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Bioregionalism: An Ethics of Loyalty to Place

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Abstract: *Bioregionalism is an environmental movement and social philosophy that envisions decentralized community self-rule within political boundaries redrawn to reflect the natural contours of differing ecosystem types. Emerging from the religious "counterculture" of the United States it has escaped these enclaves, and has begun to influence contemporary environmental politics and resource management strategies. Its goal is nothing less than to foster an ethics of place and create sustainable human societies in harmony with the natural world, and consistent with the flourishing of all native species. This paper assesses the history, types, impacts, perils and prospects of "countercultural" bioregionalism and its offshoots.*

When the animals come to us,
asking for our help
will we know what they are saying?

When the plants speak to us
in their delicate, beautiful language,
will we be able to answer them?

When the planet herself
sings to us in our dreams,
will we be able to wake ourselves
and act?

Gary Lawless, in *Home: A Bioregional Reader* (Andruss et al. 1990)

A change is taking place . . . [It] involves the spread of communities of people who are trying a new approach to living on and with the land. We call this phenomenon *re-inhabitation* . . . which means developing a bioregional identity . . . a process that involves learning to live-in-place . . . , in an area that has been disrupted and injured through past exploitation. . . . It involves becoming native to a place through becoming aware of the particular ecological relationships that operate within and around it. It means understanding activities and evolving social behavior that will enrich the life of that place, restore its life-supporting systems, and establish an ecologically and socially sustainable pattern of existence within it. Simply stated it involves becoming fully alive in and with a place. It involves applying for membership in a biotic community and ceasing to be its exploiter.

Raymond Dasmann and
Peter Berg in "Reinhabiting
California" (1977)

Earth First! is the militia of the bioregional movement.

Dave Foreman, co-founder
of Earth First!, April 86
(Haenke 1986, p. 28)

Bioregionalism is a rapidly growing green political philosophy emerging with greatest force from within the "counterculture" in the United States where it now boasts well over one hundred very active regional organizations and conservatively, thousands of adherents. Bioregionalists envision decentralized community self-rule ("participatory democracy") within political boundaries redrawn to reflect the natural contours of differing ecosystem types. The fundamental goal of bioregionalism is nothing less than the creation (some say "remembering" or "borrowing") of sustainable human societies in harmony with the natural world and consistent with the flourishing of all native species. Although bioregional ideas are becoming influential far beyond their countercultural birthplaces, I will focus first on their original and countercultural forms.[1] Countercultural bioregionalism is animated by two central convictions: (1) people within a given ecological region can, by virtue of "being there" and "learning the land" (its climate patterns, native flora and fauna, water systems, soils, and so on) better care for and build ecologically sustainable lifeways than can people and institutions placed farther away; (2) for local communities to revision and construct such lifeways, a fundamental reorienting of human consciousness is needed (at least for modern, industrial humans). This reformation of consciousness is post-anthropocentric, sometimes post-humanist, and usually "deep ecological"—namely it values the natural world intrinsically, for its own sake, rather than merely for its usefulness to human beings.

Usually the deep ecological conviction is tied to a perception that the land is sacred and all its inhabitants are worthy of reverence (this perception takes many forms and is expressed in plural ways). This axiology in turn is based on a belief in the possibility of kinship, and even communication, with the "more than human" world (Abram 1996). Indeed, as the epigraph-poem by Gary Lawless suggests, bioregionalism is often

grounded in what can accurately be labeled an "animistic" or "pantheistic" world view—pointing to the possibility of interspecies communication, or even of the planet communicating with us.[2] Indeed, were we to "map" this movement (to borrow an idea from Martin Marty 1976) within what Collin Campbell (1972) has labeled the "cultic milieu" (the counterculture's plural amalgamations of alternative spiritualities) bioregionalism (at least its main streams) could be viewed as an "alternative" or "new religious movement." It overlaps significantly with a number of kindred social movements, including neopaganism and several forms of "radical ecology" including the "feminist spirituality movement" (Eller 1993), deep ecology (including its militant vanguard Earth First!), green-anarchism (including its most important green-manifestation, social ecology) and even sometimes with New Age spirituality and "transpersonal" psychology.[3]

In the following pages I will (1) expand my description of the ecological, political, and religious dimensions of bioregionalism to typify more fully the bioregional worldview; (2) describe some of its historical sources and contemporary manifestations, including its sometimes tense relations with the so called "radical environmental" movement; (3) discuss some of the theoretical and practical problems that inhere to such a green ideology; and (4) conclude with reflections on the dramatic impacts of this fascinating movement including how it promotes an important rethinking of a variety of assumptions, thereby contributing to a critical reappraisal of many aspects of the nature-human relationship.

A Global Bricolage of Sources

Bioregionalism is a creative bricolage, namely, an amalgamation of many bits and pieces of diverse cultural systems. It appropriates ideas about "regionalism" from the ecological sciences, about political decentralization from certain political ideologies, and about spirituality from a variety of experiences, perceptions, and traditions. In an early bioregional treatise, Jim Dodge (1981, abridged reprint 1990) outlined bioregionalism's concerns in a similar tripartite way, writing that it involves and draws on "regionalism" (with regions defined by one or another set of ecological criteria), "anarchism" (meaning "political decentralization, self-determination, and a commitment to social equity"), and "spirituality" (with its key sources, "the primitive animist/Great Spirit tradition, various Eastern and esoteric religious practices, and plain ol' paying attention"). An overview of these three dimensions of bioregionalism follows.

Regionalism—and Ecological Science. It is important to recognize the influence of scientific ecology on the bioregional movement. From its earliest manifestations, some of the pioneers of bioregionalism drew heavily on cutting-edge ecological science. For example, *Turtle Island*, Gary Snyder's Pulitzer Prize-winning book of poetry and prose, that doubled as an early bioregional manifesto, was one of the first books to discuss the importance of "biological diversity" (1969, p.108). Ecological science has long been an important bioregional strategy for "learning the land." A number of those involved in the bioregional movement have made ecology their avocation or profession, and a significant proportion of these individuals deploy such knowledge as activists in efforts to thwart environmentally destructive enterprise. Since the mid 1980s, bioregional activists have increasingly borrowed insights from the recently created discipline of "conservation biology." Some have developed an expertise in Geographic Information Systems technologies in order to inventory and assess the needed habitats of at-risk species, providing crucial information for law-based appeal processes and litigation. The most ecologically sophisticated bioregionalists have become some of the nation's most effective wildlands defenders, through science-dependent appeals and lawsuits (Taylor 1997), or have been innovators in the nascent field of restoration ecology. Many of the participants in the subcultures of radical environmentalism are involved both in bioregional groups as well as Earth First! (including its various "biodiversity projects" and dozens of radical environmental offshoot-groups around the country). "Bioregionalists" and "radical environmentalists" often draw on similar scientific literature and employ similar strategies.[4]

Several of the scientist-pioneers of conservation biology have developed close ties with certain individuals and branches of the radical environmental movement.[5] Perhaps the best example of such an overlap can be found in the work of the Wildlands project. After a 1990 schism severed Earth First! into at least two major factions (Taylor 1994), Dave Foreman and John Davis began publishing in the spring of 1991 a new journal called *Wild Earth*. The next year, a special issue of *Wild Earth* appeared entitled *The Wildlands Project: Plotting a North American Wilderness Recovery Strategy* (Foreman and Davis 1992). It announced an ambitious, long-term, continental vision for wildlands preservation and restoration. The project was self-consciously based on ecological principles emerging from the discipline of conservation biology and, to a significant extent, on bioregional assumptions and values as well. This introductory issue included articles by nationally prominent conservation biologists Michael Soulé, and Reed Noss (who had also signed-on as board members for the Wildlands Project). Noss's contribution provided a comprehensive overview of the principles of conservation biology and how they could be applied to "wilderness recovery. . . the most important task of our generation" (Noss 1992).[6] Also in this issue, bioregionalism elder Gary Snyder (1992) stressed the importance for bioregional thought in general and the Wildlands Project in particular, of Systems Theory and two

sub-specialties of ecology, namely Island Biogeography and Landscape Ecology. Such ecological theories have become important in bioregional thinking because they suggest that preserving biodiversity (a central objective for bioregionalists) demands a careful integration of human cultures with nature *within* each ecosystem type or bioregion, and the need for large, relatively undisturbed wildlands. Without such careful integration and wildlands preservation the habitats some species depend upon will be destroyed by human settlements or commercial enterprise, or imperiled by geographic (and thus genetic) isolation. Recognizing the need for such careful integration, and the difficulties involved, explains the centrality of ecology to bioregional thinking and activism (Figures 1–4).

Anarchism—and Decentralism—as Green Political Ideology. Bioregionalism challenges the legitimacy of centralized state governance and existing political boundaries, envisioning decentralized political self-rule within units demarcated according to one or another concept of *bioregional* boundaries. Although bioregional ideology is usually anarchistic, it nevertheless encompasses a continuum of individuals from those who view present political arrangements as completely illegitimate (or even evil) to those who less stridently believe such arrangements may "have their legitimacies" (Snyder 1990, p. 40) but that they remain fundamentally flawed, necessitating their eventual (and hopefully rapid) replacement with decentralized, bioregional forms of social organization. Another source of disagreement among bioregionalists has to do with differing views about the likely agents of the needed transformations: humans or natural processes (sometimes personified as Mother Earth). Such disagreements lead to differing views that can be cast as three general types or tendencies, which I will label and briefly characterize as (1) Evolutionary or Lifestyle Bioregionalism; (2) Revolutionary Bioregionalism; and (3) Apocalyptic Bioregionalism.

