCracken, *Culture and Consumption: New Approaches to the Symbolic Character of Consumer Goods and Activities* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988), 106–7.

33. Mike Featherstone, *Consumer Culture and Postmodernism* (London: Sage, 1991).

34. Lauren Langman, “Neon Cages: Shopping for Subjectivity” in *Lifestyle Shopping: The Subject of Consumption*, ed. Rob Shields (London: Routledge, 1992).

35. *Ibid.*, 68.

36. *Ibid.*, 68.

37. Z. Bauman, “Survival as a Social Construct,” *Theory, Culture, and Society* 9 (1992): 1–36.

38. *Ibid.*, 25.

39. Jay Rosen, “Optimism and Dread: T.V. and the New Age” in *Not Necessarily the New Age: Critical Essays*, ed. Robert Basil (Buffalo NY: Prometheus Books, 1988), 275.

40. Jay Rosen, “Consumer Culture and the New Age,” *Skeptical Inquirer* 13, no. 4 (1989): 401–4.

41. Rosen, "Optimism and Dread," 271.
42. *Ibid.*, 288.
43. In *God Is Red*, Vine Deloria Jr. backs up his proposition that Americans attempt to find authenticity and some kind of historical roots in American Indians by citing a bizarre fragment of a William Carlos Williams poem: "The land! Doesn't it make you want to go out and lift dead Indians tenderly from their graves, to steal from them—as if it must be clinging even to their corpses—some authenticity" (Vine Deloria Jr., *God Is Red* [New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1977], xi).
44. Rayna Green, "The Tribe Called Wannabee: Playing Indian in America and Europe," *Folklore* 99, no. 1 (1988): 30–55.
45. Green discusses the "Taos cult of the thirties, with Mabel Dodge Luhan, her 'guru' Indian husband Tony, her covey of displaced, hedonistic New Yorkers, and obeisance to the cult goddess, Georgia O'Keefe" ("The Tribe Called Wannabee," 43). Green argues that the Southwest became more than a canvas or scene for the camera lens with this thirties cult; it became a style. Green also points out that countercultural hippies in the sixties often donned headbands, beads, fringed jackets, and purses adorned with feathers. Philip Deloria gives an insightful analysis of counterculture's fascination with "playing Indian" in chap. 6, "Counterculture Indians and the New Age," in Philip Deloria, *Playing Indian* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 154–80.
46. Although I believe that New Age commercialization of Native American spirituality is on a much wider scale than the nineteenth-century spiritualist movement, I do not want to overlook the history of commercialization of the "Indian" image since the late 1800s. Daniel Francis traces the use of the Indian in advertising and products from the late nineteenth century through the twentieth century (Daniel Francis, "Marketing the Imaginary Indian," chap. 8 in *The Imaginary Indian* [Vancouver BC: Arsenal Pulp Press, 1992]).
47. Green, "The Tribe Called Wannabee," 45.
48. Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste*, trans. R. Nice (London: Routledge & Kegan, 1984).
49. Jean Baudrillard, *Simulations* (New York: Semiotext(e), 1983).
50. As Vizenor phrases it, "The simulation of the indian is the absence of real natives—the contrivance of the other in the course of dominance. Truly, natives are the stories of an imagic presence, and indians are the actual absence—the simulations of the tragic primitive (Gerald Vizenor, *Manifest Manners: Narratives on Postindian Survivance* [Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1999], vii).
51. As Vizenor analyzes the rise of plastic shamans: "'When the real is no longer what it used to be, nostalgia assumes its full meaning,' wrote Baudrillard in *Simulacra and Simulations*. There is a proliferation of myths of origin and signs of reality; of second hand truth, objectivity, and authenticity. Nostalgia, and the melancholia of dominance, are common sources of simulations in manifest manners; mother earth and the shamans of the other are summoned to surrender their peace and harmonies in spiritual movements" (Vizenor, *Manifest Manners*, 25).

52. This idea of New Age simulations of Indians is evident in Vizenor's analysis of the Rainbow Tribe. As he argues: "The simulations of his rainbow tribe [referring to Ed McGaa] are treacherous, in one sense, because nostalgia is the absence of the real, not the presence of imagination and the wild seasons of peace. The rainbow tribe is a diversion, it would seem, a simulation marooned in the romance of the noble savage and the unattainable salvation of absolute boredom and melancholy" (Vizenor, *Manifest Manners*, 25).

