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Nature and Self in New Age Pilgrimage

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ABSTRACT *Several scholars have argued that New Age spirituality is best understood as a form of 'self-spirituality' and as an expression of the consumer capitalist tendency to commodify all things, in the process converting religion into a 'spiritual marketplace'. This article examines the phenomenon of New Age pilgrimage, especially pilgrimage to natural 'power places', with a focus on New Age practices at Sedona, Arizona, USA. The author assesses New Age notions of sacred space, nature, and the self, and compares pilgrim practices and sensorial interactions with Sedona's red rock landscape to forms of tourist practice and commodification more prevalent in Sedona. He argues that New Age pilgrimage, in theory and sometimes in practice, rejects the consumerist impulse, and that the New Age 'self' is both more open-ended and 'postmodern', and less central to New Age practice, than is suggested by the characterisation of New Age as 'self-spirituality'.*

KEYWORDS: New Age, pilgrimage, sacred space, visuality, nature, Sedona

Introduction

New Age spirituality has commonly been seen as a form of 'self-spirituality', an expression of the trend within advanced capitalism to commodify everything and convert it into a marketplace of choices for individual consumers (Lasch 1980; Heelas 1992, 1996; Mills 1994; Johnson 1995; Bruce 1996; van Hove 1999; Urban 2000; Lasch 1980 *et al.*). According to this view, even the apparent New Age desire to sanctify nature or the Earth as 'Gaia' and to recognise particular historical or ancient cultures as representatives of a more 'harmonious' relationship with the Earth, when accompanied by the commodificatory impulse underlying New Age spirituality, results in the strengthening of economic rationality and the deterioration or destruction of the very places and peoples New Agers claim to hold sacred.

To probe the veracity and limitations of such an assessment would require analysing New Age conceptions of the self, of society, and of nature or the cosmos. Perhaps more importantly, it would require examining New Age *practices*, as theory rarely translates directly into lived action. This article aims to contribute to such an analysis, but its objectives must of necessity be more

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limited. In what follows, I will examine the phenomenon of New Age pilgrimage, particularly pilgrimage and travel to so-called 'power places', in terms of the ideas and the sensory modalities that inform this phenomenon, and in terms of whether it facilitates or hinders the process by which nature and landscape are commodified in consumer capitalism. Looking at New Agers' ideas of nature and sacred space, and at their actual interactive engagements with landscapes that are believed to harbour sacred 'power' will allow us to gain a fuller picture of this dimension of New Age spirituality.

My argument is grounded in case studies that I have carried out since the mid-1990s at two hubs of New Age spirituality: Sedona, Arizona and Glastonbury, UK. At both of these places, New Age adherents mix and mingle with Neo-Pagans, extraterrestrial 'contactees', theosophists, occultists, liberal Christians and others, resulting in a hybridisation and cross-breeding of alternative spiritualities. Due to the focus on a shared landscape that, to a greater or lesser extent, is valued for its natural features, what emerges from this mix might be loosely termed 'New Age nature religion'. It is true that not all participants accept the label 'New Age'—some practice a form of nature religion that makes little reference to the millenarian hopes and expectations associated with New Age thought. At the same time, not all New Age adherents share the beliefs that make up what scholars have termed 'nature religion' (see Albanese 1990; Beyer 1998; Taylor 1999; York 2000). Nevertheless, due to the central role of New Age discourse within the alternative spiritual milieux represented at these two sites, both can be taken as indicative of a certain dimension of New Age spirituality or, more generally, New Age culture, which is concerned with 'nature' in some sense of the word (to be examined herein).[1]

New Age ideas of nature have been examined by several scholars (for example, Ross 1991; Hanegraaff 1998; Sutcliffe 1998), but New Age practices, especially as these impinge on issues of commodification and environmental practice, remain under-examined and under-theorised. Drawing on ethnographic data from these two communities and on theoretical approaches to visuality, commodification, and the phenomenology of landscape perception, I will argue that photography and the production of such 'power places' as visual commodities has contributed to their 'spiritual magnetism' for followers of New Age nature religion. For example, the photographs of Courtney Milne, discussed later, present an image of an Earth marked, or perhaps inhabited, by vitalistic energies that are concentrated at specific sites. The actual sacralisation of such 'power places', however, involves a much richer multi-sensorial engagement in the 'enactment' of sacred space. Closer examination of New Age practices and texts reveals an overwhelming priority given to listening or 'attunement' over the visual mode of engagement, a priority that suggests a model of the 'self' very different from the modern Cartesian subject. This is accompanied by a specific series of New Age tropes or images representing the natural world, of which the most prominent are ideas of Gaia, personified 'spirits of place', 'earth energies', and sacred geometry. In what follows, I will provide a brief historical overview of the development of New Age pilgrimage and travel to natural as well as cultural sites, examine the role of the senses in the New Age encounter

with, and enactment of, sacred space, and assess New Age ideas of nature and of self as seen in pilgrimage phenomena. Based upon this examination, it will be my contention that characterising New Age activities as 'self-spirituality' is inadequate: as New Age pilgrimage shows, both the 'self' and the 'spiritual' or 'sacred' are more fluid and more complex than that term suggests.

Pilgrimage and sacred geography in New Age culture

As a phenomenon that began largely within Western urban centres, the 1960s counterculture was conspicuous in its tendency to move *away* from those centres, whether in a relocation 'back to the land' or as a more ephemeral drift to places of exotic allure or vague spiritual import. Regarding the first movement, many rural communards eventually returned to the cities, but a significant minority stayed on and dug their heels into the land. For some, the rural communes and intentional communities that emerged and grew in the 1970s were seen as places in which the practical implications of the 'new consciousness' could be worked out; and, over the years, surviving communities organised themselves into networks, such as the Federation of Egalitarian Communities, the Fellowship of Intentional Communities, the Alternatives Communities Network in Britain, and the International Communes Network. By the mid-1970s, the more explicitly spiritual or New Age communities, such as Scotland's Findhorn Community and India's Auroville, had begun expressing the vision of a neo-monastic communitarianism, consisting of 'centres of light' linked in a network that would provide the infrastructure for a 'new planetary culture' (Thompson 1974, Spangler 1977). Countercultural historian Theodore Roszak compared the present period with the waning decades of the Roman Empire, and saw this new communitarian 'monasticism' as a tested historical model for the 'creative disintegration of industrial society', a model that 'illuminates the way in which the top-heavy and toxic institutions of an exhausted empire were sifted down into civilized, durable communities where a vital, new sense of human identity and destiny could take root' (Roszak 1978:289). To this day, Findhorn, Auroville, Tennessee's The Farm, and numerous other intentional communities interact with the broader culture in a dialectic that helps to sustain New Age and alternative spirituality (see, for example, Popenoe & Popenoe 1984, McLaughlin & Davidson 1986, Fellowship for Intentional Community 1995).

At the same time, the countercultural movement to rural and non-metropolitan areas closer to home (for instance, to places in the US Southwest, northern California and the Pacific Northwest states, and to the Gulf Islands on the west coast of Canada, or, in Britain, to southwest England and Wales) began turning into a broader pattern of 'counter stream migration' consisting of primarily middle-class urban expatriates looking for quieter, safer, and more 'natural' havens for relocation. Fuelled by environmentalist discourse and imagery, effective real-estate marketing strategies, and the geographic imperatives of the global tourist economy, the culturally produced nostalgia for rural or natural places has dovetailed with the New Age search for natural 'power', resulting in

the growth of such New Age hubs as Santa Fe and Taos, New Mexico; Sedona, Arizona; and Glastonbury, UK. Among its results are the environmental and social stresses accompanying such growth.

