

was deemed “unclean,” both were considered to be in a precarious state.

Upon reaching adulthood, women went to sauna. Girls of marriageable age were bathed and slapped by older women with the birch branches to incantations on procuring love. Traditional Finnish wedding ceremonies involved the bathing of the girl to be given in marriage by her family, the *antilas*. This was done in the sauna by the married women of the family. After the ablutions, the girl’s hair, which had so far been worn loose, was plaited and a “wife’s cap” placed on her head together with the other symbols of a married woman. In the sauna, in the company of women, the girl was also initiated into how different life would be at her husband’s place and what it would be like under the eagle eye of her mother-in-law. She was then completely “away from the paternal home” to which she could only return the August after the birth of a son to visit relatives.

For women, there were more transitions in the sauna than for men: from girl to bride, from bride-to-be to a girl given in marriage, from a girl given in marriage to a wife, from a wife to a “breeding” mother, then to one who suckled an infant. Various functions became attached to various individuals regarding the sauna rituals in the extended family.

Sauna may also be connected to funeral rites. In some rural areas there was a custom that after death the corpse was carried into the sauna on a board where women of the family who specialized in the task washed it. In family-oriented communities it was important that all those with a role in the rituals, those who washed the body, the wailing women, those who spoke the words, and those who made the coffin, should all be family members. If someone was requested to perform such a function, it was tantamount to a last wish, and it would be improper to decline. Once the corpse had been washed with soap reserved for that purpose, it would be dressed and lifted onto a laying-out board in the threshing building.

Ancient Finnish folk tradition indicates consistently that the conception of mixed bathing in sauna, assumed by the rest of the world, is only regionally valid. In most communities men and women had their own turns. Sauna taken in a family group is a more recent phenomenon. Earlier, the farmer would take sauna with his farmhands once the work in the fields was done, while the farmer’s wife would go to sauna with the maids after milking. Since the men’s turn was first, the women’s turn on the eve of the Sabbath might well continue into the Sabbath. Sunset was a delimiting factor until it was superseded by the clock. When the church bells rang at six o’clock in the evening to announce the Sabbath, the women should have left the sauna.

In the Finnish folktales, sauna is a “hard place” and people were afraid to go there alone. Finnish folk beliefs contain many stories about first-hand experiences of

encountering the spirit of the sauna in which the spirit has been felt to be “hard.” Such an apparition was believed to be a punishment for infringements against the Sabbath. The narrative tradition confirms men’s and women’s sauna turns. When they had had their sauna, there began a third turn, that of the spirit of the sauna. In most cases, the person experiencing something is a lone woman or a group of women bathing together. Sometimes, it is a question of an obviously erotic dream; the last woman to go to bathe falls asleep on the bench and feels or sees a hairy male creature who comes to throw water on the stones or comes to caress her.

As with the home, the threshing building, the cowhouse or other building with a fireplace, the spirit of the sauna is the first to kindle a fire. Thus, the people of the house would try to find a “nice, mild” person, a kindly old woman or man, to ensure good sauna luck. When the spirit of the sauna is seen, a resemblance is reported with the first person to kindle a fire. This is in accordance with the ancient belief in the playful, blithe child – the most suitable person for a good sauna spirit.

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Savages

Structurally speaking, savages – whether noble or ignoble – are category violators. Ideologically speaking, savagism – again, whether of the noble or ignoble variety – is a discursive device in the service of cultural criticism. In the

case of “savages,” taxonomic violations – especially imagined cannibalism and incest – are emphasized as a way to mark the differences between “civilization” (proper society: + God and + institutional constraints on human appetites) and “natural man” (– God and – institutions, a veritable Hobbsean war of all against all) and to justify whatever means necessary to redeem the latter category to (the interests of) the former, whether as ends – converted human beings – or as a means to an end (i.e., converted into labor). In the case of the noble savage, cultural criticism is internally leveraged. Here ideological struggles are against “society” itself, with noble savages – à la Montaigne and Rousseau, for example – serving as the counterpart to and antidote for the corruptions of “civilization.” While thumbnail, this schema of savage/noble savage holds in some permutation or another from Herodotus to the American novelist Fenimore Cooper. What remains to be specified is how savagism reverberates to the present and with what ramifications for how we understand the intersection between religion and nature.

Here I will limit my comments to the North American context, where savagism persists to the present, particularly in some government policies (continued paternalistic treatment), social practices (Indians facing explicit racism), and media images (one acute example is the character Zach Provo, played by James Coburn in *The Last Hard Men*, who is a particularly smart but depraved “half-breed”). However, in all of these realms the noble savage has gained ground on the ignoble savage, as reflected in increasingly proactive legislation, softened public sentiment, and romantic Hollywood films, for adults and children alike. The primary characterization of Indians in this mode is as stewards and priests of nature: Indians have become eco-shamans of the contemporary world. This phenomenon has two basic sources: non-Indian and Indian authors.

Historically, non-Indian authors of noble savagism emphasized aspects of native cultures that could be construed as rejoinders to European social constraints, whether at the level of the body, community, property, or the land. Thus, drawing upon native traditions, authors of noble savagism celebrated Indians’ putative naturalness, especially as reflected in dress, demeanor and sexuality, “original” democracy, communal property, and connection to the land. In this way, historical noble savagism operated by means of selective interpretation and strategic distortion of existing Indian traditions. Modern noble savagism, by comparison, is less concerned to construct itself in relation to “tradition,” and looks instead to already circulating images of “the Indian” that might be refashioned to fit the times. This is particularly true in the representation of Indians as environmentalists. Non-Indian authors of this persona have not, on the whole, worked from the ample resources of Indian traditions concerning care for the Earth. Whether images are cast by way of crying In-

dians, fictive chiefs’ speeches, or new age books, the icon of the noble environmentalist is a product of modernity, even while being a critique of it.

