



An Introduction to the Conversation

Charles G. Leland, and Naming



I am not very good at introductions. Two people meet; both are known to me but unknown to each other. I am there, and responsible for making connections sufficient for them to relate to one another. I often feel uncomfortable; I am never sure I have “done it right.” Nevertheless, if you are going to be able to engage in this inquiry in a meaningful way, you will need to have a passing familiarity with some of the situations and people to which this study attends. You will need a series of introductions. The first of these is to the study of Native American religions itself.

Proper introductions are difficult at the best of times. These are difficult times for the academic study of Native American religions. It is a study haunted by a history of conquest and colonialism, whose present is marked by passionate intensity. Here is a story—featuring an Internet discussion—that illustrates what I mean:

In late April of 1993 a long message appeared virtually simultaneously on three academic electronic discussion groups.¹ Ron Grimes was making public a “highly charged stand-off” (1.1) that was simmering all over North America, but that boiled furiously at the University of Colorado where Native Studies scholars Sam Gill, Vine Deloria, Jr., Ward Churchill, and Deward Walker teach, and where Grimes was on sabbatical. Grimes was direct. He asked three questions contextualized in a long, thoughtful message:

1. Should or should not European Americans be teaching courses on Native American religions?

2. If we should not, why not, and what would be the results of our refusal?
3. If we should, how best can we proceed? (1.1)

The questions were powerful, but the long message in which they were embedded was what left me speechless. Grimes reported some of what I already knew: the climate in Native American religions studies was deteriorating. Some not-Native male scholars were leaving the study of Native American religions. Against this phenomenon Grimes wrote, “The notion of abandoning academic turf (as if it were bad land) and giving it back to ‘the natives’ (as if it were a gift we previously owned) seems to me a piece of bad choreography to which we have danced several times before” (1.1). In response to those who claimed this situation was no different than non-Buddhists teaching about Buddhism, Grimes replied that “this is a serious problem not to be written off by assimilating it to the study of religion in general.” And he added, “I would just like some company, both Native and non-Native, in thinking through this specific dilemma” (1.3). I was not very good company. I had little to say. All my easy answers had been gutted. Others were not so easily deterred. The messages on the Religion discussion group kept coming. Grimes weighed in again:

We who do fieldwork do so under both ethical and legal constraints regarding our consultants. Stealing sacred secrets would not pass the ethics committee at my university. Is such knowledge, obtained under colonial conditions, legitimate for us to use? Much (not all) of what we know about indigenous religions was obtained under shady circumstances. Methodologically speaking, how do we proceed—if our data is shady, our qualifications questionable, and our students and colleagues feeling ripped off by acts of cultural imperialism?

I figure the only way to answer such questions is to become identified with them. So far, much of what I hear sounds like we’re deflecting them. (1.10)

On a number of occasions Grimes underscored his fundamental assertion that “the primary issue is not whether only Native Americans can study Native Americans but what it means when non-Natives determine most if not all of the terms of the debate” (1.17).

On into May the discussion churned. Deward Walker sent an outline of a presentation he had given on the issue in another venue. My friend and mentor, Sam Gill, posted a long message explaining his “rubric shift” from Native American religions to religion and culture (1.22). I read hurt and anger, frustration and disappointment in his words. In his response to Gill, Grimes surveyed the academic landscape: “At the moment negotiations are hard. There is shouting. There is sulking. There is conspiring. There is anger” (1.25). That was clear: one person suggested that there should be classes on Sam Gill at “Indian schools” (3.9); another that it was time for Gill to abandon the area completely (3.21). Grimes suggested a shift of metaphors from embattlement (“hold your ground”) to human family (“we shouldn’t walk away, I say to myself, they’re family”) (1.25). Reflecting on the depth of feeling in Sam Gill’s posting, I found myself wondering what Grimes’s family was like. I have been part of a number of families; I’ve often felt hurt, attacked . . . embattled. And walking away is never possible: “There are continuing connections, obligations, relationships, snarls of all kinds,” which, if one does find a way to amputate, result in a diminishing of what makes us human.²

Through May the discussion continued. There were what looked to me charges of racism leveled, later retracted . . . after a fashion. There were misunderstandings, some angry; these were “conversations hard and wild.”³ Improbably, the discussions had an extraordinarily long life. Electronic conversations rarely last more than a couple of weeks; this one lasted a month. If printed out, the conversation would run to over ninety single-spaced pages.