The second line of geographic mobility within the New Age and countercultural milieu, since the late 1960s, has been that centred on places identified as generically more 'spiritual' or 'sacred' than the urban-industrial West. Romanticisation of the non-West, particularly India, Bali, and Central and South America, grew with the rising popularity of books by authors such as Hermann Hesse, Alan Watts, Carlos Castaneda, and others. Travel to sacred places around the world became a staple of the Western hippie seeker's itinerary in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Already in the late 1960s one can find the idea that a network of 'power places' is spread out across the planet (for example, Michell 1969), and by the mid-1970s a variety of guidebooks had appeared for the growing number of New Age pilgrims (for example, *Spiritual Community Guides* 1972–1979, *Pilgrim's Guide to Planet Earth* 1974).

The 'power place' idea fermented for two decades within the hippie and New Age counterculture and was launched into popular consciousness with the 'Harmonic Convergence' of August 1987. Projected to be the largest simultaneously coordinated act of prayer, meditation and ceremony ever to take place at sacred sites throughout the world, the Harmonic Convergence was an overt manifestation of the New Age movement's incipient millenarianism. According to its primary instigator, art historian José Argüelles, the dates 16–17 August 1987 were supposed to mark the synchronous occurrence of several significant events, including the beginning of the final 26-year period of the Mayan calendar's 5200-year 'Great Cycle', the 'dancing awake' of 144,000 Sun Dance enlightened teachers, a 'grand trine' in the astrological fire signs and the first time since the early 1940s that the seven planets have been so closely aligned, and a galactic 'calibration point' allowing for the anchoring of divine energy into the power points of the planet for their subsequent transmission through the 'planetary grid system' (cited in Dame-Glerum 1987:A3, Buenfil 1991: 177–8). Argüelles called for 144,000 people to meditate, pray, chant and visualise at sacred sites and power spots throughout the world in order to launch the 25-year transition into a New Age of peace and harmony. Convergers, including celebrities like Shirley MacLaine, John Denver, and Timothy Leary, gathered at places as varied as Sedona, California's Mount Shasta, Chaco Canyon in New Mexico, the Black Hills of South Dakota, New York's Central Park, Glastonbury and Stonehenge, Machu Picchu in Peru, the Great Pyramid in Egypt, and Mount Olympus in Greece to celebrate the event and to 'create a complete field of trust by surrendering themselves to the planet and to the higher galactic intelligences which guide and monitor the planet'. As the list of Convergence sites suggests, New Age spirituality envisions what could be considered an 'Eliadean' geography of non-homogeneous space, marked by special places (hierophanies, kratophanies; see Eliade 1959: 20ff) that stand out as especially important, meaningful or powerful. These sites can be distinguished as 'natural' and 'cultural', and I will now look at each of these categories in turn.

Natural power places: the New Age desire for nature

Natural sites of 'power' include mountains, unusual rock formations, spectacular lakes and canyons, falls and hot springs, and others that are characterised by some outstanding quality. They are places where the power, vitality, or sheer otherness of non-human nature seems obviously present, places where the Earth seems to *speak*, relatively unobscured by the din of modern civilisation. Such places are believed by many to harbour 'earth energies' of some sort—energies that are thought to be beneficial and health-promoting in their effects and catalytic to spiritual growth. In the growing body of popular literature on such power spots, these landscapes are seen as places of personal transformation, and pilgrimages to them are considered a tool of such transformation.

Photographer Courtney Milne's lavish photographed book *The Sacred Earth* (Milne 1991a) exemplifies the 'earth cathedrals' genre of visual representation. Milne's 5-year odyssey to sacred sites on seven continents was instigated, according to the author, by a 'mysterious-looking document' called *Revelations from the Melchisadek Priesthood*. This book by New Age author Robert Coon describes 'The Twelve Sacred Places of the Earth': Glastonbury, Ayers Rock (Uluru) in central Australia, Haleakala Crater in Hawai'i, Bolivia's Islands of the Sun and Moon, Palenque in Mexico, the Great Pyramid of Gizeh and Jerusalem's Mount of Olives (a 'combination power spot'), and the mountains Tongariro (New Zealand), Shasta (California), Kailas (Tibet), Fuji (Japan), Table Mountain (South Africa), and the Four Sacred Mountains of Bali. This list echoes and overlaps with others that are readily available in numerous books and on websites devoted to sacred places, power spots, Goddess sites, and the like (for example, Swan 1990, 1992, Bryant *et al.* 1991, Rufus & Lawson 1991, Devereux 1992, Joseph 1992, McLuhan 1996, Leviton 2002, Gray nd). For New Age earth pilgrims who consider the earth itself a potent and divine being, such places are Gaia's theophanies, and pilgrimage offers access to the power and spiritual secrets they hold.

Milne describes his thinking during his odyssey:

> Was I at this sacred spot as a pilgrim to meditate or as a photographer to get the job done? As the project progressed, however, I realised that I had been training myself for years to meditate, not by sitting in the lotus position with my legs crossed but by looking through the viewfinder at the exquisite shapes and forms and letting the 20th century evaporate from my consciousness. (1991b:42)

Curiously, this passage suggests that his dependence on twentieth-century photographic equipment has also 'evaporated' from his consciousness, allowing him access to an authentic 'nature' undefiled by modernity. Yet photography has been one of the primary ways in which such places of power have become established as magnets for the very modern activities of tourism and pilgrimage. In a rapidly expanding global economy, tourism constitutes one of the main engines of economic growth for such non-urban centres as those that dominate Milne's and others' lists.[2] Within the amorphous networks of New Age

spirituality, 'power places' become known in part through word of mouth, with seekers and travellers exchanging travel tales among themselves, but in part also through tourist marketing and the reproduction of images. The role of photography and visual imagery in the development of a New Age sacred geography can hardly be denied; in fact, it is doubtful whether 'New Age nature religion', with its emphasis on Gaia and her 'power spots', could have emerged were it not for the by-now ubiquitous image of the whole earth as seen from space. To the extent that New Age sacrality both relies on and contributes to the commodification of a landscape, it would seem to be complicit with the economic processes of consumer capitalism. However, as I will show later, New Age pilgrimage practices deviate substantially from tourist encounters with landscape; in them, visuality is demoted, and to a large extent supplanted, by practices aimed at 'attuning' oneself to voices, channels, and invisible energies harboured by the landscape. But before examining the case of Sedona (as a site where photography and visual representation have played the single most important role in creating a tourist destination, and where New Age activities are especially prominent), I will briefly discuss cultural 'power places'.

Cultural power places and New Age Orientalism

If many New Age power places are obviously valued for their *natural* features, others, such as Stonehenge, Machu Picchu, and the Great Pyramid of Gizeh, are clearly valued for their cultural monuments and built structures. The connection between the two kinds of sacred sites, for many New Age devotees, is that the latter are believed to have been constructed in coordination with the natural energies represented by the former. In other words, ancient cultures, such as the megalithic monument builders of the British Isles, the temple builders of Mesoamerica and the Near East, prehistoric 'Goddess cultures', or the legendary civilisations of Atlantis and Lemuria, are thought to have constructed their own monuments on powerful 'energy points'. According to different accounts, ancient peoples either intuitively perceived the 'Earth energies' or they practised a proto-scientific or quasi-scientific geomancy based on earth energy alignments that follow geometrical patterns or form planetary 'energy grids'.