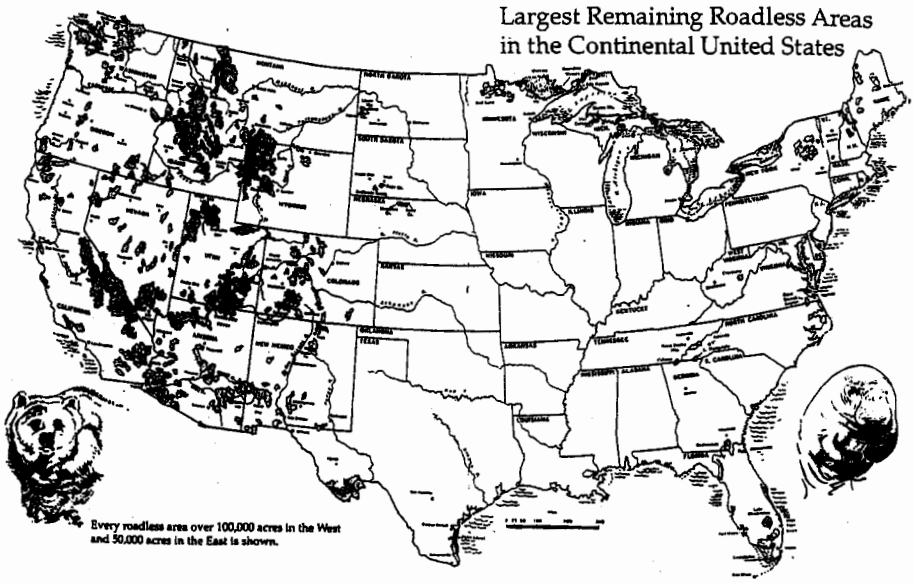


Figure 1. The Wildlands Project's bioregional vision begins with identifying and protecting wilderness and roadless areas. From "The Wildlands Project, *Wild Earth* (Special Issue) 1992.

Evolutionary and Lifestyle Bioregionalism. The main stream of bioregional thought in the United States can best be characterized as evolutionary or lifestyle bioregionalism (sometimes this kind has a relatively pragmatic vein), even though most of the early proponents of countercultural bioregionalism trace their political ideology to anarchism. Such nuance in interpretation requires careful navigation through the views of early pioneers of bioregionalism, especially Gary Snyder and Jim Dodge. Gary Snyder once acknowledged, for example, although he did not know from where the term bioregionalism came, that he knew that it drew strongly

> on the history of anarchist thought . . . [on the conviction] that we do not need a state, and that the state or government is *not* necessarily synonymous with the social order and organization inherent in society. By *anarchism* I mean a nonviolent political philosophy that finds order in the possibilities of a free society, and not in the imposed order of a state structure operating with a monopoly on violence. . . [and] not . . . wild-eyed bomb throwers. . . . So North American bioregionalism is an extension of anarchist thought, combined with much appreciation of American Indian culture areas, the recognition of the virtues of decentralization, and the insights of "field ecology." (Snyder in Woods and Schoonmaker 1985, pp.115–116)

Snyder's recollection parallels Jim Dodge's understanding of anarchism, expressing a view akin to those I have heard expressed many times by green-anarchists during my fieldwork: "Anarchy doesn't mean out of control; it means out of *their* control" (Dodge 1981, p. 8). For Dodge, like Snyder, anarchism means "self-reliance, the conviction that we as a community . . . can make decisions regarding our individual and communal lives and gladly accept the responsibilities and consequences of those decisions." Most bioregionalists share the conviction (or hope) expressed by Dodge, that with locally based, face-to-face interactions, "we can act more quickly in relation to natural systems and . . . hopefully with more knowledge and care" (Dodge 1981, p. 8).[7]

Figure 2

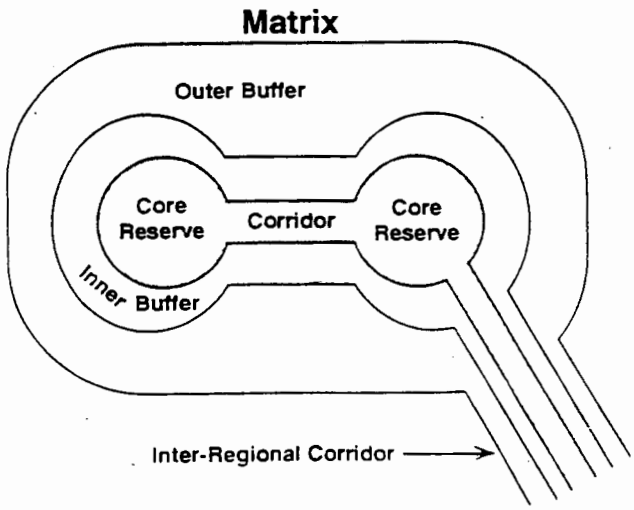


Figure 3

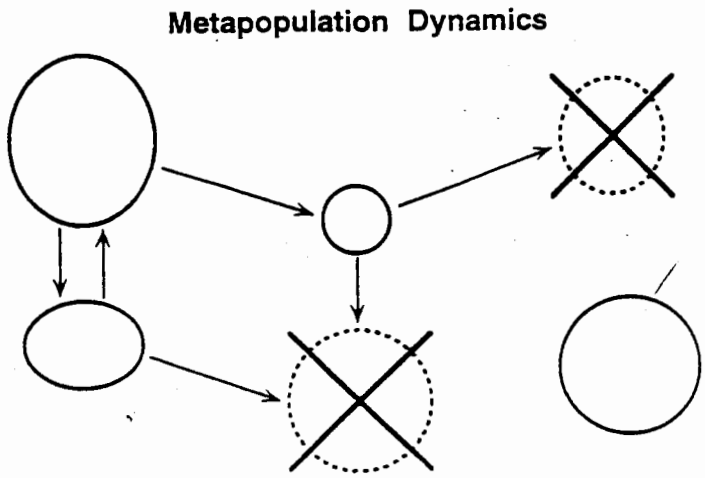
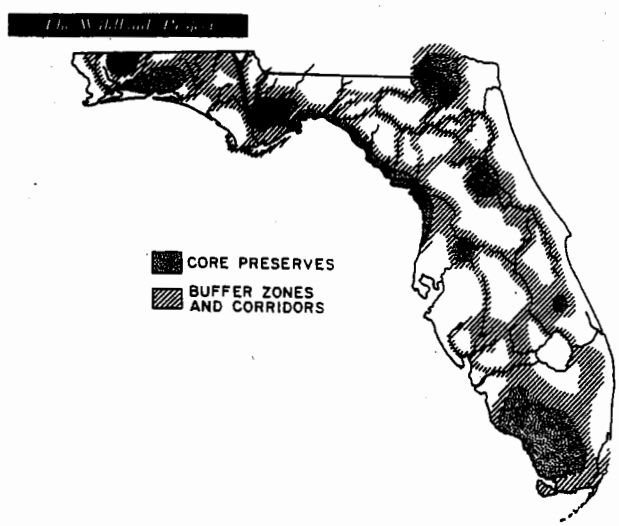


Figure 4



Figures 2–4. Core-Buffer Matrix, Metapopulation Dynamics, and Florida Core-Buffer Map (from Noss 1992). The central idea of the project is to protect large biological preserves by surrounding them with buffer-zones with low levels of human enterprise near them. By then connecting these reserves with wildland corridors, the migration of species populations between the preserves can be ensured, and thus the genetic vitality and viability of these species secured.

Although bioregionalists such as Snyder and Dodge express a radical, decentralist vision incompatible with nation-state regimes, they also express a more moderate and pragmatic political analysis than do some other bioregionalists. Snyder and Dodge are greatly concerned but appear less pessimistic in their ecological analyses than do their more apocalyptic kin. They yet hope that human societies can evolve to make the needed changes. They seem to believe that it might be possible to avert a catastrophic path to sustainability.

All bioregionalists wish to supplant nation-states in favor of decentralized and face-to-face community polity but evolutionary bioregionalists hope that this can occur without either revolutionary action or ecosystem collapse. Consequently, such activists are less likely to demonize nation-states or their functionaries than are their "revolutionary" and "apocalyptic" brethren. Even though Gary Snyder's most cherished values subvert national regimes (1990, pp. 37–39), he grudgingly acknowledges that such regimes "have their legitimacies." Nevertheless, he is harshly critical of them and envisions their passing:

> Calling this place "America" is to name it after a stranger. "Turtle Island" is the name given this continent by Native Americans based on creation mythology. The United States, Canada, Mexico, *are passing political entities*; they have their legitimacies . . . but they will lose their mandate if they continue to abuse the land. "The state is destroyed, but the mountains and rivers remain." (Snyder 1990, p. 40)

This statement captures the ambivalence felt by many bioregionalists toward nation-states. Clearly, Snyder's eschatology also envisions the dismantling of the state, but his longer time frame and less categorical denunciation of modern democracies allows him to promote "through the system" activism as well. Thus, some bioregionalists use federal environmental laws (and strive to retain

Figure 5. Lifestyle Bioregionalism. The environmentally sustainable, bioregional lifestyle begins at home. Source: *Our Ecological Footprint* (Wackernagle and Rees 1996) published in the New Catalyst Bioregional Series New Society Publishers).

and improve such laws through electoral politics) in defense of ecosystems in their regions. In general, the evolutionary bioregionalists are more "realistic," both about the repressive power of the state (thus eschewing revolutionary romanticism), and in recognizing that moving toward bioregional polity must be a long-term endeavor.

Evolutionary or lifestyle bioregionalists seem unconvinced that political and environmental turmoil necessarily must precede the needed changes. Such bioregionalists tend to place their greatest energy into "learning the lore" of their regions and how to live presently in regionally self-sufficient, environmentally sustainable ways, while participating in politics primarily at the regional level. (Sale 1991, pp. 44–45, 42) Practicing organic agriculture or "permaculture" (Mollison 1991), engaging in ecological restoration projects, replacing consumer culture with a more satisfying art-and-ritual infused bioregional culture, and creating and utilizing "alternative" housing and energy, preoccupy the majority of such activists' energies.