By late May the flurry of messages seemed to have finally subsided. Then, in early June, Vine Deloria, Jr., posted a message (3.36). After citing a number of instances where scholarly work had been or could be used either directly or indirectly in political arenas to harm Native Americans, Deloria concluded, “So we should admit that everything we do has political implications in the world outside our walls—the real world as it were.” He went on to criticize the inappropriateness of many of the “basically insulting categories of analysis” often applied to Native American religions. He complained that “incredibly smug” scholars of Native American religions “rush non-Indian frameworks of analysis into the discussion as soon as possible in order to control the definitions of what is being said and thought about regarding Native religions. . . .” The notion that academic discourse might itself be a way

of perpetuating the conquest of Native peoples had been raised earlier in the discussion by Grimes and others. Deloria here highlighted the point eloquently. He went on to criticize Gill specifically for his use of the word “goddess” in his study of the Mother Earth story. He stressed that the “Near Eastern concept” of “gods” had little to do with the “experience of personal energy within the physical universe,” an experience with an important emotional component.⁴

Deloria finishes his message with a warning:

I don't see why non-Indians cannot teach courses on Native religions, as long as they understand and accept the fact of modern American political life, and with the knowledge that they are intruding on the emotional commitments and experiences of a specific group of people who may not appreciate their efforts, and are willing to take the consequences.

Despite the provocativeness of Deloria's posting, the discussion veered off in another unrelated direction.⁵

Most of what follows was written before this discussion singed the edges of my electronic mailbox. I knew the outline and tenor of the discussion, however, prior to the sound of Ron Grimes's disconcerting whistle-blowing, Sam Gill's explanation of his “rubric shift,” and Vine Deloria's challenge to the discipline.⁶ I knew from the reaction of some “trusted assessors”—people to whom I sent drafts of this work for comment. As a study of the study of Native American religions, this inquiry intends to shed some light on the errors we students of these religions have made and continue to make in our work. I imagined myself a “good guy,” trying to straighten out some harmful scholarly inclinations. I was perplexed, then, when some of my trusted assessors seemed angry or skittish in their responses. In this volatile atmosphere, I realized, even my awkward introductions were likely to generate friction sufficient for ignition; the larger study was likely to cause explosions.

As this realization dawned, my first reaction was fear. If trusted assessors responded this way, how would less sympathetic readers react? I was not sure I wanted to deal with what Deloria calls “the consequences.” I toyed with leaving the manuscript unfinished, then thought about expunging all potentially controversial sections. I considered reducing this inquiry to a story of a 100-year-old scholarly transgression, the affront I felt by it, and leave it at that. Obviously I

didn't act on my fear, but I thought about it. I relate my failure of nerve here both as an acknowledgment of the intensity of the conversation into which I send my voice, and as preparation for much of the remainder of this chapter with its awkward but thought-full labels and careful groundwork.

There are no good, all-inclusive labels for the original inhabitants of the American continents and their descendants.⁷ In the early 1990s a number of labels vie for prominence—First Nations People, Amerindians, indigenous people, and Aboriginal people (even “Aboriginals”!). I have settled on the imperfect “Native American” largely because it has become the scholarly convention. As well, I prefer this label because it directs attention to what I will argue is at the heart of scholarly difficulties in the study of the religions of these peoples.