Anthropologist Victor Turner (1969, 1974) provides a useful perspective on pilgrimage to such sites. Turner contended that pilgrimage, festival, and ritual serve 'anti-structural' and 'liminal' functions within societies and were motivated by a desire for 'communitas', the temporary shedding of social roles, and the experience of unmediated and liberatory relations between people. By activating such feelings, pilgrimage creates a sacred geography for the religious practitioner. According to Turner (1974: 184), the geographic distribution of pilgrimage sites is frequently polarised in relation to a society's political topography, with shrines being located in politically and economically peripheral areas. Liminality, however, is central within religious conversion, which normally involves displacement and transition, a radical disorientation from the devotee's previous sense of order and meaning, and a re-orientation around new

values and meanings. Conversion replaces the pilgrim's old geographic bearings with a new sacred geography. In New Age pilgrimage, formerly peripheral places become linked together, in discourse and in practice, providing pilgrims with a geographic anchor for the forging of their identities as part of an alternative culture: a culture that is perceived to constitute a critical alternative to urban-industrial modernity, and which therefore grounds itself in places that appear to represent a power that is older and more deeply rooted than modernity.

Travel to peripheral places is, of course, hardly a radical act. Reincorporated into the cultural logic of capitalist and neo-colonialist social relations, travel becomes global tourism, a consumption of countries and places by privileged and mobile members of the (largely Western) developed world. The construction of a global tourist imaginary contributes to a geopolitical discourse that, in Said's (1979) terms, 'orientalises' other parts of the world, turning them into the modern West's Other, to be desired at the same time as they are dominated and denigrated. In the New Age variant of 'romantic Orientalism' (Lopez 1995:261), places like India and Bali are imagined to be more 'authentic', representative of timeless tradition, sacredness, and spiritual wisdom; they offer restoration and salvation to the progressive, rational, but dispirited West. But in the romantic veneration of non-Western Others, 'they' are always expected to conform to the images 'we' have created for them, whether that be as noble savages, bearers of traditional wisdom, mysterious sensualists, or the like (see Mehta 1991, Bartholomeusz 1998, King 1999).

New Age travellers[3] can be subdivided into 'mere tourists' and 'genuine pilgrims'. While tourists always intend to return home within a relatively short period of time, pilgrims perceive themselves to be on spiritual quests. They often 'drift' or 'seek' for a while until they return home or relocate to a spiritually more meaningful new home or 'elective centre' (Cohen 1992). This movement of pilgrims, over time, gives rise to an international New Age infrastructure, a network of healing centres, retreats, spiritual communities, and places of New Age commerce. Just as travel books and tours produce what John Urry (1990) has called a 'tourist gaze', so New Age pilgrimage guidebooks and 'sacred site tours' have produced a certain New Age encounter with the landscape (which is, however, much more than a mere 'gaze'). In the following section I will examine the touristic production of Sedona's red rock landscape and then contrast it with the New Age encounter with that landscape.

Visual representation and tourism in Sedona

Several cultural historians and philosophers have argued that visual perception has been hegemonic among the senses in Western modernity. As Heidegger (1977) argued, our ocular-centric age turned the world into a 'picture' and thereby made possible the conquest and transformation of nature into a 'standing reserve' to be surveyed, unlocked, and transformed into usable energy and profit. The dominant modes of Western modernist visuality, according to cultural historians, have been rooted in a 'Cartesian perspectivalism', the

tradition according to which a coherent, distinct subject gazes out at an empirical, discrete object, with no inherent connection between the two and neither changing in the process of seeing or being seen (for example, Rorty 1979, Bordo 1987, Jay 1994). In the Cartesian relation, the seeing subject is active, viewing the objects of the world on his/her own mental representational screen, while the object seen is passive, simply there to be viewed. According to Jay (1992: 181), the ascendancy of classical linear perspective in the Renaissance meant that the 'participatory involvement of more absorptive visual modes was diminished, if not entirely suppressed', and the gaze fell on objects of desire 'largely in the service of a reifying male look that turned its targets into stone'.

During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, European and Euro-American artists and critics elaborated several distinct visual modalities atop this generally Cartesian substrate of perspectival landscape art. In representing the landscapes of the American West, in particular, American artists made extensive use of the 'magisterial gaze', a mastering and panoramic view from on high, which constructs nature as scenic vista and spectacle, to be gazed at and admired for its sweeping visual beauty and to thereby be possessed by its viewer (Boime 1991). As some have argued (for example, Dorst 1999), this gaze served as a prelude to the colonial appropriation of land and the extraction of resources. In today's global economy, non-urban areas have frequently been already divested of their resources, or, alternatively (as in the Western United States and Britain), resource values have plummeted as new resource frontiers have been opened up in parts of the world where labour is cheaper and laws more flexible. Tourism has consequently become a popular solution for such places as Sedona, Santa Fe, Aspen, and other hubs of the American 'New West' (Riebsame & Robb 1997, Rothman 1998, Campbell 2000), while an analogous 'manufacture of heritage' has been occurring in Britain and parts of Europe.

Sedona's landscape presents itself as highly photogenic (see Figure 1). Its 'imageability' has been evident to visitors at least since 1895, when archaeologist Jesse Walter Fewkes described its rock formations as 'weathered into fantastic shapes suggestive of cathedrals, Greek Temples, and sharp steeples of churches extending like giant needles into the sky', adding that 'this place, I have no doubt, will sooner or later become popular with the sightseer' (cited in Rigby 1979). By the 1920s and 1930s, Hollywood had begun to make use of that landscape in its mythic portrayals of the American West; to date, over 60 feature films (including *Broken Arrow*, *Johnny Guitar*, and *Billy the Kid*) have been shot here. The town is nestled in the 'red rock country' formed by erosion of the Mogollon Rim, the 1,000-foot high escarpment that makes up the southern rim of the Colorado Plateau. Reddish brown and vermilion, copper, orange and magenta sandstones and shales have been sculpted by wind and water into spectacular mesas, buttes, spires, columns, domes, and arches. With such dramatic visual possibilities, the engine of the town has become the demand to produce, stage-manage, and market visual pleasure, and the town has been successfully sold as an upmarket destination resort, a picture-postcard haven for ex-urban second-homers, retirees, and tourists.

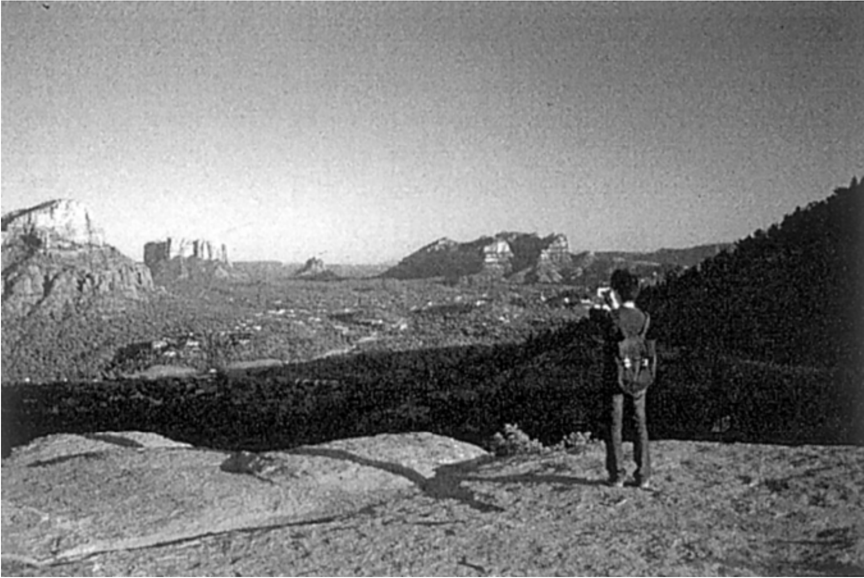

Figure 1. Capturing the view in red rock country, Sedona.