To generalize, those who associate primarily under the umbrella of bioregional groups and networks, attending their congresses, reading their publications, and promoting the bioregional movement itself, can best be viewed as "evolutionary," "lifestyle," or even "pragmatic" bioregionalists. Although strategically oriented more to reform than anti-state rebellion, such bioregionalism remains utopian, envisioning the state's eventual replacement. Such is bioregionalism's predominant stream in America. Its worldview elements overlap significantly, however, with what I am calling the revolutionary and apocalyptic camps (Figures 5 and 6).

Revolutionary Bioregionalism. Some bioregionalists are revolutionaries intent on dismantling industrial nation-states. They intend to attack the infrastructures of industrial societies in every way possible, including by sabotage. Some such activists have recently taken to calling this perspective "revolutionary ecology," expressing themselves primarily in two journals, *Live Wild or Die* and *Alarm: a Voice of Revolutionary Ecology.* These journals were created by anarchist participants within Earth First! who felt

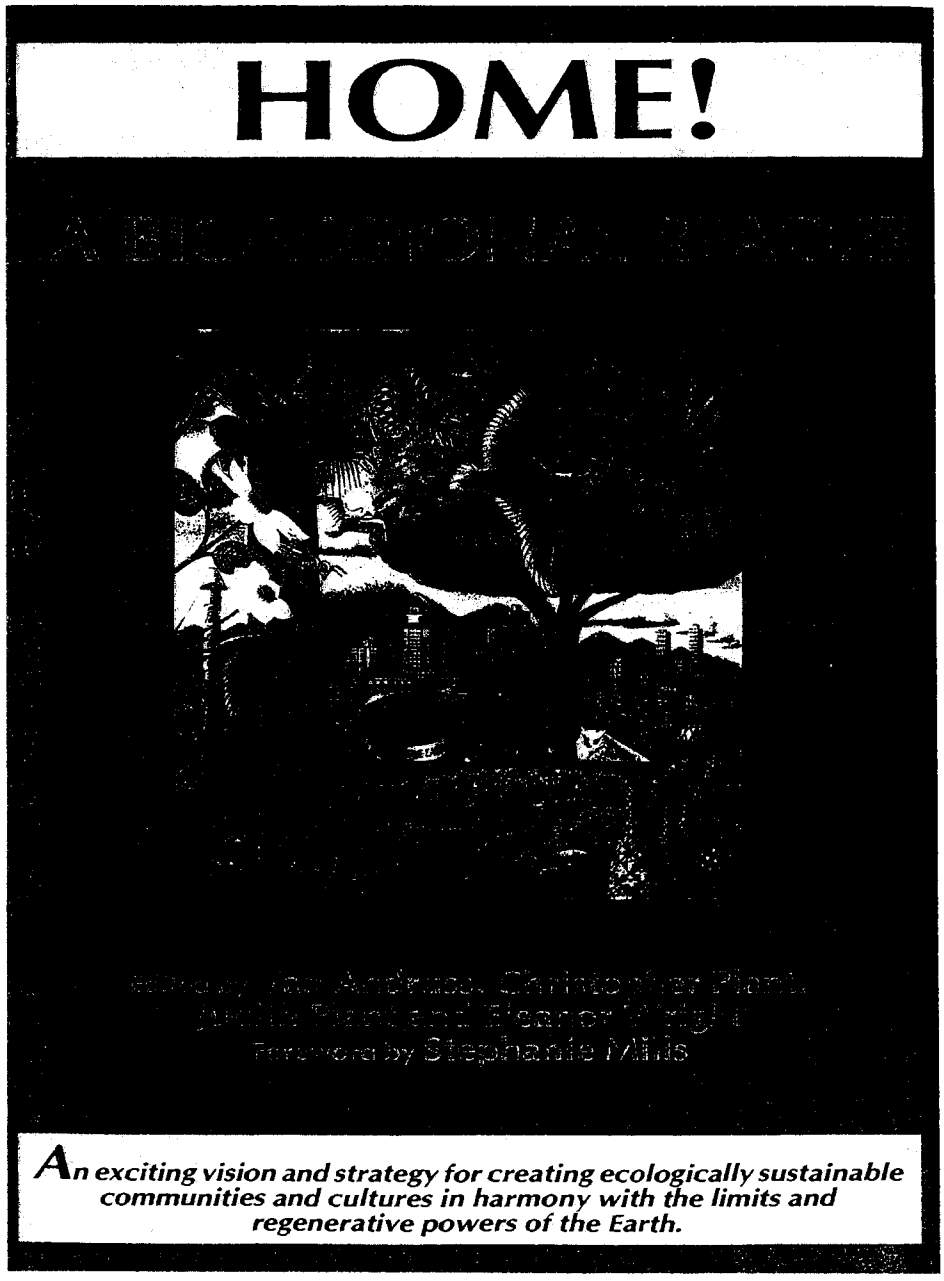


Figure 6. *Home.*

that such perspectives were needed but ignored by its premier outlet, the *Earth First!* journal.[8] As I have focused on such groups elsewhere (Taylor 1998), I will not discuss them in detail here (Figure 7).

Apocalyptic Bioregionalism. A third and differently radical form of bioregionalism shifts agency from human revolutionaries to the laws of nature, and sometimes if not usually, to nature personified as an intelligent, decision-making presence. A belief in earth or some other intelligent being is sometimes grounded upon a scientific theory such as the Gaia hypothesis, and for others, on pantheistic or other organicist religious perceptions, in which earth herself, for example, may be called Gaia, Mother Earth, or even the Goddess. Often, for adherents to such worldviews, the science-grounded gaian view of the earth as a living organism is seen to cohere with primal religious beliefs of earth's processes as embedded in a sacred cosmos. But whether grounded first in science or an intuitive religious perception, with apocalyptic bioregionalism, the devolution of industrial nation-states is an expected outcome of the environmentally destructive growth-at-all-costs economies they promote.

Both scientific and overtly religious approaches to bioregionalism often assume an apocalyptic tone. Ironically, it is from such an expectation that some activists deduce hope, based on the belief that the envisioned sufferings of the revolutionary period, or variously, the devolution of industrial nation-states as a result of the collapse of over-exploited ecosystems might create the necessary conditions for the re-creation of decentralized and sustainable lifeways.

Fluid Boundaries Among Bioregional Subcultures. My contention that the dominant wave of America's bioregional movement has an evolutionary-lifestyle orientation can be further illustrated by examining tensions between such bioregionalism and its more revolutionary and apocalyptic kin. Most radical environmental activists are bioregionalists who best fit in the revolutionary or apocalyptic camp. Many of the revolutionaries share the view that ecological degradation will also play a crucial role in precipitating a revolution. And most activists of the more revolutionary and apocalyptic bent aspire to low-impact lifestyles. Yet the more time such activists engage in the lifestyle activism characteristic of the evolutionary bioregionalists, the less closely associated they will be with the anti-state activism, or with the direct action defense of ecosystems that typifies the revolutionary and apocalyptic factions (Figure 8).

Dave Foreman, co-founder of Earth First!, provides an excellent example of the apocalyptic alternative, playing off the important bioregional idea of "reinhabitation," or learning about and living-in-place.[9] Foreman argues that "in reinhabiting a place, by dwelling in it, we become that place" (1987). Therefore, he continues, "Our most fundamental duty is that of self-defense. We are the wilderness defending itself." He then weaves this notion of self-defense into his apocalyptic thinking exclaiming, "Our self-defense is damage control until the machine plows into that

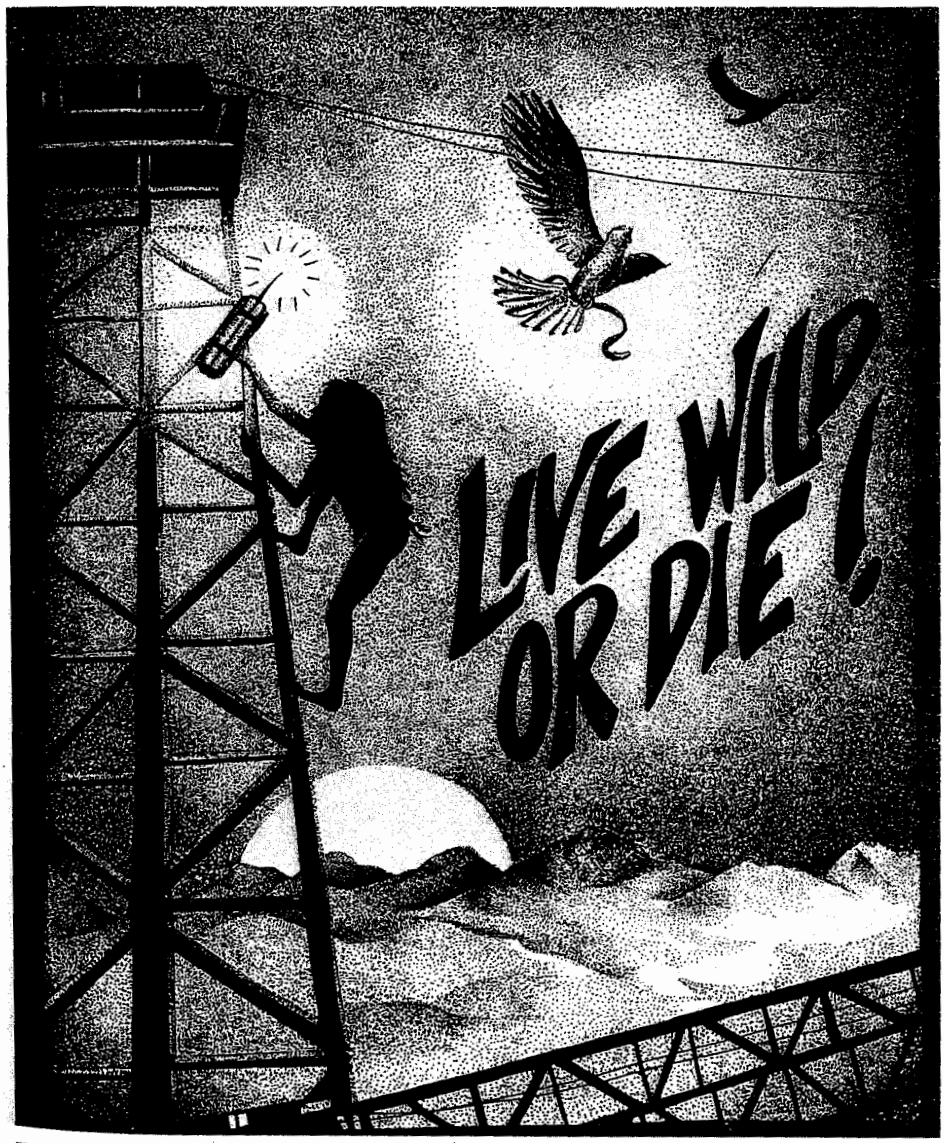


Figure 7. Premier issue of *Live Wild or Die*, 1989. Started by anarchistic Earth First!ers, frustrated with what they considered to be its tame tactics; note the Apocalyptic theme.

