

PRELIMINARIES

ALCHERINGA . . . “dream time” of the Arunta . . . “The Eternal Dream Time” . . . (or) “The Dreaming” . . . of a sacred heroic time long long ago when man & nature came to be . . . a kind of narrative of things that once happened; a kind of charter of things that still happen; & a kind of *logos* or principle of order transcending everything significant . . . *the act* of dreaming, as reality & symbol, (by which) . . . the artist is inspired to produce a new song . . . (by which) the mind makes contact with whatever mystery it is that connects The Dreaming & the Here-&-Now.

—W.E.H. Stanner, “The Dreaming”

what the informant told Franz Boas in 1920 (Keresan)

long ago her mother
had to sing this song and so
she had to grind along with it
the corn people have a song too
it is very good
I refuse to tell it

—Armand Schwerner

The ancient Poets animated all sensible objects with Gods or Geniuses, calling them by the names & adorning them with the properties of woods, rivers, mountains, lakes, cities, nations, & whatever their enlarged & numerous senses could perceive.

And particularly they studied the genius of each city & country, placing it under its mental deity;

Til a system was formed, which some took advantage of, & enslaved the vulgar by attempting to realize or abstract the mental deities from their objects: thus began Priesthood;

Choosing forms of worship from poetic tales.

And at length they pronounc'd that the Gods had order'd such things.

Thus men forgot that All deities reside in the human breast.

—W. Blake (1790)

Time flows past the permanent central position . . . they live at a place called noon, at the center of the world, the only place where space & time intersect.

—Stanley Diamond, from “Anaguta Cosmography” (Nigeria)

O, they were hot for the world they lived in, these Maya, hot to get it down the way it was—the way it is, my fellow citizens.

—Charles Olson

Sioux Vision Event

Go to a mountain-top & cry for a vision.

Magic Words (Eskimo)

In the very earliest time,
when both people and animals lived on earth,
a person could become an animal if he wanted to
and an animal could become a human being.
Sometimes they were people
and sometimes animals
and there was no difference.
All spoke the same language.
That was the time when words were like magic.
The human mind had mysterious powers.
A word spoken by chance
might have strange consequences.
It would suddenly come alive
and what people wanted to happen could happen—
all you had to do was say it.
Nobody could explain this:
That's the way it was.

(English version by Edward Field)

It was a vast old religion, greater than anything we know: more starkly & nakedly religious . . . For the whole life-effort of man was to get his life into contact with the elemental life of the cosmos, mountain-life, cloud-life, thunder-life, air-life, earth-life, sun-life. To come into immediate *felt* contact, & so derive energy, power, & a dark sort of joy. This effort into sheer naked contact, *without an intermediary or mediator*, is the root meaning of religion, & at the sacred races, the runners hurled themselves in a terrible cumulative effort, through the air, to come at last into naked contact with the very life of the air, which is the life of the clouds, & so of the rain.

—D.H. Lawrence

A Wintu Indian Statement on the Ecological Crisis

The White people never cared for land or deer or bear. When we Indians kill meat, we eat it all up. When we dig roots we make little holes. When we build houses, we make little holes. When we burn grass for grasshoppers, we don't ruin things. We shake down acorns & pinenuts. We don't chop down the trees. We only use dead wood. But the White people plow up the ground, pull up the trees, kill everything. The tree says, 'Don't. I am sore. Don't hurt me.' But they chop it down & cut it up. The spirit of the land hates them. They blast out trees & stir it up to its depths. They saw up the trees. That hurts them. The Indians never hurt anything, but the White people destroy all. They blast rocks & scatter them on the ground. The rock says, 'Don't! You are hurting me.' But the White people pay no attention. When the Indians use rocks, they take little round ones for their cooking . . . How can the spirit of the earth like the White man? . . . Everywhere the White man has touched it, it is sore.

—Old woman speaking to Dorothy Lee "in prophetic vein"

Zuni Cryptogram

teyalanne / ground
tek'inaye / the ground is wet
te'ananne / footprint
teyacchinne / cultivated field
teky'appowanne / hill

tewutso'ya / the weather is clear
tene''anaye / a strong wind is blowing
tets'enaye / the weather is cold
tehts'inaye / it is winter
telakwayi / spring

tehya / it is valuable

telhasshinanne / shrine
teshkwinne / taboo
tewusu / sacred
tewusukky'a / pray
tenanne / song
tepehanne / pottery drum
telapnanne / story
tesshukw'a / yesterday
tehlhi'a / night is coming
tewani / tomorrow
tewankwin / eastward
teyaye / living
tek'ohannanne / daylight
tek'ohannan aaho''i / daylight people (mankind)

The American Indian is the vengeful ghost lurking in the back of the troubled American mind. Which is why we lash out with such ferocity & passion, so muddled a heart, at the black-haired young peasants & soldiers who are the "Viet Cong." That ghost will claim the next generation as its own. When this has happened, citizens of the USA will at last begin to be Americans, truly at home on the continent, in love with their land. The chorus of a Cheyenne Indian Ghost Dance song— "hi-niswa'vita'ki'ni"— "We shall live again."

—Gary Snyder

old Moke, if you could
see these mountains all
around, if the two of us
could laugh with the pines,
if a dark Pygmy and a
dark Indian could share
the tears of a rainbow
then it would be as when
cloud bursts flood the forest
of the Ituri and scatter
the happiness of the BaMbuti
to everyone everywhere
and all who will accept
this universal prayer

—Harold Littlebird, Pueblo Indian

He who loses his dreaming is lost.

—Australian Aborigine