One of the most effective marketing tools for the selling of Sedona has been the slick and glossy full-colour publication *Sedona Magazine*. Filled with full-page picture-postcard photographs of red rock scenery, resorts and subdevelopments, golf courses, and advertisements for art galleries (with their characteristic Native American and Southwest *kitsch*), the magazine, sold across the USA, attempts to elicit a kind of open-jawed excitement in its target audience. The back cover of a typical issue can be taken as an example of its visual strategy. It features the caption 'AH … isn't this why you came to Sedona?' above three rectangular-framed, wide-angle images of high-contrast reddish rock formations majestically looming above a forest-green landscape and set against the blue and grey of the sky. Each of them presumes a viewing subject positioned magisterially well above ground level at a panoramic distance from the monuments portrayed—three windows onto a scenic landscape viewed from an invisible panoptic location hovering in mid-air somewhere above Sedona. The ad is for Casa Contenta, 'Sedona's premier residential community,' yet there is no residence in sight nor any sign of human habitation at all. Clearly, this is one reason why people come to Sedona: to see views that can only be captured by camera (the redness of the landscape is often accentuated through the use of colour filters) because they carefully omit the signs of human activity that have made them possible. The ad, like numerous others, offers a promise that effaces its own materiality, a God's eye view from everywhere and nowhere, and the prospect of living in a place uncontaminated by living itself.

The dominant optical regime in Sedona, then, has followed in the tradition of the magisterial and panoramic gaze at nature. Among visitors this gaze becomes effected through the taking of photographs, while among those who stay it mediates the buying and selling of land. Indeed, this imageability has become part of the defence of the red rock landscape against further development. A proposal to build a bridge over Oak Creek at a place called Red Rock Crossing—considered necessary by many to deal with heavy motor traffic passing through the town centre—has been vigorously contested by environmentalists who argue that such a bridge would destroy the beauty of the 'most photographed spot in Arizona'. Red Rock Crossing runs directly below a rock formation known as Cathedral Rock, a highly distinct 'signature monument' that typically graces photographs, postcards, and tourist brochures for Sedona. This photogenicity argument cuts to the heart of the paradox of the American West: it is a kind of reversal of the landscape's role in the creation of that mythic 'West', with its image now become part of its own defence against further development.

New Age Sedona: beyond the visible

Sedona's 'New Age' or 'metaphysical' community, one of the most concentrated of such communities in North America, has been growing steadily since the late 1950s, but this growth accelerated dramatically after psychics Dick Sutphen and Page Bryant publicly identified the area's 'power spots' or 'vortexes' in the late 1970s, and especially following the Harmonic Convergence of 1987. The community includes a variety of psychics and spiritual counsellors, therapists and alternative health practitioners, and others who have exchanged better-paying jobs elsewhere for the local retail or service industries. Local New Age authors and tour guides tout the vortexes, describe the extraordinary experiences they and others have had at them, and draw up maps of the 'interdimensional landscape'.

The role of visual imagery in New Age pilgrimage has rarely been studied. Perhaps the best known example of a case where an image of a natural landscape formation has been instrumental in attracting spiritual seekers to that landscape is to be found in the Hollywood blockbuster *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* (director Steven Spielberg, 1977). The film portrays a number of seemingly ordinary citizens dreaming or otherwise 'receiving' visions of the monument that, on an inner compulsion, they then seek out. The monument turns out to be Devils Tower (Bear Butte) in Wyoming, to which the seekers congregate in time for the descent of the benevolent and godlike extraterrestrial mothership. Mirroring the film, the visual spectacle of Sedona's landscape has had a similar effect on many of the New Agers whom I interviewed there. Many reported arriving in the area because they felt a strange connection to the landscape: like the characters in Spielberg's movie, they followed some inner compulsion, a feeling of being 'irresistibly drawn' to Sedona, or obsessed over it after they first heard about it or saw photographs of the area (regarding the

same trope in Glastonbury, see Dongo 1988, Bowman 1993, Ivakhiv 2001:187ff).

Once 'drawn', however, New Age devotees celebrate the landscape less for its scenery than for the experiences to be had in it. In the debate over Red Rock Crossing, New Agers raised a very different kind of argument to the conservationists' 'most photographed place' argument. For New Agers, Cathedral Rock and Red Rock Crossing are among the most potent of Sedona's 'vortex' areas. A local New Age author, Richard Dannelley, has written that:

> we must do everything we can to make sure that this bridge is never built [...] Cathedral Rock is sacred and a highway through this area cannot be allowed. Cathedral Rock is an ascension point. (Dannelley 1993:62; original italics)

('Ascension' refers to a meditative practice by which the body moves towards a spiritualised 'light-body' state.) Dannelley argued that 'placing a metal bridge over Oak Creek at this place would also interfere with the spiritual energy that flows along the creek' (1993:62) and that 'many people, myself included, have encountered Angelic entities in this area' (1993:54). Another psychic, Page Bryant, informed her readers that 'two magnificent Archangels stand guard over the "entrance to the inner sanctum" ' at Red Rock Crossing, and that this spot is the only 'magnetic vortex' in the area and thus vital to the energetic balance of the landscape (Bryant *et al.* 1991:13). For another local spiritual group, the Aquarian Concepts Community, Red Rock Crossing is nothing less than the central 'power point' on the Earth's surface.

What we see, then, is that New Agers put a premium on contact with energies of various sorts (physical, psychic, electromagnetic) or with beings believed to exist in invisible or non-material dimensions of the physical world. Where most visitors are content with the 'view' or the 'scenery', New Age pilgrims show a profound distrust for visual representation; instead, they valorise the invisible and 'interdimensional' landscape. (The language of 'New Age physics', including superstring theory with its notion of 12 dimensions, has entered the Sedona New Age community in part through a former MIT student of mathematics who resides there. The 'interdimensional landscape' is thought to be inhabited by a variety of accessible spiritual energies and/or entities.) Research at other New Age sites has shown that spiritual pilgrims rank photography much lower on their list of important activities than non-spiritual visitors; instead, they are much more likely to pray, visit or build shrines, bathe in a creek, or watch for UFOs (for example, Huntsinger & Fernandez-Gimenez 2001). New Age activities are directed less at gazing onto an objectified landscape and more at listening, receiving, 'channelling' or 'tuning in' to voices or signs that lurk hidden behind the observable façade of the landscape.