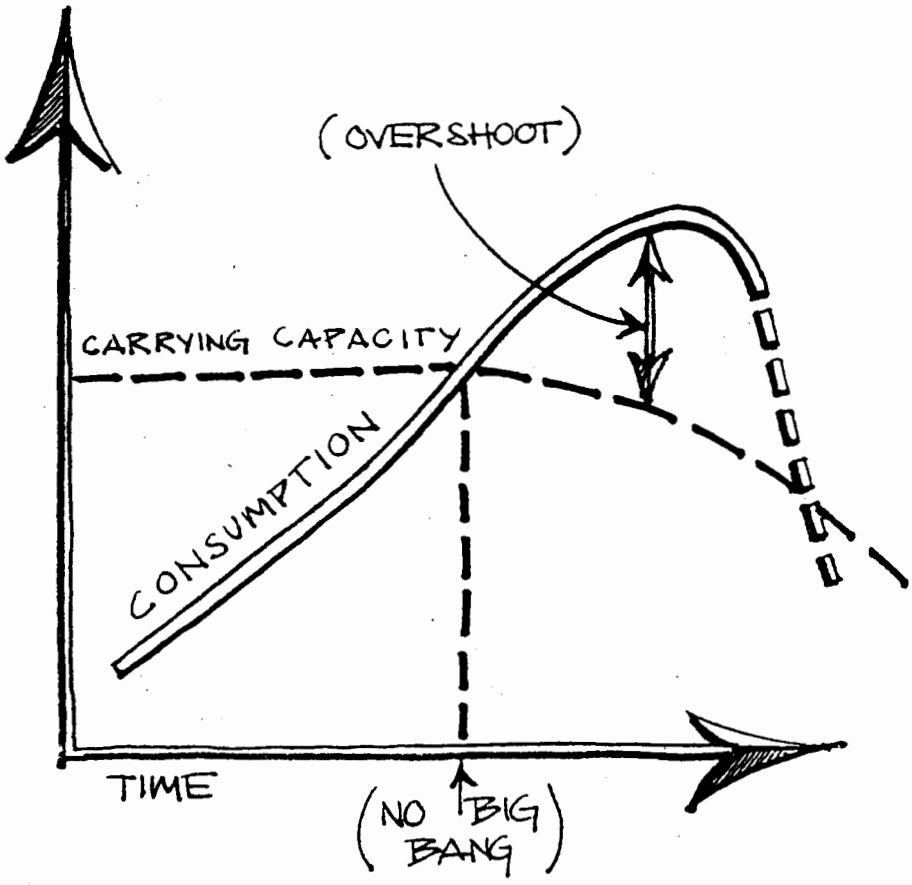


Figure 8. Overshoot. Eco-apocalypticism is often based on the study of "population dynamics" and expects a precipitous human die off as our species "overshoots the carrying capacity of the earth. This graphic is from Wackernagle and Rees 1996, published in the New Catalyst Bioregional Series. On such science, see especially Catton 1980.

brick wall and industrial civilization self-destructs as it must" (1987). From this perspective Foreman criticizes the priorities of the central streams of bioregional practice; prior to this collapse, he believes, it is impossible to create sustainable societies.

Despite his affinity for it, Foreman once complained that bioregionalism has become "mired in its composting toilets, organic gardens, handcrafts [and] recycling" while ignoring the duty to defend the biotic diversity of the planet. "Bioregionalism is more than technique, it is resacralization and self-defense," Foreman insisted.[10] Yet he also sees potential in bioregionalism. In an early bioregional anthology he implored:

> There are two things to do right now. One is this self-defense of the wild. More of us need to do everything we can to try to ensure that wild places remain, and that's whether you monkeywrench, or just buy wild land, or whether you work through the political process for better management, whatever. The other is what the bioregional movement is doing: trying to re-connect with our tribal roots, trying to recreate, to grope towards, that kind of society. . . . I see ecodefense and bioregionalism as being two sides of the path towards whatever society will become in the future, once we're through this catastrophic event that's coming up. (Foreman 1990, p. 65).

This brief excursus suggests that all three bioregional approaches, lifestyle focused, revolutionary direct action, and "nature bats last" apocalypticism, are closely aligned and often intertwined. These categories will only illuminate the bioregional landscape if we apprehend that the membranes between these typified groups and emphases are permeable. It is likely that, were I to identify specific individuals as involved in one or another of these factions, objections would arise; a "lifestyle" bioregionalist asserting that she shares the apocalyptic ecological perspective, for example, even though she yet hopes that the transition to sustainability will not involve a great catastrophe. Indeed, revolutionary and lifestyle bioregionalists often share the apocalyptic worldview, and may well await the collapse of nation-states as inevitable or highly likely. The revolutionaries hope to speed their fall, the evolutionary bioregionalists hope instead to create the alternative culture and livelihoods, to supplant industrial lifeways and break trail to sustainable ones. By learning how to live on the land *now*, when industrial society with its unsustainable agriculture grinds to a halt, they will already have developed livelihoods appropriate to the post-industrial age.

To summarize and speak generally, evolutionary, revolutionary, and apocalyptic bioregionalists recognize the others as kin, and tensions between them, as family squabbles.[11]

Spirituality—and the Perception of a Sacred Earth

The preceding discussion has already indicated the affinity various bioregionalists express for animistic and pantheistic spiritualities. Such affinities are also characteristic of most Earth First! activists, whose religious perceptions and ritual practices I have analyzed in some detail elsewhere (Taylor 1993, 1994, 1995b, 1997). Such spiritualities I have labeled "primal" or "pagan" to reflect the widespread desire to emulate the purportedly nature-revering worldviews of the world's remnant primal (namely, small scale, tribal) societies.[12]

Because the myth-making and ritualizing found in Earth First! overlaps with the bioregional movement I will not here repeat such descriptive analysis. Instead, I will briefly illustrate the importance of such spiritu-

ality in bioregionalism, using the North American Bioregional Congress as an example of this general propensity.[13]

The First North American Bioregional Congress. A series of North American Bioregional Congresses began in 1984. The first one was organized by David Haenke and held in Missouri. John Davis, then the editor of the radical environmental journal *Earth First!* , quoted from the preamble of the first congress in an article that provides a good sense of this emerging subculture:

> Bioregionalism recognizes, nurtures, sustains and celebrates our local connections with: land; plants and animals; rivers, lakes and oceans; air; families, friends and neighbors; community; native traditions; and systems of production and trade. It is taking the time to learn the possibilities of place. It is mindfulness of local environment, history and community aspirations that can lead to a future of safe and sustainable life. It is reliance on well-understood and widely-used sources of food, power and waste disposal. It is secure employment based on supplying a rich diversity of services within the community and prudent surpluses to other regions. Bioregionalism is working to satisfy basic needs through local control in schools, health centers, and governments. The bioregional movement seeks to re-create a widely-shared sense of regional identity founded upon a renewed critical awareness of and respect for the integrity of our natural ecological communities. (Davis 1986, p. 12)

Davis shows how, from the very beginning of these congresses, there has been a great affinity between deep ecology (or "biocentrism," life-centered ethics) and bioregionalism. Indeed, this initial congress formally adopted the deep ecology principles of Arne Naess "almost intact," as Davis enthusiastically noted. He also commented on how, during this initial bioregional congress, Judith Plant argued that deep ecology and ecofeminism were fully compatible (Davis 1986). Plant (1989) would soon publish *Healing the Wounds: the Promise of Ecofeminism,* an important anthology integrating bioregional, deep ecological, and ecofeminist ideas. This volume demonstrates the growing influence of ecofeminism within radical environmental subcultures during the 1980s.