One label I never considered using was “Indian.” The label floats in a solution of complex images, saturated with meanings. Fifteen years ago, in his *The White Man's Indian*, Robert Berkhofer demonstrated the complexity of those meaning-rich images, arguing that the term “Indian” should be reserved not for real human beings but for only the images themselves. Said Berkhofer, “I have employed the phrase *Native American(s)* to refer to the actual peoples designated by the term *Indian(s)*, which I reserve almost exclusively for the White image of those persons.”⁸ I have followed Berkhofer in this, and, noting our carelessness in the intervening years, I have placed shudder quotes around Indian to remind the reader and the author that “Indian” connotes not a person, but a set of images, a stereotype.⁹ I will argue in what follows that the use of this stereotype is characterized by an oscillating duality. “Indian,” then, refers to a stereotype used in two different ways.¹⁰

The brief quotation from Berkhofer above uses the label “White”; the title of his book uses “White Man.” I have chosen to follow the convention that has arisen in the last decade of avoiding “White” or “White man.” These too are more stereotype than helpful generalization. The problem, however, extends past these labels. “Whiteman,” “White,” “White Man,” *as well as* their replacements, “non-Indian,” and “non-Native” are, in most usages, stereotypical foils for images of the “Indian.” Further, using this set of labels undergirds a central characteristic of the stereotype of the “Indian,” one I shall describe in chapter 5 as the assumption of a nearly unbridgeable chasm between “Indian” and “Whiteman.” I have therefore decided against using any of these terms.

What is needed is a label that can be used more descriptively. I have chosen “not-Native” in hopes that the jarring quality of the name will serve to remind reader and author that this is a descriptive term referring to a wide variety of peoples from disparate ethnic backgrounds. Where I have needed a more general label I have used “hegemonic culture” and “hegemonic popular culture” or “North American culture” if that seemed more appropriate. While I am aware on one hand that heaping U.S. and Canadian cultures along with their diverse populations into one lump is prone to the same abuse as the use of “Indian”; on the other hand, I find it useful and accurate to generalize about the mainstream anglophone North American cultural expressions in print and broadcast media.¹¹ With other scholars I acknowledge significant regional and national variations in the relationships between not-Native and Native Americans,¹² yet I see a consistency transcending time and place of the dual use of the “Indian” stereotype.

Inevitably in a conversation with this focus on stereotypes the question arises: Surely you are not saying that all generalizations about Native Americans are false? Not exactly. Generalizations about Native Americans are useful *where there are similarities*. More often than not, however, the “Indian” stereotype arises out of a not-Native necessity that forces similarities among Native American cultures (including religions) where none exist. We hope our generalizations have some connection to the reality of the people of whom we speak; we know our stereotypes do not. Generalizations are relatively flexible tools of understanding, not laden with emotional intensity; thus easily changed or retracted in the face of contrary evidence. Stereotypes, on the other hand, are far more rigid, held with an emotional intensity born of some need that makes alteration difficult and retraction agonizing.¹³

From one perspective, then, the difficulty of naming the original inhabitants of the Americas and their descendants—a difficulty at least as old as the first arrival of Europeans—stems from trying to generalize about different groups of people whose differences seem ready at any moment to overwhelm their commonality. Of course this difficulty arises not only with Native Americans, but with other peoples as well.¹⁴ One would think, however, that if we were careful to be specific about particular Native American nations, this difficulty of naming would not arise. One would think.

This inquiry into the study of Native American religions touches on four Native American nations: the Maliseet, Micmac, Passamaquoddy,

and Penobscot. These names are the ones currently in use, but they are neither the names that occur in the earliest European reports, nor are they the names that these people have historically had for themselves. The Maliseet called themselves *wulastuk kewiuk*, the beautiful-river-people; the Micmac, *Inu'k*, human beings; the Passamaquoddy, *peste-mohkatiyek*, the people of the place where pollock are plentiful; and the Penobscot, *panawahpskek*, where the rocks widen or open out.¹⁵

There is no easy, neat way to refer to this particular group of Algonkian-speaking people of Northeastern North America. As a group Micmacs, Maliseets, Penobscots, and Passamaquoddies have no label that refers only to themselves. Some scholars have used the term "Wabanaki" to label these four Native American nations, but historically that term was used for a confederacy that included the Mohawks of Kanawake.¹⁶ "Algonkian-speaking people of Northeastern North America," besides showing little economy of phrase, also includes more than these four nations.¹⁷ Because it describes the historical kin relationship between the Maliseet, Passamaquoddy, and Penobscot, on the one hand, and the more distant cousins, the Micmac, on the other, many scholars have opted for the shorthand "Abenaki and Micmac."¹⁸ I follow that labeling convention here, well aware of its imperfections.