Many of Sedona's more prominent channellers are regularly featured in the locally based *Sedona: Journal of Emergence*, which has become one of the leading media for channelled spiritual writings in North America. The magazine features a heteroglossic stew of millennial prophecies, astrological predictions, and spiritual and personal advice, penned in quasi-scientific jargon by channels

with names gleaned from science-fiction (Kryon, Vywamus, Zoosh, the Galactic Council), romantic fantasies about Native Americans (Red Cloud and the Council of Eight), angelic personages, and even 'Mother Earth (Gaia)' herself. *Journal of Emergence* bills itself as presenting 'the latest channelled information on what to do as humans and the earth move from the third to the fourth dimension—how these energies affect you and the earth'. The ambiguous notion of 'energies' plays a crucial function within New Age discourse, serving as a kind of conceptual glue that binds together alternative and non-Western physico-medical theories, ideas inherited from late nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century spiritualism and metaphysical religion, the post-1960s lingo of humanistic psychology, and an imagined future in which advanced technology is reconciled with earthly and cosmic ecology. The connection between energy and rocks is one that has been especially pursued within New Age thought, particularly during the crystal craze of the 1980s, and the two together constitute a type of 'New Age sublime' that is readily found in Sedona's looming ancient rock formations. That red rock landscape often serves as a background—but in some cases the foreground as well (for example, Bryant *et al.* 1991)—for the communicative productivity of Sedona's psychics, yet these voices show little interest in the monumental visuality splayed across the pages of (the rival) *Sedona Magazine*. The few photographs to be found in *Journal of Emergence* tend to be grainy, black-and-white images of inscrutable lights in the sky, mysterious 'flying disks' captured on film surreptitiously in the night sky, and other signs of meaningful life beyond the visible spectrum. The channellers portray the landscape as redolent with invisible and mysterious, but psychically perceivable activity, filled with 'energy portals' and 'interdimensional doorways', dissemination points, stargates, spiritual presences and alien beings. In contrast, then, to the dominant representations of Sedona, *this* landscape harbours far more than the eye can see, making up a neo-magical universe in which particular locations (canyons, rock outcroppings, etc.) correspond to specific stellar constellations, cosmic forces, chakras and body parts, elemental qualities, and spiritual states. In the next section, I will examine both the theory (as found in guidebooks) and the practice of what New Age pilgrims do at Sedona's sacred places.

Enactment of sacred space: theory and practice

Sacred sites, as pilgrimage promoter Martin Gray suggests, hold the promise of a beneficial 'energy connection' with the Earth, a connection that is activated in part by the pilgrim, who travels to the sacred site purposefully. Manuals for New Age pilgrimage provide a plethora of suggestions and advice for pilgrims, detailing not only the places to be visited, but the activities to be performed and attitudes to be cultivated in the process. The more conscientious guidebooks advise extensive preparation and a certain etiquette, generally involving some form of 'purification' or 'clearing', assessment of one's motivation, and a general sense of humility and respect. Many recommend 'asking permission' of the 'spirit of the site' or engaging in dialogue with its invisible 'guardians'.

Heselton (1991) goes so far as to advocate a practice of 'tending', which might 'involve clearing out the clogged-up holy well, weeding round the mark stone so that it can be seen, or encouraging the old tree species and companion plants where a clump is threatened', as well as 'picking up litter on a regular basis'. 'The important thing', he continues, 'is to be open to the place: let it speak to you until you become aware of its spiritual essence' (Heselton 1991:98–100). Bryant *et al.* (1991:64) provide a detailed guide to 'ceremonial etiquette' in a check-list of 'Ten Easy Steps', which include 'grounding', purification through 'smudging' with sage, sweetgrass, or tobacco; making an offering of herbs, a small crystal, or a chant, song, dance or prayer; and so on. Some writers advocate specific methods of altering one's consciousness in order to facilitate 'attunement' or 'interfacing' with the Earth. Devereux suggests fasting, meditation, ritual drumming and movement, dreamwork, trance induction, or the use of psychoactive plants (Devereux *et al.* 1989). Others recommend drumming or other trance-induction methods for accessing the spirit, 'deva' or 'guardian' of the site. Following whatever ritual or 'attunement' the practitioner undergoes, most authors suggest some expression or token of gratitude before departing. Joseph's (1992:xiii) list of appropriate offerings includes 'tobacco or sage, a few drops of blessed or pure water, a seed or flower from your garden, a crystal or attractive stone'. Others, cautious about the aggregate effects of pilgrims leaving behind material offerings, propose prayers or gestures instead.[4]

The notion of 'attunement' is central to New Age pilgrimage, as is the belief in the efficacy of ceremonial ritual. The act of travelling to and performing rituals at sacred sites is often believed to have tangible effects on the sites and on the world at large. As many of these writings make clear, however, much of the desire motivating such pilgrimage is a personal one—the desire for experience, 'personal transformation' or 'self-actualisation'—which would seem to support the claim that New Age religion restricts itself to a self-centred spiritual individualism. Visiting sacred sites, however, is for many pilgrims only a beginning—or a punctuation mark—in a more extended life-pilgrimage. There are those for whom such places become so important that they leave behind their former places of residence and re-settle closer to their 'elective centre'.

In the case of Sedona, such pilgrim-migrants engage in a variety of individual and collective activities that serve to reinforce their claims about the landscape's sacrality (see Figure 2). These activities include hiking or walking the land and repeatedly visiting specific locations with spiritual intent; cultivating a state of psychic receptivity while there through meditation, visualisation, chanting, 'chakra activation', invocation or channelling of guides or spirits; and the arrangement of stones or rocks in circular 'medicine wheels' (modelled after Plains Indian practices) and the conducting of ceremonies within them (see Figure 3).[5] Rather than being taken apart after use, as some claim would be a more traditional practice, medicine wheels in Sedona are often left in place after their use; and sometimes tobacco, coins, pine cones, or other personal offerings are left behind as well. Such medicine wheels seem to be built for three main purposes: to mark out the place as sacred (which could be seen as a territorial claim or type of 'religious graffiti'); to facilitate the prayer, meditation, or ritual

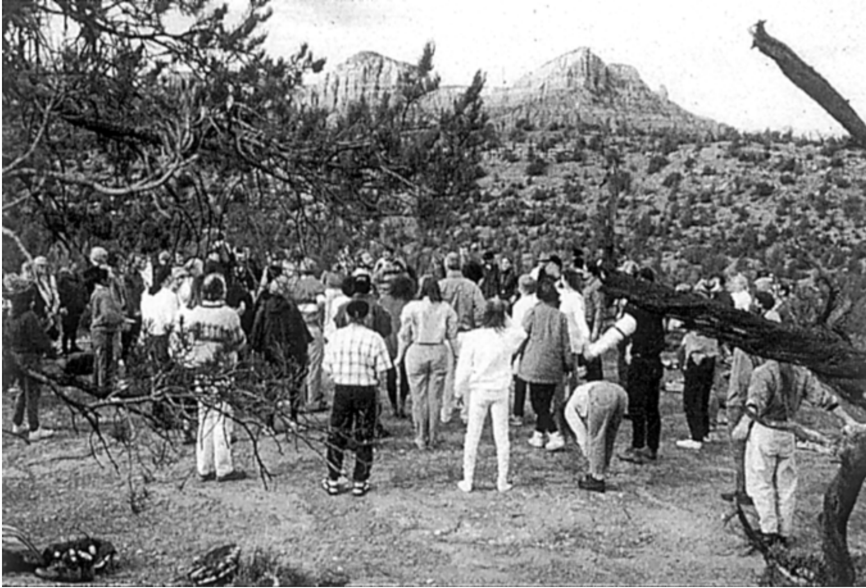

Figure 2. New Age gathering at Cathedral Rock, Sedona.

performed within them; and to effectively 'harmonise with' or 'channel' the earth energies believed to flow through the landscape. As an example of this third goal, a large medicine wheel on Schnebly Hill outside Sedona was build repeatedly, even after being dismantled by forest service rangers, in order to 'heal' a 'broken ley line', in the words of one of the leaders of this action.