The Second North American Bioregional Congress, Northern Michigan, July 1986. During the second NABC an animistic proposal from "the committee for . . . Animism, Geomancy, and Interspecies Communication" was adopted by consensus. Drafted primarily by David Abram (who also wrote for *Earth First!* and attended its gatherings), the proposal was to have four non-human representatives at the next Congress: "one for the four-legged and crawling things, one for the flying people, one for our swimming people, one for our swimming cousins, and one (very sensitive soul) for the myriad plant beings." The statement affirmed, in a way that underscores a belief in interspecies communication, "that it is a very delicate, mysterious process whereby these representatives are recognized . . . we hope that the four representatives will be chosen not just by human consensus but by non-human consensus" (Abram et al. 1986).[14]

To modern ears such beliefs sound strange, but they are prevalent among radical environmental and bioregional groups. In a 1985 interview, Gary Snyder, who through his writings is probably the most influential "elder" in the bioregional movements, articulated a similar animistic epistemology, describing the "elegant, even if overly optimistic" view of a Crow Indian elder who once told him

> I'm not really worried about what white people are going to do on this continent. If anybody lives here long enough, the spirits will begin to speak to them. It's the power of the spirits coming up from the land. . . . That's what taught us, and it would teach everybody, if they'd just stay here. The old spirits and the old powers aren't lost; people just need to be around long enough to begin to influence them. (Woods and Schoonmaker 1985, p. 116)

Such a spiritual epistemology reinforces the bioregional commitment to place, for without staying put, one will never discern the land's sacred voices.[15] It thereby challenges directly the hyper-mobility promoted by today's increasingly global economy.[16]

The Third NABC, British Columbia, Canada, 1988. Beginning with ceremonies drawn from Native American cultures (a friendship dance) and the wiccan/pagan tradition (a spiral dance), the third NACB got underway, deeply infused with pagan spirituality. David Abram (1988, see also Zuckerman 1989, pp.4–5; 38–40), for example, an important mediator during the Congresses and the driving force behind the previously adopted resolution to recognize four participants representing our "non-human cousins," afterward described this aspect of the 1988 Congress. "Several of the intermediaries had prepared for months beforehand," Abram wrote, "through both study and empathy, to begin to identify with other species, at least to the point of being able to keep faith with these other modes of awareness while still listening . . . to the human bioregionalists." During the meetings,

> standing, or crouching, in each of the four directions, these individuals acted as potent witnesses . . . when the needs of their fellow species were violated. At one strong moment, a woman speaking eloquently . . . for fluid beings angrily interrupted a compromising proposal by the water committee, startling the assembled circle into momentary silence, and moving us all toward deeper mindfulness. (Abram 1988, pp. xx)

By 1988, a ritual process promoting mystical identification with non-human species, known as the Council of All Beings (Seed et al. 1988; Taylor 1994), had begun touring the country, mostly sponsored by radical environmentalists. Abram's report suggests that the Council had already influenced the 1988 NABC,[17] for this congress ended as do most of these newly invented rituals: "The gathering culminated with a rollicking masquerade dance, an 'all species ball,' under the full moon on the last night . . . in a full moon ritual [with] chanting."[18]

Despite great enthusiasm for the presence of non-human intermediaries and newly created ritual processes designed to summon them, during NABC II and III a spirituality committee could not arrive at a consensus statement regarding bioregional spirituality. Gene Marshall (1989) reflects vaguely on this failure without describing the disagreements. He then argues that David Haenke's view (current governments are illegitimate because they do not recognize "nature as sacred authority") provides a good starting point for developing an appropriate bioregional spirituality.

This appeal to Haenke's view of nature as sacred authority is ironic when juxtaposed with Haenke's own expressed ambivalence toward many of the movement's rituals. Such ambivalence illustrates the complex tensions regarding nature-based spirituality among bioregionalists, for despite his clear conviction about nature as sacred authority, Haenke afterward complained about the "contrived" character of some of the ceremonies at the congress. He was especially critical of the "tendency for some to impose pagan pomp" on all others present. His concern was strategic more than metaphysical, however, worrying that such insensitivity could hinder "bioregionalism's ability to reach out beyond its hippie and back-to-the-lander base" (Alexander in Zuckerman 1989, p. 7). Haenke's concerns intensified by the mid-1990s.[19]

Among the best sources revealing the earthly spirituality of the bioregional movement are *Home!: A Bioregional Reader* (Andruss et al. 1990), and *Turtle Talk: Voices for a Sustainable Future* (Plant and Plant 1990). The Andruss anthology includes, for example, an article by Starhawk (America's foremost Wiccan priestess, activist, and writer), envisioning a future of people and nature living harmoniously, whatever their religions, and a message of the Haudenosaunee, or the Six Nations Iroquois Confederacy, prescribing Native American spirituality and polity as an antidote to human ills. This latter article concludes by expressing a conviction shared by many bioregionalists, that

> traditional Native peoples hold the key to the reversal of the processes in Western Civilization which threaten unimaginable future suffering and destruction. Spiritualism is the highest form of political consciousness. And we, the Native peoples of the Western Hemisphere, are among the world's surviving proprietors of that kind of consciousness. We are here to impart that message. (Haudenosaunee 1990)[20]

Having reviewed the main types, perceptions, and priorities of countercultural bioregionalism I will now examine the movement's sources and contemporary manifestations (Figures 9–11).

Sources and Manifestations

Precursors. The central precursors to bioregionalism, namely, those figures advancing bioregional ideas before the coining of the term include: Alfred Wallace, whose book *The Geographic Distribution of Animals* was recently cited by Raymond Dasmann (1995) as a pioneering effort in bioregional mapping; the Russian Anarchist Peter Kropotkin, especially his 1914 classic *Mutual Aid*, which attacked social Darwinism by attending to the many synergistic relationships in nature; the anthropologist A. L. Kroeber, whose *Cultural and Natural Areas of Native North America* (1947) became a template for much early bioregional thinking;[21] Lewis Mumford's critiques of industrial societies, especially *The Myth of the Machine* (1966) and his two volume history of technology, *Techniques and Human Development* (1966); E.F. Schumacher's

Figure 9. All Species Mandala. Bioregionalists often draw their spirituality from religions originating in the Far East; eco-mandalas are often used to symbolize their efforts to re-harmonize human lifeways in nature.

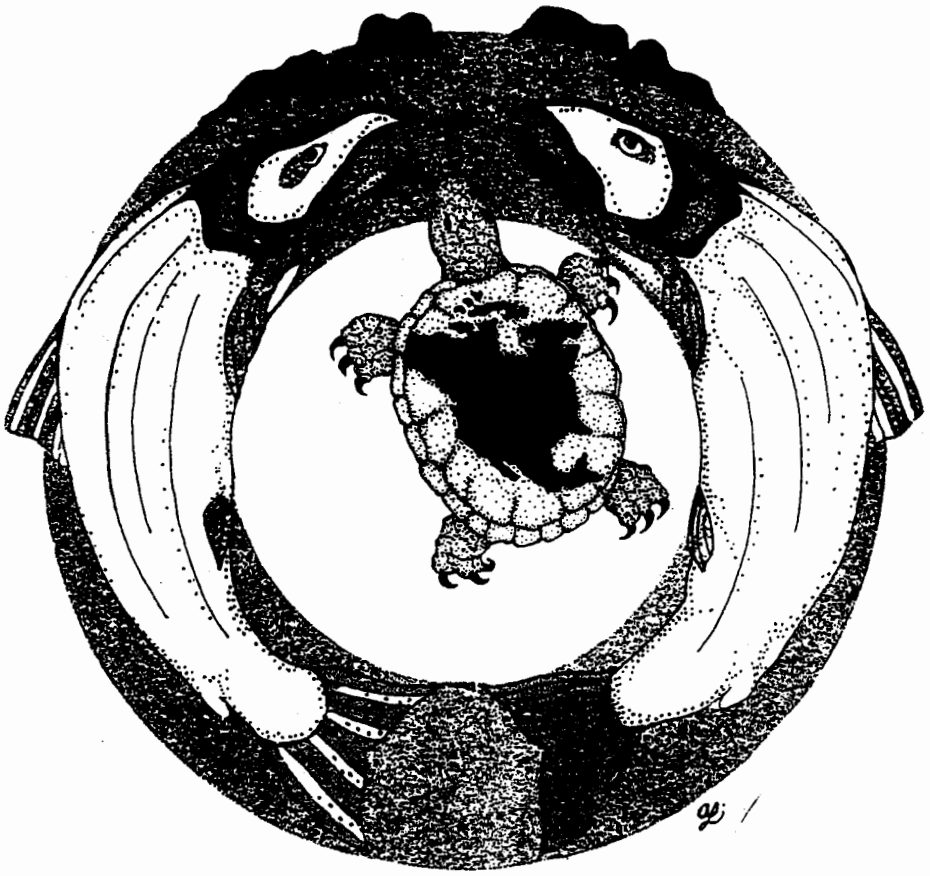


Figure 10. Turtle Island Representation. One of many representations of Turtle Island, a name for North America borrowed from Native Americans, originally by Gary Snyder. (From Andruss et al. 1990, p.125).

advocacy in *Small is Beautiful* (1973) of simplicity, even of a "Buddhist Economics," a moral call contributing to the back-to-the-land impulse that fueled the yet unnamed discipline of ecological economics; early articles by Raymond Dassman (1973) and Peter Berg and Dassman (1978), which expanded on Wallace's earlier bioregional mapping endeavors, struggling with problems related to identifying the contours of bioregions; and Murray Bookchin's *The Ecology of Freedom* (1982), which established Social Ecology as an important green ideology upon which many radical environmental thinkers, perhaps especially bioregionalists, would draw.[22]

Architects—Terms & Slogans. To examine the creation and evolution of bioregionalism itself, one must attend to the contributions of its early architects, and especially to their creative play with ideas and language.

Bioregionalism and "reinhabitation." According to Parsons (1985) and Alexander (1990) the term bioregion was coined by the Canadian poet Allen Van Newkirk in 1974. (Newkirk attempted to establish a center for bioregional studies,[23] but this effort did not succeed and thereafter he had little to do with the evolution of the movement.) Soon after he coined the term, however, it was used (at the time without attribution) by Peter Berg and Raymond Dasmann, in the very essay where they introduced another key bioregional term, "reinhabitation." This essay, published both in *The Ecologist* and in the Newsletter of the Friends of the Earth, *Not Man Apart*,[24] was entitled "Reinhabiting California." "Reinhabitation" captures the bioregional mandate to settle in a place and learn its lore, spirits, and proper lifeways. In Snyder's 1977 book *The Old Ways*, one chapter is labeled "re-inhabitation." As he put the meaning elsewhere: the central advice of bioregionalists is, "don't move!"[25]

The roots of bioregionalism, as we saw in the previous section, clearly go further back than even these publication dates suggest. Indeed, some of the history of the critical terms remains cloudy. Gary Snyder once stated, for example, that he did not know where the term bioregionalism originated (Woods and Schoonmaker 1985), yet he told me in 1994 that the term was coined by a Canadian whose name he couldn't remember (probably Newkirk) and who subsequently dropped from sight.[26] Snyder credited this Canadian with "beginning to use the term the way we do now," adding a qualification, that the chronology of the term's genesis and adoption remains unclear in his own mind.