Of the four, the Micmac used the easternmost territory, comprising what is now mainland Nova Scotia as well as Cape Breton, Prince Edward Island, and parts of what is now New Brunswick and Quebec. The Maliseet used the land along the St. John River from the St. Lawrence River to the Bay of Fundy, while the Passamaquoddy used land extending along the Bay of Fundy south from Maliseet territory and centering on the St. Croix River. The Penobscot used the land south of the Passamaquoddies, in a territory extending from the Bay of Fundy north into the interior of Maine, centering on the Penobscot River. Prior to European contact the Abenaki used land from the St. John River in what is now New Brunswick to Lake Champlain in what is now Vermont.

Currently Micmac people live on twenty-eight reserves in the Canadian provinces of New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island, Québec, Newfoundland, and Nova Scotia as well as one community in Maine and a large off-reserve population in Boston. The Micmac people who will figure in this inquiry are from communities in Big Cove, New Brunswick; Shubenacadie, Nova Scotia; Maria, Québec; and Lennox Island, Prince Edward Island. Maliseets live in eight com-

munities with six reserves along the St. John River. There are two Passamaquoddy communities at three reservations in Maine, and one Penobscot community at Old Town reservation, also in Maine.¹⁹ The significant Maliseet and Passamaquoddy consultants who appear in these pages—Gabriel Acquin, Tomah Joseph, Louis Mitchell—lived in the nineteenth-century versions of the communities of St. Mary’s on the St. John River near Fredericton, New Brunswick and Sebayik (Pleasant Point) near Eastport, Maine.

While this inquiry touches directly on the religious history of these four Native American nations, its central concern is with the scholarly study of these and other Native American religions. I begin the inquiry with where my curiosity was first engaged—the story of Kluskap and Malsum, and the preeminent collector and reteller of that story, Charles Godfrey Leland.²⁰ Leland is himself worthy of a full-length study; the data from his life and folklore studies have already sustained two Ph.D. dissertations.²¹ His personal religious history bears on this inquiry as much for what it does not contain as for what it does. Raised in the Unitarian Church of the Reverend W. H. Furness in Philadelphia, Leland spent his college years at Princeton attending the Episcopal Church, enamoured of its elitism, and, because it was required, the Presbyterian Church associated with the College.²² While attending the latter, according to his own account, he read books during the sermons—which he characterized as mostly pouring water on a drowned mouse.²³ After he left Princeton, he was not a regular churchgoer, and he did not belong to any church.²⁴ Except the liberal Christian influence of the Unitarians and a life-long aversion to Roman Catholicism, little from his interaction with mainstream Christianity seems to have influenced his life work. Indeed, when he writes of his experiences of Christianity, as he does infrequently, he seems curiously unemphatic, especially in contrast to the extensive and enthusiastic work of his folklore studies. More than a mere observer but less than a full participant, Leland was attracted in his lifetime to Gypsy lore and language, the “Old Religion” of Italy, as well as the religions and stories of those he called the “Red Indians.”