Aside from these more 'focal' practices, pilgrims' sacred site encounters involve an array of other 'background' activities and perceptual interactions with the landscape: movements and physical exertion to manoeuvre their way through the topography on the way to a sacred location; changing visual, auditory, olfactory, and kinesthetic perceptions at different stages of a pilgrimage route or climb; the colours, shapes, textures, and other physical qualities of the landscape; the temporal or durational factor, as pilgrims undergo the process of journeying, expectation and desire, encountering a site, performing a ritual or 'attunement', and returning home; and all of these factors and qualities as they change over daily, seasonal and annual cycles. Over time, this experiential and interpretive data collects and is sedimented within the interpretive communities for whom the place is held to be sacred. As such a community becomes more firmly anchored within the landscape, its interpretations take on an increasing matter-of-factness for its members. These interpretations are shaped, in part, by prior expectations, preconceptions, and existing discourses, but crucially also in and through the direct encounter between pilgrims and landscape. New Age pilgrimage places a high premium on 'openness' to 'signs' or 'signals', perceptions, and intuitions; and it is this quality of 'encounter' that makes New Age pilgrimage a different form of 'place practice' than the Cartesian relation-

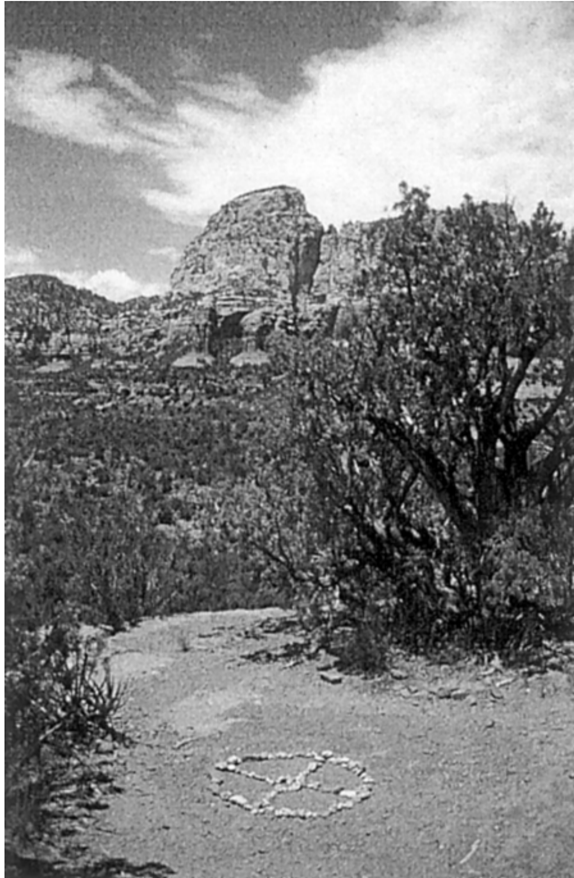

Figure 3. A medicine wheel on Rachel's Knoll, Long Canyon, Sedona

ship embodied in photography, sightseeing, and other forms of commodification.

Baroque visuality, New Age 'glossolalia', and the postmodern self

New Age practices, then, clearly reject the Cartesian perspectivalism that keeps subject separate from object and facilitates the colonisation of land as resource and property. Before rejecting visuality altogether as a useful indicator of the sensorial qualities of New Age pilgrimage, however, it would be useful to explore alternatives to the Cartesian mode. In his analysis of the main ocular regimes of modernity, Martin Jay (1992) identifies two such alternatives: the more descriptive and empirical tradition of Northern European landscape painting, and the baroque tradition. It is the latter that presents the most insightful analogy for New Age landscape perceptions. 'In opposition to the lucid, linear, solid, fixed, planimetric, closed form of the Renaissance', Jay

writes, 'the baroque was painterly, recessional, soft-focused, multiple and open'. Rejecting the 'monocular geometricalization of the Cartesian tradition' in favour of a 'dazzling, disorientating, ecstatic surplus of images' (Jay 1992:187), a distorting and strongly tactile or haptic 'madness of vision' with its 'palimpsests of the unseeable', the baroque, according to Jay, indulges in a fascination for opacity, unreadability and indecipherability, and resonates both with the raptures of Counter-Reformation mystics and with the postmodern reappearance of the sublime (Jay 1992:187–9; see also Buci-Glucksmann 1984).

It could be argued that New Age responses to the natural world, at pilgrimage sites such as Sedona and Glastonbury, present a narrative, non-ocular version of baroque representation: dazzling, disorientating and ecstatic in its surplus of voices and meanings, infused throughout by the experience of the sublime. In this sense, New Age sensory practices could be interpreted as reflecting a shift from modern ocular-centrism to a more baroque and postmodern vocal polyphony or heteroglossia. To the extent that New Age discourses (as found, for instance, in the channelled writings of *Sedona: Journal of Emergence*) appear inscrutable or self-contradictory to outsiders, they could be seen as a form of 'glossolalia'—an ecstatic surplus production of vocal or textual utterances, a 'vocal utopia' (de Certeau 1996), the meaning of which may reside less in the details than in the textual 'fabric' they create for the New Age community. Where Sedona's dominant culture of real estate and tourism presents the red rock landscape as purely an object, to be viewed magisterially and appropriated as such, the New Age approach is simultaneously more penetrative and less objectifying, finding the object not mute and inert, but filled with a stream of voices.

If New Age religion represents a form of 'self-spirituality', then, it would be appropriate to ask exactly what kind of 'self' is being 'spiritualised'. The foregoing suggests that the New Age self is less bounded and stable than the unified, modern 'subject' defined in opposition to the objects of its gaze and desire. At least three different kinds of New Age 'self' can be identified from available data (see also Hess 1993:chapter 3, Kuhling 1993, Hanegraaff 1998). The pervasive emphasis on self-development and personal growth, as well as more specific concerns about 'clearing' one's 'aura' and the like, do suggest a *bounded*, *essential self* that must guard against the threat of depletion or impurity. At least as common is a *multiple self*, whose many subcomponents may include an 'inner child', a 'wild man' or 'wild woman' within, animal teachers and spirit guides, past incarnations and ancestral figures, and so on. The relationships between these, informed to some extent by popular post-Jungian depth psychology (for example, Bolen 1985, 1990, Bly 1992, Estes 1992), are kaleidoscopic and rather open-ended. This is a self that seeks 'openings', if not to the larger human community, at least to the imagined community of nature or the cosmos, perceived as constituting a multitude of archetypes or entities. Finally, there is a *cosmic self* found in frequent references to a 'higher self' that is thought to be rooted in the cosmos and that provides the inner guidance for the development or 'evolution' of one's spiritual growth. (In 'earth spirituality' variants of New Age thinking, this cosmic self tends to be presented

as a *depth self*, rooted in the Earth, whereas millenarian and channelled writings emphasise ‘ascension’ towards a ‘light-body’.)

The individual is thus seen to be unified, multiple, *and* open-ended or evolving, connected to sources of energy much greater than the everyday self; and (generally speaking) the ‘deeper’ or ‘higher’ one goes in one’s psychospiritual explorations, the closer one is supposed to get to the source of value and meaning. According to New Age theory, then, the ‘ego-self’ is a limited construct that must be challenged by the multiplicity and otherness that it repeatedly encounters, while the ‘true’, ‘inner’ or ‘higher self’ is appealed to as a source of guidance and wisdom. In practice, of course, New Age practitioners may not be well practised at distinguishing between the ‘true self’ and the ego, and the multiple and multidimensional ‘others’ may well become less a challenge to the ego than a source of spiritual diversion. In any case, the characterisation of New Age as ‘self-spirituality’ should be problematised and seen in a larger context within which New Age ideals may be frustrated or rendered difficult by the social and economic conditions in which they arise.