On another occasion, during an interview in the *Berkeley Barb*, Snyder recalls having learned of the term even earlier, "in 1971 or so," adding that Peter Berg picked up on the term at about the same time. In a 1989 interview, Berg also acknowledged that the term originated with Newkirk (Goldhaft 1989). What generated the appropriation of the term, Snyder explained, was "an attempt to have some geographical and biological precision" as well as "the exercise of ignoring the presence of the national state."

Snyder also told me that Kroeber's study of the cultural zones of Native Americans had been critical to the development of his own thinking, specifically that these cultural zones paralleled regional ones. Such an understanding of the overlapping of cultural and regional zones, "combined with our idea of beginning to finally have a generation of Americans who were rooted," Snyder asserted, contributed to the emergence of bioregionalism. When I asked him, "Who coined the idea of "reinhabitory people," he answered, "us." "You and Berg?" I asked him.

Figure 11. Indigenous Resistance. Many bioregionalists view the arrival of European Setlers as a cataclysmic, defiling event, and indigenous resistance is seen as something to support and emulate.

"Yes, and Peter Coyote [who became the well known motion picture actor], and Freeman House. In various combinations [we] came up with much of this language and conceptualization. We were consciously reinventing a language for North America," Snyder continued. Using the term "Turtle Island . . . is part of reinventing a language for our time here. It's a political act." A flurry of constructive bioregional publishing followed such discussions among this small group of friends. Then in the fall of 1973, Peter Berg founded Planet Drum and soon began publishing *Raise the Stakes*, a biannual journal that would become an important bioregional forum.

Future primitive, totem salmon, and "back to the Pleistocene!" Shortly after Planet Drum was founded, in 1974, Jeremiah Gorsline and L. Freeman House published "Future Primitive,"[27] expressing a hope for a return to primal lifeways emerging from back-to-the-land communities. Also in 1974, House wrote "Totem Salmon."[28] This remarkable essay describes the historic significance—culturally, spiritually, and materially—of salmon to humans and other creatures in the Pacific Northwest. House argues that ceremonies by aboriginal peoples were designed to ensure that the salmon take no offense when captured. Such etiquette, he wrote, was based on the notion that conscious spirit resides in all plants and animals. [Therefore,] the

> Salmon is always perceived as a person living a life similar to that of the people who catch it [and] the ceremonies have the practical effect of assuring the continuity of both species, salmon and human. (House 1990a, p. 68)

Here and elsewhere, House articulates the vision of the salmon speaking to humans, at least practically, promoting appropriate lifeways. They are telling us, among other things, "please, let's get serious about this business of coevolution" (House 1990). House continues:

> Salmon is a totem animal in the North Pacific Range. Only salmon, as a species, informs us humans, as a species, of the vastness and unity of the North Pacific Ocean and its rim. The buried memories of our ancient human migrations, the weak abstractions of our geographies, our struggles toward a science of biology do nothing to inform us of the power and benevolence of our place. Totemism is a method of perceiving power, goodness, and mutuality in locale through the recognition of and respect for the vitality, spirit, and interdependence of other species. In the case of the Pacific North Rim, no other species informs us so well as the salmon, whose migrations define the boundaries of the range which supports us all. (House 1990a, p. 68)

This essay is an interesting example of bioregionalist appropriation of Native American culture; it also illustrates the penchant among such groups to revere and emulate indigenous cultures, questing to create a "future primitive" or to somehow go "back to the Pleistocene!"[29]

Freeman House was not just *articulating* a bioregional vision, however, he and his fellows were *experimenting* with it. By the late 1970s, for example, neighbors within the Mattole River watershed (where House eventually settled in Northern California's so-called "lost coast") formed a salmon protection group in response to the precipitous decline of salmon populations that had resulted from decades of logging, ranching, and other commercial activities. As they experimented with ways to restore the salmon, it became clear that the problems flowed from the surrounding hillsides. Therefore, the restoration effort was expanded to include the entire watershed, leading to the 1983 formation of the Mattole [Watershed] Restoration Council (Sayen 1989; House 1999). Among their many efforts, participants designed their own backyard hatchery

systems, got elementary school children involved, and even infused the restoration project into the local curriculum. The needs of the salmon, in House's words, provided an example of "how salmon [can] organize human activity" (1990).

From Ecotopia to Ecopsychology. Other important contributors to the unfolding of bioregionalism include Ernest Callenbach who, a year after the founding of Planet Drum, published the green-utopian novel, *Ecotopia* (1975). Without using the term bioregionalism, Callenbach imagined the secession of most of the Pacific Northwest from the United States and the construction of an environmentally and socially just society.[30]

About this same time the term reinhabitation began to gain widespread attention among radical green groups. Peter Berg and Raymond Dasmann published "Reinhabiting California" (1977), first in several small tabloids, then in the influential international journal, *The Ecologist*. A year later Berg published a collection of essays entitled *Reinhabiting a Separate Country: A Bioregional Anthology of Northern California* (1978), deploying two of the movement's central terminological inventions. This volume provided something of a model for a bioregional attentiveness; it included oral history from a Native American elder, short stories (including stories by Jim Dodge and Ernest Callenbach), articles on ritual, marijuana and organic agriculture, and an overview of the geology of California. Probably the two seminal articles were Berg's and Dasmann's republished bioregional manifesto, "Reinhabiting California" and Dasmann's own overview of the bioregions of California. This latter article included a striking confession by Dasmann, suggesting that, despite his scholarly credentials (as a Professor at the University of California) he shared the earthen spirituality characteristic of countercultural bioregionalism: "A thousand-year-old [redwood] forest is a unique phenomenon, a holy place, and it takes a thousand years to grow one" (Dasmann 1978b, p. 30).

Meanwhile Theodore Roszak's 1978 *Person/Planet: The Creative Disintegration of Industrial Society* was published, proposing a radical downsizing of all human institutions and comprehensive political decentralization in favor of local control.[31] He would soon extend his focus more deeply into spiritual concerns, widely promoting the kind of pagan spirituality usually found in countercultural bioregionalism, both through workshops and with his popular book, *Voice of the Earth* (1992). In this extraordinary work he defended the idea of earth as Gaia, an intelligent being, basing his argument on the anthropic principle. He then forthrightly promoted an animist spirituality and pantheistic worldview. This work represented a significant contribution to a the development of "ecopsychology," a nascent school of thought (indeed a new religious movement) that traces environmental destruction and societal dysfunction to a "spiritual" estrangement between humans and nature, prescribing a panoply of spiritual antidotes to bridge this divide.[32]

Also critical to popularizing bioregional thought has been the work of Kirkpatrick Sale, especially his *Dwellers in the Land: The Bioregional Vision* (1985). The 1985 edition, interestingly, counted "sixty groups in North America specifically defining themselves as bioregional" (Sale 1991, p. 43). By the end of the century, bioregional groups, of the various sorts typified earlier, had proliferated to a point uncountable and were engaged in a wide variety of endeavors promoting environmental sustainability, including at times dramatic and risky direct action resistance to commercial and extractive enterprises in natural areas.

Problems with Bioregionalism

Social philosophies generally retain their own set of antinomies and conundrums. Bioregionalism, as a nascent philosophy, has had less time than most to resolve such problems. Nevertheless, it is important to critically analyze the problems that inhere to bioregional thought.[33]

The Difficulty of Identifying Bioregions. Perhaps the central problem in bioregionalism is that of fluid boundaries and the difficulty of demarcating what constitutes a bioregion. In his seminal 1981 article, Jim Dodge wrote, "The criteria most often advanced for making bioregional distinctions are biotic shift, watershed, land form, cultural/phenomenological, spirit presences, and elevation" (1981, p. 8, abridged reprint in Andruss 1990).[34] He explains these distinctions as follows:

Biotic shift involves the "percentage change in plant/animal species composition from one place to another—that is, if fifteen to twenty-five percent of the species [change, it is probably a] different biological region." [Dodge believes this] "is a fairly slick and accurate way to make bioregional distinctions" but acknowledges that the arguments then are inevitably "over the percentage, which invariably seems arbitrary" (Dodge 1981, p. 7).

Watersheds are river drainages that can be analyzed through topograpical mapping. Although this designation often seems straightforward, Dodge acknowledges that drainages overlap, making such analysis alone insufficient for identifying bioregions. Clearly, to provide but one example, some drainages are so vast that they pass through a number of regions with very different biota.

Land forms (or geomorphology) can also provide helpful bioregional markers, according to Dodge (1981, p. 8); although singularly these would provide insufficient guidance in efforts to identify bioregions.

Cultural / Phenomenological markers, namely, where people perceive their homes and regions to be can also be important, although Dodge, in deep ecological style, expresses discomfort with such an anthropocentric criterion (Dodge 1981, p. 8).

"Spirit Places" or "psyche tuning power-presences," according to Dodge, are places that exercise "psychophysical influences" on people and their sense of place, and can also be used as a bioregional criterion (Dodge 1981, p. 8).

Elevation often is used by people to demarcate different areas, as reflected in "distinctions [such as] those between hill people and flatlanders" (Dodge 1981, pp. 7–8).

Dodge concludes that "taken together, as I think they should be, [these criteria can be used to identify bioregions, giving] us a strong sense of where we're at and the life that emeshes [sic] our own" (Dodge 1981, p. 8).[35]

Dodge's suspicion of cultural, as opposed to natural, criteria is absurd in an important way: for what are bioregional provinces but human constructions, given the many possible criteria and the need for humans to make judgments about their relative importance? This realization, ironically, can be liberating and *make plausible* the possibility of bioregional social organization. For when we assume that bioregional provinces *are necessarily also cultural zones that are contested and negotiated*, then we can conceive of the possibility of a process evolving for establishing forms of political association that correspond to human-defined bioregional provinces. This might also make possible creative new polities, resource regimes, and economic relations. Thus, by recognizing that any conceivable bioregional identification is a contested and negotiated human construction, the prospect of demarcating bioregions and somehow basing human action upon them becomes possible. We can assume that whatever approach to defining bioregions prevails will be an outgrowth of debates and struggles among individuals and groups in various localities, and the various rules of thumb for determining bioregions may vary from place to place and from time to time, as will any normative judgements derived through this process.