Although Charles Leland would, if he could have afforded it, have spent his whole life investigating liminal peoples and the religions at the margins of elite society, he could not and did not. He trained as a lawyer,²⁵ but worked as a magazine editor, journalist, and political writer. In this latter capacity he campaigned for abolition, using the argument that slavery was unnecessary because “white men” were

capable of doing everything better than “negroes,” including raising cotton. Furthermore, the dignity and prosperity of these “white men” were at stake.²⁶

Part of Leland’s journalistic duties took him to the “frontier” of the adolescent nation, which in 1866 was located in Kansas. There, as part of his tourist entertainment, he hunted buffalo and met a group of Kaw, a Siouan people.²⁷ Later, after a ten-year stay in England, he would meet the Passamaquoddy consultants who would provide the impetus for retelling, in 1884, a large collection of Abenaki and Micmac stories, *The Algonquin Legends of New England*, most recently reprinted in 1992.²⁸ In his autobiography Leland is intent on underscoring his close relationship with Native Americans, a theme picked up by his biographer.²⁹ In fact, Leland felt that there was something of the “Indian” in him, a character trait that was manifest in all manner of behavior from his habit of making small smudge fires alongside the road during rest breaks to what he saw as his “natural” rapport with Native Americans. This feature of Leland’s self-understanding will prove illuminating in the chapters that follow. By way of this introduction, though, it is important to note that Leland is not alone in his sense that he shares something special with the “Indian.” If the purely anecdotal evidence of the number of people who are eager to tell me of their “Indian” grandmother is a worthy indicator, this feeling is widespread among not-Natives.³⁰ I, too, have experienced the pull of this feeling. As a vantage point from which to reflect briefly on similar phenomena, I want to recount my most memorable formative encounter with the “Indian.”

I spent my fifteenth summer as a staff member at a Boy Scout camp (called a “Reservation”[!]) in northern Vermont. Toward the end of the summer I was inducted into an esoteric organization within the Boy Scouts of America called the Order of the Arrow (see Figure 1.1).³¹ The first part of the initiation was publicly to set apart the boys who, if they passed the Ordeal, would become members of the Order. It was dark but not quite chilly when the whole camp arranged itself in a number of concentric horseshoe-shaped lines before a large tipi in a field. Standing next to the tipi, a drummer in a loincloth and single feather kept a steady beat as we assembled. The boys in the lines stopped punching each other on the arms; there was anticipation. The drumming suddenly stopped. Even though I had seen this event before and knew all the guys—Jeff, Butch, Pud, and the rest—who would soon appear from the tipi, I found myself holding my breath.



Figure 1.1. "The Higher Vision" from *Order of the Arrow Handbook, 50 Years Anniversary Edition*, New Brunswick, N.J.: Boy Scouts of America, 1965. (Courtesy Boy Scouts of America)

We heard the bells first. With each step the ankle bells jangled. The drum began again. In all there were five "Indians" who emerged from the tipi: first a loincloth-clad torch carrier, followed by three powerful looking "Indians," then another torch carrier. The three central "Indians" commanded our attention. Over twenty-five years later I cannot remember exactly what they wore, but I do remember Plains dress: a full eagle-feather headdress on one, a complete buckskin outfit on another, buffalo horn head gear; one had his face painted half black and half red. They walked slowly, steadily, in time to the drum between the curving lines of boys. A sixth torch carrier had joined them, walking equally ceremoniously, but always behind the line facing the other five. Periodically this sixth, recognizing an initiate, would

stop behind him, face the drum, and raise his torch slowly into the air. The drumming crescendoed, then stopped abruptly just as the three impressive figures stopped and turned to face the neophyte.

My own Scout troop was in camp; I had seen this ceremony three times already that summer. I knew, standing there in the dark, there was a good chance I would be chosen for initiation. I was nervous—scared even—and angry with myself for being so. I reasoned that two of the three prominent “Indians” (the “medicine man” and the “chief”?) were my bunkmates in the staff tent. When they stopped in front of me, I looked for some sign of recognition. There was none. I felt the adrenaline rush of fight-or-flight; my heart pounded; I forgot to breathe. One of them placed his hands on my shoulders, then slapped my left shoulder three times, hard.