Nature in the New Age

Having given some attention to the New Age self, what remains is to look more closely at New Age ideas of nature. Such ideas intersect with scientific, popular and environmentalist thinking in various ways. Much New Age writing is anthropocentric, understanding the human role as that of a ‘global brain’ or as ‘Gaia’s nervous system’ (Russell 1984) and emphasising our divine potentials and our technological capacities to take control over evolution (Anderson 1987, Marx Hubbard 1994). Other New Age voices are less technocentric, and New Age ‘nature religionists’, to the extent that such a term holds, lean toward a more biocentric view of the human–nature relationship (for example, Oates 1989). Michael York finds in the New Age movement an:

> unresolved dialectic between the idea of *Nature as Real* and *Nature as Illusion*, between the immanentist pagan concept of pantheism and the transcendental gnostic concept of theism, between a numinous materialism and a world-denying idealism. (1994 : 16)

This tension, as Sutcliffe (1998) and others have shown, can be seen at the northern Scottish ‘incubator’ of New Age ideas, the Findhorn community. Nature, at Findhorn, has variously been seen as an autonomous, but intimately present, realm inhabited by a diversity of elusive spiritual entities with whom we are encouraged to converse so as to obtain ‘instructions’ on how to work the land; as humanity’s ‘partner’, with which we are called to ‘co-create’ in our capacity as ‘stewards’; and as an ‘abstracted, introverted, quasi-solipsistic’ ‘trigger’ for spiritual growth (Sutcliffe 1998 : 37; see Spangler 1994 : 105–7, Walker 1994).

At the same time, much New Age discourse employs a terminology drawn from twentieth-century science, especially from ecology and a variety of systems theories in biology, theoretical physics, and other fields. Hanegraaff

(1996, 1998) has argued that New Age ideas present a 'secularisation' of esoteric thought, but others see in New Age spirituality an innovative attempt to carve out a 'middlebrow' form of cultural critique that draws on the authority of science while presenting an alternative to secular modernity (for example, Ross 1991, Hess 1993). This is especially the case in so-called 'New Paradigm' thought, which appropriates the glamour and respectability of science while critiquing its modernist foundations: its Cartesian rationalism, mechanistic materialism, and complicity with medical, political, and military establishments (see Griffin 1988, Zimmerman 1994).

In many respects, New Age concepts of nature could be seen as mapping readily onto the ideas of nature found in popular culture and in mainstream environmental discourse. As several environmental cultural critics have argued, notions of nature in contemporary Western society can be distinguished between a small number of 'root metaphors', for instance, nature as object (or machine), nature as resource, nature as spirit, and nature as home (for example, Killingsworth & Palmer 1992, Herndl & Brown 1996: 11). New Age nature religion imbues each of these with a quality of 'meaningfulness' absent or only minimally present in the more generic versions. Thus, 'object' becomes 'sacred geometry' or 'sacred mathematics'; 'resource' becomes 'organism' or 'energy'; 'home' becomes 'mother'; 'spirit' becomes 'teacher' or 'trickster'; and combinations of these proliferate. Let us examine these a little more closely.

Gaia has become a popular trope, used by scientists as a provocative shorthand image for a holistic theory of the biosphere, and by Pagans, New Agers, and others to refer to the divine person or spirit of the Earth. Defenders of women's and Goddess spirituality have been quick to identify Gaia as an empowering image, just as environmentalists have found it useful as a personification of the desired relationship between humans and the Earth. On the other hand, proponents of 'planetary resource management' and 'sustainable development' have linked the image of Gaia to a kind of technocratic managerialism that continues to treat nature, in typically mechanistic fashion, as a storehouse of resources for human use (for example, Myers 1984). Feminist critics have pointed out that sex-typing the planet as woman and as mother reinforces stereotypes because it 'occurs within the parameters of a patriarchal culture' (Murphy 1995: 61, cf. Seager 1993: 219–21): the 'feminine' is idealised yet remains passive, and humanity is still perceived as a masculine agent, 'central nervous system' (Lovelock & Epton 1975: 306), or 'global brain' (Russell 1984) to the unconscious, feminine body of the Earth. If Earth is a woman, then the implicit suggestion seems to follow that women should be more like the Earth, and in a Western, androcentric society this means passive, nurturing, and/or irrational. And though, for some, Earth-as-Gaia discourse may suggest a need to care for our mother, loving and honouring her for her self-less nurturance of her many children, androcentric attitudes have historically tended to promote a schizoid love/hate response on the part of the collective male-identified ego toward its mother. It is that mother, after all, whose overbearing presence constrains the growing adolescent and is rejected in the process of becoming a 'man'. As monolithic as the proverbial mother-in-law, then, the

planet reconfigured as 'Gaia' is metaphorically overly restrictive for re-envisioning socio-ecological relations.

In any case, 'Gaia' is meant to describe the Earth as a whole, so when it comes to describing the living quality of specific landscapes, one generally finds images on a smaller, more local scale. The most common New Age trope that articulates the recognition of a local numinosity is that of *earth energies*. Energy metaphorics have their own history (alluded to earlier), having worked their way into New Age discourse in part from the spiritualist and metaphysical movements of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. 'Energy' also sounds 'scientific', and the common reference to 'subtle' or 'astral' energies, multiple dimensions of reality, holographic paradigms, and other quasi-scientific jargon, is in part intended to grant New Age discourse a sense of authority, while its ambiguity makes for a polysemic applicability to nearly anything. The fact that the Gaia and energy discourses frequently accompany each other is a reflection of the ubiquity of alternative medical traditions (as well as various kinds of systems theory) within New Age thought. Chinese acupuncture, martial arts like Tai Ch'i and Aikido, unorthodox Western systems such as polarity therapy and Reichian bodywork, and more recently popularised systems such as Reiki all conceive of the body in energetic terms: a healthy body is one in which the flow of life-energy is unimpeded. If the Earth is identified as Gaia, then it is reasonable to suppose that life-energy flows through its body, and that there will be places, 'chakras' or 'energy centres', where this flow is more intense and the energy more concentrated than elsewhere.

In its plurality, its suggestiveness and ultimate elusiveness, the notion of 'earth energies' has played an important function within New Age and counter-cultural 'nature religious' discourse. But it remains limited in its evocative capacity, suggesting as it does a physicalistic universe uninhabited by beings or personal 'others'. As such, it is vulnerable to the Heideggerian critique referred to earlier, insofar as it suggests that nature can be 'unlocked', 'transformed', and in the process subjected to management by some technocracy of, say, geomancer-engineers. This trend is especially evident in the notion of 'sacred geometry', which frequently accompanies the 'energy' discourse (more so in Britain than in North America). The idea, expressed clearly in the works of John Michell (1969) and others, is that the earth's energies are structured according to specific geometrical and mathematical patterns and formulas, and that the proper human relationship to them is to 'channel' or manipulate those energies in order to follow those patterns. Energy also suggests a kind of *convertibility*, whereby one form of energy can easily be transformed into another one. In an unwitting example of such a 'conversion' of 'energies', pilgrimage leaders Suzanne McMillan-McTavish and Glen McTavish (1994), founders of Sacred Sight Journeys International, recount their several-year mission to complete a circuit of 'Transceiving Stations' intended 'to unite the Americas on the ley lines (earth's energy grid) and assist the earth in her ascension through harmony, balance and stability'. By 1994, 44 of these 'stations' had already been created, and 40 more were planned by the year 2000. After they were 'given the word to move to Sedona', Glen spent 3 weeks in Phoenix 'taking an

accelerated course to get an Arizona real estate license in order to sell vacation interval ownerships. Spirit had let us know that Glen's mission had shifted after he had arrived in Sedona'. The tour leaders continue, without a hint of irony, 'Glen's mission now is to move large amounts of financial energy and real estate (earth energy) around to create the physical spaces for Suzanne to anchor the Light for Spirit to move into'. Earth energy thus becomes real estate, which becomes financial energy, all in an invisible circuit of flows (and see Mikaelsson 2001).