53. As Vizenor phrases it: "The postindian warriors and posers are not the new shaman healers of the unreal. Simulations and the absence of the real are curative by chance . . . postindian warriors are wounded by the real" (Vizenor, *Manifest Manners*, 23).

54. This idea of Euro-American definitions of "authentic" representations of Native American cultures is suggested by Vizenor's definition of "manifest manners," the term he chooses as the title of his book. Vizenor defines manifest manners as "the course of dominance, the racialist notions and misnomers sustained in archives and lexicons as 'authentic' representations of indian cultures" (Vizenor, *Manifest Manners*, x).

55. As Deloria phrases his quandary: "What concerns me even more, however, are the ways in which a contradictory notion of Indianness, so central to American quests for identities, changed shape yet again in the context of these postmodern crises of meaning. On the one hand, the refigurings of Indianness produced by the counterculture and the New Age reflect a historical moment unique from those we have already examined. On the other hand, the diverse practices we often subsume under the word *postmodern* may simply echo the familiar toying with meaning and identity we have seen in a long tradition of Indian play. Or maybe both notions are true" (Deloria, *Playing Indian*, 157).

56. As Deloria elucidates: "And yet, placed in the context of a postmodernism that emphasized relativism and openness, it was easy to read cosmopolitan multiculturalism as a license for *anyone* to choose an ethnic identity—Indian, for example—regardless of family, history, or tribal recognition. When non-Indian New Age followers appropriated and altered a cosmopolitan understanding of Indianness, they laid bare a slow rebalancing away from the collective concerns with social justice that had emerged in the 1960s and toward the renewed focus on individual freedom that has characterized America since the 1980s" (Philip Deloria, *Playing Indian*, 173). Later, Deloria astutely observes: "Indeed, the New Age's greatest intellectual temptation lies in the wistful fallacy that one can engage in social struggle by working on oneself" (Deloria, *Playing Indian*, 177).

57. Deloria, *Playing Indian*, 174.

58. *Ibid.*, 175.

59. As Deloria notes, "In the New Age, authenticity had few material or social forms. Rather it resided—like all good, unknowable essentials—in a person's interpretive heart and soul" (Deloria, *Playing Indian*, 176). In particular, (and fitting with the title of this section ("The Noble Savage in New Age Garb")), Deloria seems particularly

bothered by the clothes chosen by New Agers in playing Indian. As he notes, “It was perhaps indicative of the nature of the movement (New Age) that its followers tended to play Indian in ways that were very low-grade. A bandana, an assumed name, a personal fetish—any one would suffice. . . . The concrete nature of clothing has always insured that, even in the midst of creative play, a thread of social connection bound real Indians to those who mimed them” (Deloria, *Playing Indian*, 175).

60. As Deloria phrases it, “When the New Age turned to disjointed signifiers—a headband rife with associations, a stylized pipe influenced (one would almost swear) by J. R. R. Tolkien, a set of tropes from one’s personal library—adherents allowed some of the true creative power of Indianness to slip away” (Deloria, *Playing Indian*, 176).

61. Deloria, *Playing Indian*, 176. Deloria believes that Native American activists who oppose New Agers “playing Indian” wield power. These activists combat the New Age (and postmodern) discourse that tries to subsume everything in a language of open cultural meanings by offering a pluralist discourse that highlights power, struggle, and inequality. As Deloria poignantly states:

[I]t was . . . important that they (the oppositional warriors) speak—and speak critically, for in doing so, they offered one of the only indicators of authentic difference functioning in the world of texts, interpretations, and unchained meanings. Whereas Sun Bear and Medicine Woman Lynn Andrews inhabited a cultural world easily shared by Indians and non-Indians, oppositional native people focused on social and political worlds, where the differences between the reservation, the urban ghetto, and the Beverly Hills Hotel . . . stood in stark relief. When they tried to force non-Indians to translate from the cosmopolitan language of open cultural meanings to the pluralist languages of power, struggle, and inequality, they rethreaded the material connections that made Indianness so real (Deloria, *Playing Indian*, 177).