I do not remember what happened next. I do remember all of the boys who were “tapped out” came together later that night at a central meeting area. There we underwent another part of the Ordeal. I remember my shoulder was black and blue for days after. I remember I was sworn to secrecy. Curiously, although I left the Scouts shortly thereafter (and not because of this initiation experience), I still feel bound by that vow. Suffice it to say that the “Indian” continued to play an important ceremonial role during the remaining twenty-three hours of the Ordeal. Further, my knowledge that the “Indians” were really Jeff and Butch and Pud and that the “torches” were really rolls of toilet paper soaked in kerosene, stuck in number-ten cans nailed to broom handles, did nothing to blunt my adolescent sense of epiphany when, after a typical initiatory trial that marched us blindfolded deep into the forest, an anonymous “brave” pulled down my blindfold and spun me around to reveal a breathtaking tableau of “real-live” torch-lit “Indians” arrayed on a bluff above me.

Reflecting on this sequence of events some time later, I came to see this whole experience, including the imitation of the “Indians,” as pretty strange stuff. It turns out, however, that my experience of “Indians” is not all that unusual. The Scouts are not alone in their desire to play or even become “Indians.” This “persistent theme in North American culture” has found expression in other children’s camps, including those of the YMCA, as well as the Woodcraft League of Ernest Thompson Seton.³² If these imitations of “Indians” by children were all there was, it would be enough to draw our attention; but adults, too, play “Indian.”

The “Indian” Hobbyist Movement entails not-Natives learning



Figure 1.2. “Indian” hobbyist, Westerwald (near Koblenz) Germany. (Photograph by Dawn Goss)

“Indian” arts and crafts, songs, dances, ceremonies, and other aspects of (usually Plains) culture in order to gather periodically and share what they have learned with one another at “powwows.” The result is what looks to be a Plains encampment in Cleveland, Ohio, or Detroit, Michigan; Dresden, Germany, or Stockholm, Sweden. Infrequently some political awareness of the situation of contemporary Native Americans is part of the hobbyist movement; usually it is not (see Figure 1.2).³³

Beginning in the 1960s in North American popular counterculture, as Steward Brand indicates, “hippies” were also enamored of “Indians” but expressed their imitation in a much less systematic and rigorous way than the Hobbyists.³⁴ More recently, the Bear Tribe

Medicine Society provides an example with a more obvious and systematic religious dimension. These mostly not-Native followers of Sun Bear often express the transformative power of Sun Bear's words and Bear Tribe programs by their "Indian" names—Elizabeth "Turtle Heart" Robinson, Simon Henderson "Corn Man," Erika Thunderbird Woman Malitsky, David Whitehawk Moore.³⁵ At a 1983 Gathering of the Tribe, participants paid \$100 for three days of camping, meals, and instruction in offering tobacco, the sweat lodge, pipe ceremony, Give-Away, and Medicine Wheel.³⁶

Ten years later the Bear Tribe was recovering from the death of its charismatic leader. Sun Bear "passed into the Spirit" on June 19, 1992, from esophageal cancer, naming Marlise Wabun Wind as his successor to the position of Medicine Chief of the Bear Tribe. He left behind "some questions . . . that anyone claiming to channel me would have to be able to answer to prove the truth of their claim," and a heart that "kept beating for an hour after his life essence left his body, like the heart of the turtle, symbol of this continent."³⁷ Wabun Wind remembered her teacher as "the first true contemporary bridge between the Native and mainstream cultures and as the visionary who brought the Medicine Wheel back to his people."³⁸ Whether the Bear Tribe can remain a viable not-Native religious option following the death of this charismatic leader remains, in 1993, to be seen. It is making every effort, trying to replace the single teacher with a "tribe of teachers" organized into a network, a "web of light," complete with an organizational chart.³⁹ The *Bear Tribe Directory* lists a number of different programs. The ten-day Introductory Program, at which the participant will encounter topics like "techniques for connecting with your own energy and the energy of Mother Earth" and "working with the sweat lodge and pipe ceremonies," has a sliding fee schedule from \$695 to \$1,195 depending on income. Included in the program are "teaching, meals and camping space" (27). Another teaching topic is the "history, philosophy and life-ways of indigenous peoples as they relate to contemporary life." The appellations and phrases are here all correct; but the "Indians" and their special teachings are not far beneath the surface.