In contrast to the energy metaphor, an explicitly animist metaphorics more readily allows for the articulation of specific place-relevant meanings. When members of Glastonbury's alternative community speak of the 'angel of Glastonbury', they are suggesting that there is a kind of guardian being or spirit that is identifiable with or somehow 'responsible' for Glastonbury. Sometimes place-names like 'Glastonbury' or 'Sedona' are used as stand-ins for the spirit of a place. (New Age art often attempts to represent such invisible entities, but I leave this topic for another discussion.) Since there is rarely a consensus about what this 'spirit' or 'guardian' may require of those in 'attunement' with it—whatever consensus there is, in fact, emerges out of vigorous community discussion (evident in both Glastonbury and Sedona)—this becomes a convenient shorthand for expressing values outside of the economic 'bottom-line'. More pluralistically conceived, animism suggests the metaphoric basis for an animated world, in which even genes and automobiles can be perceived as more than mere mechanisms. Frequently, such personification resembles traditional mythological trickster figures. Devas, nature spirits, elves, and others tend to be represented as elusive, amorphous or shape-changing, defying control or even intellectual systematisation. When Findhorn's gardeners or the characters of *The Celestine Prophecy* (Redfield 1993) attempt to 'attune' themselves to nature devas and invisible energy fields, they seemingly open up to the guidance provided by autonomous nature itself.

At a different point on the spectrum, however, are variants of personified agency that, in terms suggested by Brenneman (1985), are not place-based or 'loric', but are 'cosmic' in their dimensions. Extraterrestrials, archangels, cosmic messengers, saints and ascended masters, and sundry others, have no inherent relationship to a place. Like the Virgin Mary, they tend to 'appear' somewhere for reasons not associated with the place or landscape, but rather according to some external agenda. Those which are obviously from 'off planet' arguably provide a science-fictional compensation for the recognition that the Earth has indeed been divested of its own spirits.

New Age conceptions of nature, then, fall into a spectrum that ranges from the animistic to the physicalistic, the personified to the abstract, and the locale-specific to the cosmic. Some of these, such as the abstract notion of 'energies', are more conducive to the consumerist tendency to commodify and manipulate the earth and its resources. Others, such as personified and animist conceptions, are less conducive to such usage. Both types can, of course, be marketed (T-shirts of Gaia being no less inherently unlikely than T-shirts of the Virgin Mary), just as both can inform the strategies of those who strive to

defend nature from exploitation and development at Sedona and Glastonbury (see Ivakhiv 2001). As with the New Age self, then, so with New Age ideas of nature: both are complex and multifaceted, and are at least sometimes used against the kinds of practices of commodification implied by the notion of New Age as a 'spiritual marketplace'.

Conclusion

In light of the New Age preference for listening and 'attunement' over modernist forms of visual encounter with landscapes, and the multiplicitous and relatively open-ended New Age notions of the self, it would seem that the claim that New Age spirituality is a 'self-spirituality' should be modified, qualified, or abandoned. To the extent that the dominant contemporary notion of the self remains a Cartesian subject (a point that may be debated, but that debate is beyond the bounds of the present paper), New Age pilgrimage, in theory and to a large extent in practice, runs counter to such a subject. New Age spirituality may appear to be a 'self-spirituality' for a variety of reasons: for instance, because its carriers tend to be more mobile and less traditional in their familial and community relations than the average, and because its sense of community is a relatively weak one, preferring vaguely 'cosmic' referents over more local ones. This mobility and weakened sense of community, however, can result in the development of new communities and new sacred spaces, as seen in Sedona and Glastonbury. In New Age pilgrimage, place and landscape become an important locus for spiritual practice, which unfolds in part through the bodily and sensorial activities involved in encountering landscape, and which often results in a mixed and ambivalent, rather than an obviously complementary, relationship with the consumerist trends unfolding around the practitioners.

Drawing on Fredric Jameson's (1991) often-cited arguments about the "cultural logic of late capitalism," Hugh Urban (2000) has made a strong argument that New Age should be considered 'the spiritual logic of late capitalism' (see also the article by Possamai in this issue). Setting aside the neo-Marxist teleology of the term 'late capitalism' and replacing it with the more descriptive 'consumer capitalism', it is clear that consumption does occur in New Age culture. However, contemporary capitalist society has produced a variety of religious and spiritual phenomena, and to grant New Age spirituality a paradigmatic role while relegating others (such as evangelicalism, Pentecostalism, the suburban 'megachurch' phenomenon, etc.) to secondary status seems unwarranted. The kinds of 'postmodern' notions of self, subjectivity, and personhood found in New Age spirituality may be causally linked to the political economy of consumer capitalism (see Heelas 1993, Lyon 1993, York 1997, Kubiak 1999) but, as Sedona's New Agers' struggles against the bridge at Red Rock Crossing show, they are sometimes employed in a way explicitly intended to counter the commodificatory impulses of consumer capitalism. Although at Sedona such an intent has remained only marginally effective, the fact that it exists at all suggests that New Age spirituality is much more complex than these characterisations allow.

Notes

1 My use of the term 'New Age' in this article will follow this broader, *cultural* sense of the word: it reflects a certain sensibility, identifiable by the prevalence of certain ideas, practices, and approaches to religion and spirituality, and is therefore along the lines of Hanegraaff's (1998:94ff) 'New Age *sensu lato*' rather than his 'New Age *sensu stricto*' or Sutcliffe's (2003) more restrictive definition of the term.

2 In fairness to Milne, his photographs do not readily fall into the tradition of the magisterial gaze (Boime 1991). Flipping through the book, one gets the impression not so much of a planet for the taking, a storehouse of resources, as of a planet that is very much alive. A large number of the photographs call attention to Milne's techniques, his process of selecting a view, or the time and place of the produced image. And while the implied viewer of some of the images is located at the magisterial location above and far from the focal object, in the case of many others this sense of perspective is frustrated. The viewer may be located astride the object (without much of a sense of separation from it), below it, or even caught within it, surrounded by a beauty that cannot be possessed, but only entered.

3 By the term 'New Age travellers' I mean not the more specific usage of the term as is common in Britain (i.e. semi-nomadic, countercultural neo-tribals), but simply travellers of a New Age orientation.

4 Corbett, Cynthia L. 1988. *Power Trips: Journeys to Sacred Sites as a Way of Transformation*. Santa Fe, NM: Timewindow Publications.

5 This should be Dannelley, Richard. 1991. *The Sedona Power Spot, Vortex and Medicine Wheel Guide*. Sedona: Richard Dannelley/Vortex Society.

6 Space does not allow me to delve into the vexed issue of the non-Native 'cultural appropriation' of Native spirituality, although such appropriation is widespread in Sedona. See Ivakhiv (2001:178–9, 193–7, 278–9) and Taylor (1997) for discussions of these issues.

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