Complicating this picture is that native people are co-participants in modernity. Not only do they inhabit the present, they shape it. Most significantly, Indians have exerted their voice in the symbolic economy. In particular, Native Americans have gained unprecedented agency in the control of images of themselves. Whether by way of tribal museums, congressional hearings, or mass media, in the last several decades Indians have responded to centuries of savagism (of both varieties) by insisting upon their representational autonomy. One aspect of this has been by way of tremendous cultural revitalization, as tribes and nations have expressed their identities and aspirations in the idiom of local traditions. Here, to be sure, land and nature are emphasized. Land is simultaneously the source of creation (both in the sense of autochthony and as ongoing creation), loss (by way of removal or desecration), and hope (the source and site of future generations). That is, land is frequently spoken of as timeless, in the sense of a geographical synchrony wherein past, present, and future coalesce in and as nature. Maintaining tradition – that which links the generations – is predicated upon maintaining proper relations with the land. It must be said here that such figurations of the land, while building upon ancient religious traditions, constitute an oppositional discourse leveled against the forces and threats of anti-native interests. Unlike non-native noble environmentalism, however, here agitation is not a response to abstracted disaffection with the modern condition, but is a response to proximate and concrete impediments to daily life.

Another aspect of Native Americans taking control of self-representations raises new sets of issues. If tradition-centered concern for the land is inwardly focused, we need to describe outwardly focused claims by Indians about the land and nature meant for non-native audiences. This distinction is not in the service of distinguishing between sincere and insincere or authentic and inauthentic claims. Rather, my analysis of inwardly focused and outwardly focused speech is in recognition of the multiple audiences of “tradition.” All speakers will modify their speech according to audience in order to achieve desired rhetorical effects. Neither “tradition” nor Indians stand outside of this dynamic; to imagine that they do is to participate in another form of savagism cum essentialism.

When addressing non-native audiences, contemporary Indian orators frequently assume the posture of the noble environmentalist familiar to consumers of the non-native incarnation of the image. In order to reach audiences, Indian speakers often adopt stereotypical images of themselves. This is a lesson native peoples have learned from years of interacting with the dominant society. In the contemporary context this means appearing according to

script as eco-shamans. If our analysis ended here, however, we would have failed to see this as a form of resistance to dominant culture, not a capitulation to it (recognizing, however, that “sell-outs” exist). Resistance is waged insofar as adoption of dominant images entails adaptations of them. Specifically, the noble environmentalist takes on a militant edge, appearing as an eco-warrior. This enables native speakers to confront members of the dominant society in forceful and blunt moral terms.

Speaking outwardly as moral warriors, native orators often invoke nature in a schematic way. To paraphrase:

We are born of nature, our mother. From time immemorial we have had a sacred pact to care for nature. While society has grown away from nature, we have maintained our relationship to her, preserving vital knowledge in the process. Doing so, we have sacrificed self-interest and economic gain. Now we are in crisis because the dominant society has taken advantage of us. Tradition, religion, and language are in decay, and we face cultural extinction as a result. At the same time the world itself is in crisis. The Western ethos has run its course, exhausting nature in the process. The only remedy is for native people to use our knowledge and ritual practices to restore the Earth for the good of all humanity. This situation had been prophesied repeatedly. We are here today to show you that we can heal nature from the damage you have caused her, but only if you first begin to heal the damage you have caused us.

This discourse does a variety of things. Primarily, it signals a desire on the part of Indians to have their moral and political voices registered and seeks to extend the moral authority of the native speaker over the non-native audience. This discourse implicitly – and sometimes explicitly – relies upon feelings of guilt and spiritual inadequacy on the part non-natives, using vulnerable emotional states of the audience as a platform upon which to construct and advance moral claims in a religious idiom. Specifically, moral claims are framed in reciprocal terms: we care for you at the spiritual and cosmic level (by maintaining the Earth); in turn, you must care for us by making sure our political and economic grievances are addressed.

Whether spoken by Hopi representatives to the United Nations, a Ute leader to journalists, a Crow religious leader to museum officials, or by a Lakota political activist to college students, to give some examples, this discourse operates as a kind of strategic essentialism. Insofar as speakers traffic in the dominant culture’s stereotypical images, and to the degree that this discourse functions as a modality of cultural criticism, outwardly focused Indian self-representations participate in the rhetorical economy

of noble savagism. Recognizing this, we nonetheless want to point out some important respects in which native-produced noble savagism differs from the non-native variety. First, and most importantly, this discourse – however much it is stereotypical and therefore redolent of non-native discourse – is spoken by native people about themselves. Moreover, this version of the noble environmentalist is a form of cultural criticism engaged in by people who are and are not members of the society in question: issues of citizenship and sovereignty pervade this discourse. Finally, even when spoken in the most general and stereotypical terms, this discourse is defined by its concrete sources and sub-texts. One needs to cultivate an ear for how local concerns are made audible to general audiences through this language. For example, in a recent presentation a self-proclaimed “Indian elder” spoke to college students generally about the “desecration of the Earth” and, simultaneously, he gave voice as a Diné rancher to specific frustrations: his reservation faces regular environmental degradation and so few people seem to care.

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- See also: American Indians as “First Ecologists”; Noble Savage; Noble Savage and the “Ecologically Noble” Savage; Religious Environmentalist Paradigm.

Schelling, Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph (1775–1854)

The work of Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph Schelling is one of the most comprehensive and elaborated philosophies of nature to date. Its influence was enormous, not only on the