Finally there are, in this catalog of imitative encounters with the "Indian," not-Native individuals who, for a variety of reasons, have passed themselves off as Native Americans. In other words, they have become "Indians." Included in this group are Jamake Highwater,



Figure 1.3. Grey Owl at Niagara Falls, July, 1937. (Photo courtesy of the Archives of Ontario/S14482. Source: Grey Owl and Anahareo Collection, lent by Dawn Richardson)

author of the 1981 *The Primal Mind* which was made into a television film.⁴⁰ Buffalo Child Long Lance, author of the 1928 *Long Lance*, who went on to lecture on behalf of Native Americans all over North America;⁴¹ and Grey Owl, a writer and lecturer who toured Canada, England, and the United States in the 1930s. Born Archie Belaney, an Englishman, Grey Owl was unique for his claim to have converted from a life of hunting and trapping to one of conservation. Grey Owl's work with wildlife led to his employment as "caretaker of park animals" at Riding Mountain National Park in Manitoba, a position he held until his death in 1938 (see Figure 1.3).⁴²

The point of cataloging these manifestations of this persistent cultural theme—imitating "Indians"—is to underscore their incongruity. As I began my research into the study of Native American religions, I found

the theme itself, let alone its persistence, baffling. It is also unsettling. Playing at being “Indian” offends many Native people. It is easy to confuse the imitation of a stereotype and the “appropriation of Native cultures.”⁴³ It was a breathtaking experience reading the *Bear Tribe Directory* and Wendy Rose’s “The Great Pretenders: Further Reflections on Whiteshamanism” in the same midwinter week. Rose, a Hopi, includes mention of Sun Bear in a section entitled “Cults and Culture Vultures.” She reports the Chippewa had “never participated in or attended bona fide native activities” and labels his coauthor (and now Medicine Chief) Wabun “a bona fide whiteshaman.”⁴⁴ From Rose’s point of view “whiteshamanism” is pernicious:

During performances, whiteshamans typically don a bastardized composite of pseudo-Indian “style” buckskins, beadwork, headbands, moccasins, and sometimes paper masks intended to portray native spiritual beings such as Coyote or Raven. They often appear carrying gourd rattles, eagle feathers, “peace pipes,” medicine bags, and other items reflective of native ceremonial life. Their readings are frequently accompanied by the burning of sage, “pipe ceremonies,” the conducting of chants and beating of drums of vaguely native type, and the like. One may be hard-pressed to identify a particular indigenous culture being portrayed, but the obviously intended effect is American Indian. The point is that the whiteshaman reader/performer aspires to “embody the Indian,” in effect “becoming” *the* “real” Indian even when actual native people are present. Native reality is thereby subsumed and negated by imposition of a “greater” or “more universal” contrivance.⁴⁵

If “whiteshamanism” is the process whereby not-Natives try to incarnate their own images of the “Indian” stereotype—and it seems to be—then Rose’s last comment here gives one pause. On one hand, if her perception that her “Native reality” is “subsumed and negated” by “whiteshamanism” is based on her experience, it is inviolable. On the other hand, her perception points to a layered set of incongruities at the heart of this phenomenon.⁴⁶

What draws my attention is not so much that these imitations are offensive, although they may well be. It is that they just do not fit—they are anomalous. If, as Jonathan Z. Smith says, incongruity is an occasion for thought,⁴⁷ then this phenomenon—the determined not-

Native imitation of the image of the “Indian”—serves as a fine springboard for this inquiry.

It is not an accident that our inquiry begins in the next chapter with a story. Native Americans, like people everywhere, tell stories as one way of engaging in the paradoxical process of simultaneously creating and responding to a world of meaning. Not surprisingly then, studies of Native American religions often rely on the explication of stories for insight. The story of Kluskap and Malsum—the linchpin as well as the beginning of our inquiry—has meant and continues to mean much to people both not-Native and Native. I cannot discuss either the history or significance of this story without the reader knowing something of the story itself. First, then, we will need a telling of the story of Kluskap and his twin brother, Malsum.