Anthropological Wishful Thinking. Ethics is grounded upon assumptions regarding what human beings are like and what they are capable of achieving. Drawing on Kropotkin and his progeny, many bioregionalists assume that people are naturally disposed to being cooperative, except when corrupted by life in unnatural, hierarchical, centralized, industrial societies.[36] This debatable assumption depends more on a certain kind of radical environmental myth-making (see, for example, the fascinating if speculative work of Paul Shepard 1982) than on ethnology or ecology. The unduly optimistic anthropological assumption can mislead a social philosophy. The problem is illuminated by contemporary sociobiology which documents not only that cooperation can be adaptive regarding a species' survival, but so can aggressive competitiveness.

Conservation biologist Michael Soulé, puts it harshly, "Most interactions between individuals and species are *selfish* not symbiotic" (Soulé, 1995, p. 143). It is also possible, as Dan Deudney argues, that "states in a world organized along bioregional lines would be more prone to conflicts rooted in differences in identity and traditions" (Deudney 1995, p. 294). Yet by basing political assumptions on an unduly rosy picture of human altruism (or such human potential) most countercultural bioregionalism offers little antidote to abuses of power by selfish and well-entrenched elites (Schmookler 1995).

Such a flaw and concomitant naïveté about humans is a subset of a larger error: the selective or tardy appropriation of ecological science. Countercultural bioregionalists tend to overemphasize notions such as natural harmony, symbiosis, and fragile interdependence, following what is sometimes called the "Diversity-Stability" theory, or the increasingly out-of-favor "community ecology paradigm." Yet this "popular conception of living nature as a symbiotic, delicately balanced, well-intentioned, orderly system" (Callicott 1996, p. 353) has trickled down into the population, becoming a truism-like "cultural model of nature" (Kempton et al. 1995). Such emphases lag behind recent ecological findings, however, that ecosystems little impacted by humans are nevertheless characterized by disturbance ("perturbation") and directionless change, rather than by a teleological ascent to some purportedly mature stage of balance and harmony. Moreover, such perspectives often ignore how ecosystems usually contain significant amounts of "functional redundancy" (Kempton et al. 1995, p. 222), an ecological finding that erodes "natural law" type arguments for preserving all species. Such revisionist ecology can reasonably suggest that ecosystem balance is a chimera, and that it is silly to strive to sustain each and every species in their present distributions, because the retention of at least this aspect of biological diversity may not be necessary to maintain natural ecosystem processes.

As Baird Callicott has put it, "The hallowed 'law' of [community] ecology, that ecological stability depends on biological diversity, has been all but repealed" (Callicott 1996, pp. 354–5). To my knowledge, these paradigm shifts have yet to be integrated into bioregional ideology. The problem and stakes involved become apparent when the question of power is addressed.

The Question of Power. The most common critique of all utopian ideologies is that they have an unduly optimistic anthropology and thus are naïve about political power. Such criticism can be applied to some if not most countercultural bioregionalism.[37] Paul Wapner, for example, notes that nation-state governments are unlikely to cede authority (Wapner 1996, p. 38) and Dan Deudney argues that any reorganization along bioregional lines would be unlikely to occur "without widespread violence and dislocation" (Deudney 1995, p. 293). Few bioregionalist thinkers have wrestled with such facts. Moreover, making an important but often overlooked point, Deudney warns that

> The sizes of the bioregionally based states would vary greatly because bioregions vary greatly. This would mean that some states would be much more powerful than others [and] it is not inevitable that balances of power would emerge to constrain the possible imperial pretensions of the larger and stronger states (Deudney 1995, pp. 193–94).[38]

On this point it is instructive to recall that bioregionalism emerged from a particular social context where environmental degradation in northern California was exacerbated by the growing resource needs of its arid southern neighbor. The south easily dominated the north, due to its greater wealth and population. Dasmann and Berg's early and influential paper on bioregionalism, "Reinhabiting California," addressed this dynamic. In it they argued that "northern California . . . for purposes of reinhabiting the place, [needs] a political identity of its own, [for] as long as it belongs to a larger state, it will be subject to southern California's demands on its watersheds. . . . From a reinhabitory point of view," they argued, "the export of water to southern California [is a] bioregional death threat" (originally 1977, quote from reprint 1978, p. 220). They concluded by advocating that the North secede from the South:

> The bioregion cannot be treated with regard for its own life-communities while it is part of and administered by a larger state government. It should be a separate state. As a separate state, the bioregion could redistrict its counties to create watershed governments appropriate to maintaining local life-places. City-country divisions could be resolved on bioregional grounds. Perhaps the greatest advantage of separate statehood would be the opportunity to declare a space for addressing each other as members of a species sharing the planet together and with all other species. (Berg and Dasmann 1998, p. 220)

All of this is perfectly understandable given the axis of south-north power differentials in California, particularly from the perspective of the resource-rich north. It would be just as easy, however, to discuss places where realignments along bioregional lines would impair the weak and strengthen those already geo-politically privileged.

Globalization and Regionalism. The phenomenon now known as "Globalization" is another dynamic to which bioregionalism seems ill equipped to respond, despite its critique of it and sometime efforts to resist it. As Paul Wapner explains, present trends suggest an increasing rather than decreasing globalization of human enterprise, and although "trend is not destiny" (Wapner 1996, p. 37), bioregionalism can seem naïve and impotent in the face of such inertia.

Political theorist Dan Deudney is one of those promoting a greening of international politics and polity. Deudney credits bioregionalism with promoting "Earth-centered identity and community claims" that are eroding or coloring national identities in positive ways; he acknowledges that "scientific constructs are fundamentally incompatible with the parochial orientations of all existing national identities." But he also insightfully argues that an important message from ecological science has too often been ignored or downplayed by bioregionalists: "localist bioregional ideologies and political practices [that] exist within the radical environmental movement community [fail to apprehend] the unmistakable message of ecological science . . . that the earth is the only integral bioregion, and that the 'homeland' of all humans is the whole planet rather than some piece of it" (Deudney 1995, pp. 289–90).[39]

Fortunately there are more promising bases for valuing biological diversity than those that rely on a putatively natural law grounded in turn on shifting ecological paradigms. The fundamental point arising from the preceding analysis is that, due to the ecologically under-informed and sometimes overly-sanguine view of human potential,[40] as well as its tendency to sever from the biosphere various bioregional ecosystems, countercultural bioregionalists tend to abdicate engagement with (or unduly downplay) national and international electoral and administrative politics. They seemingly view these as, in the last analysis, of little importance in the quest for regional and global sustainability. As Paul Wapner concludes, bioregionalism has little "answer to specifically global environmental problems" (Wapner 1996, p. 37).[41] Even the movement axiom "small is beautiful" can in this light be seen to have an ugly underside, obscuring or summarily dismissing the beauty—or potential beauty—of larger systems, both ecological and political.

If this critique has merit, bioregionalism may be insufficiently radical. If bioregional identities displace, retard, or preclude the emergence of what a number of theorists are calling "global civil society" or "world civic politics" (Deudney 1995; Wapner 1995; Litfin 1993; Lipschutz and Conca 1993; and Lipschutz 1996),[42] the needed biosphere politics (Rifkin 1991) will not address the largest systems that need concerted attention on the way toward sustainability. It may also be, as Deudney suggests (in a way reminiscent of bioregional spirituality) that a planetary civic earth religion, or "terrapolitanism" (forms of political association based on loyalty to earth itself) is needed to legitimate international governance grounded in a federal-republican earth constitution (Deudney 1995, 1998).

Such ideas may, at first glance, appear to take us far from the original bioregional theme of this paper. A host of renegotiated bioregional political associations could however, be well integrated into new and reconstructed international resource-and-biodiversity related regimes (Lipschutz 1999). This is crucial if humans are to address the global causes of environmental degradation. Indeed, discovering the path to a sustainable future requires that bioregional and international polities not be considered mutually exclusive.[43]

There are signs that this stance is increasingly recognized. In a recent and ambitious project sponsored by the United Nations, with deep involvement from an eclectic group of religious leaders, an "Earth Charter" is being prepared for possible United Nations ratification. In my judgment, the document reflects the emergence of a nascent (and promising) planetary civic earth religion. The "benchmark draft" of this document,

approved by the Earth Charter Commission in Rio de Janeiro in March 1997, clearly expressed a view of the sacredness of the universe and of all earthly life-processes while urging reverent care, equity, and justice for all life forms, both as species and individuals.[44] Interestingly, the draft charter also expressed a clear sense of the daunting political task ahead, one that involves political reconstruction on many levels:

> In the midst of all our diversity, we are one humanity and one Earth family with a shared destiny. The challenges before us require an inclusive ethical vision. Partnerships must be forged and cooperation fostered at local, bioregional, national, and international levels. In solidarity with one another and the community of life, we the peoples of the world commit ourselves to action guided by the following interrelated principles.[45]

This remarkable document coheres dramatically with much bioregional thought, especially with its deep ecological sensibilities and keen sense that reverence toward nature should guide human thought and action. The document also shows the growing influence of bioregional ideas in international forums, even while expressing clearly as well a need for local and international relations that reconfigure human livelihoods and lifestyles in ecologically sustainable ways.

Bioregionalism's Insights and Contributions

Despite its countercultural genesis and subversive intent, in only a quarter century bioregionalism has dramatically placed its vision onto the human stage. In this final section I will briefly attend to two of the more remarkable examples of its impact, and then suggest how bioregional ideas might be extended in ways that could avoid the pitfalls already identified.

Bioregionalization—Case Studies. Many questions that can be raised about bioregionalism, particularly about the dubious ecological and anthropological assumptions underlying much of its philosophy and contributing to its tendency to downplay the importance of trans-regional nongovernmental organizations and trans-state institutions and agreements. Certainly the nature-based spirituality of its most creative proponents will alienate some readers. There is, nevertheless, a core of common sense in much of this emerging tradition; this is becoming increasingly clear even to many resource managers, particularly in the wake of escalating political crises related to endangered species. In many cases, it is hard to imagine a more irrational way to organize resource regimes than the present approach, with many competing governmental stakeholders—local, state, and federal—all contesting resource regimes, both internally, and with their diverse publics.[46] The courts are increasingly left to sort out the conflicts.

Indeed, as Karen Litfin (1993, p. 102) points out, it is political crises (such as those related to economic and political gridlock resulting from grassroots resistance to species-threatening enterprises) that can catalyze transformations in resource regimes.[47]

Bioregionalization in California. This scenario has certainly been the case in California as politicians and resource officials at various levels have struggled to arrest conflicts centered around endangered species. Facilitated by the groundwork laid by two decades of bioregional thought and practice (early on supported by "Zen-Governor" Jerry Brown and the work of Peter Berg, Gary Snyder, and Freeman House,)[48] in the early 1990s California moved dramatically toward a bioregional model of cooperation and coordination on resource matters, engaging both state (at all levels) and non-state actors in a process to resolve resource and biodiversity issues on a regional basis. Both Lipschutz (1996, pp. 81–125) and Snyder (1992) describe this "bioregionalization" of California, specifically since the 1991 signing by eighteen state and federal resource agencies of a "Memorandum of Understanding" entitled "California's Coordinated Regional Strategy to Conserve Biological Diversity." The endeavor has commonly been called the "bioregional" or "biodiversity" project. "In some ways," Lipschutz (1996, p. 83) suggests, "state sponsorship [is] an attempt to catch up with global civil society in California, whose members have undertaken hundreds of small-scale environmental protection and restoration projects" (Lipschutz 1996, p. 3).

At another level, Lipschutz believes,

> the project is trying to foster the creation of governance structures that establish environmental sustainability and local social choice as joint priorities under "local" control—not only the control of municipal or county government but civil society, too. At another level, it is no less than an effort to conserve [the] environment by dividing it into ecological provinces—units of governance based on ecosystem management. The participation of *both* state (at all levels) and society are critical to the project's success. Without civil society, the state cannot advance its goals and programs; without the state, civil society would be hard put to create and maintain such a project. Neither is entirely comfortable with this arrangement (Lipschutz 1996, p. 83).

Bioregionalization is partly fueled by the accurate perception that the resolution of conflicts related to natural resource regimes will be difficult if not impossible if decisions are not widely perceived as legitimate in the affected regions. Forced by environmentalist lawsuits based on the Endangered Species Act and other environmental laws that dramatically reduced logging in the Pacific Northwest, the project's mandate was an ambitious endeavor "to protect habitat *and* property through cultural construction of a commons . . . [yet] without fully socializing it" (Lipschutz 1996, p. 88). This initiative is a landmark in United States environmental history, although in the second half of the decade most biodiversity activists became cynical about it as little was done as a result to implement the changes they believed

necessary to save endangered species, for example, salmon in northern California watersheds.

These events suggest, on the one hand, how difficult it is to recast ecosystem management along bioregional lines, especially when local actors "have not been consulted [because] they are unlikely to agree" and thus likely to resist. For such reasons Lipschutz concludes that "the state cannot mandate in such circumstances; it can only facilitate" (1996, p. 124). On the other hand, the California case suggests that severe crises in resource regimes present bioregional opportunities. For example, such environment-related crises have precipitated at least some halting of experiments toward the bioregionalization of resource management in California. Indeed, despite how little has been accomplished in California thus far, it may be that bioregionalization will yet create positive transformations, perhaps also becoming a central government strategy to manage environment-related conflict.

It is reasonable to expect more decisive trends toward bioregionalization for, as Dasmann (1995, p. 84) has argued, there are "obvious advantages to bringing a unified political control over the management of a single ecosystem." Of course, there are formidable "political difficulties involved in redefining longstanding county or state boundaries." Consequently, Dasmann asserts, "it appears more feasible to seek close cooperation among the agencies involved in the management of a bioregion than to attempt the redrawing of political maps" (Dasmann 1995, pp. 84–85). This is, of course, precisely what was envisioned in California.

Writing in the mid 1990s, Lipschutz concluded hopefully, "If these renegotiations are successful—and it is too soon to be sure—they could actually lead to the creation of resource regimes that are protective of Nature as well as of the life and sustainability of human communities" (Lipschutz 1996, p. 125). Despite good reasons for skepticism (including the long history of cozy relationships and corruption, for example, between the timber industry and the United States government) the initial steps toward bioregionalism in California suggest that it may yet play a decisive and salutary role in resolving environment-related conflict and promoting sustainability (Figure 12).

Bioregionalization in the Northern Rockies. Another example of a science-based bioregional vision that represents a landmark in the bioregional movement, as well as an example of the mainstreaming of bioregional thought, is Mike Bader's legislative proposal, "The Northern Rockies Ecosystem Protection Act" (more widely known as NREPA). This ambitious legislation, supported by a host of bioregional groups from the Northern Rockies, including Bader's Alliance for the Wild Rockies, employs the latest biological research assembled by conservation biologists in order to advance a proposal for designating as wilderness more than twenty million acres of federal land in five major ecosystem reserves. The proposal includes a plan for linking these reserves with connecting corridors that conservation biologists view as essential for the migration of sub-

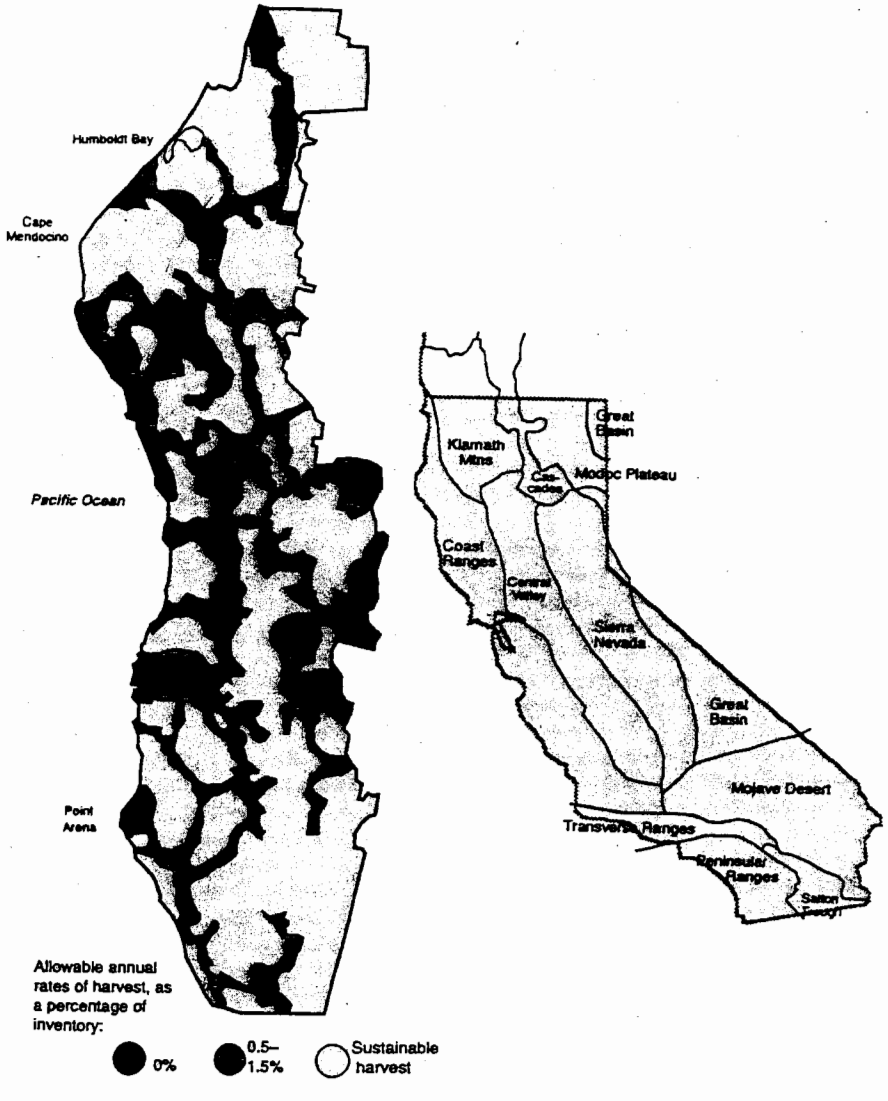


Figure 12. California's Bioregions. Two depictions of California's bioregions. From Aberle 1993, pp. 59,70.

populations between them, ensuring that species will not suffer isolation-caused inbreeding depression.[49]

Bader initially published his proposal in *Western Wildlands* (Bader 1991) and shortly afterward in a special issue of *The Wildlands Project* (Bader 1992). By the fall of 1994 the act had attracted twenty congressional sponsors (ironically, mostly from outside the region), along with widespread support from the nation's conservation biologists (Durbin 1996, p. 230). Shortly thereafter, the Republican Party gained control of the Congress and killed the bill; no progress on the bill is expected under such circumstances. Nevertheless, examples of bioregional initiatives and successes are increasing and the number of bioregional groups is proliferating rapidly.[50] Raymond Dasmann believes "bioregional approaches to management and conservation may become more the rule than the exception in the future" (1995, p. 85). The proliferation of bioregional activism and the sometimes-supportive response by regional and state governments provides hopeful if fragmentary evidence that he may be correct (Figures 13 and 14a–b).

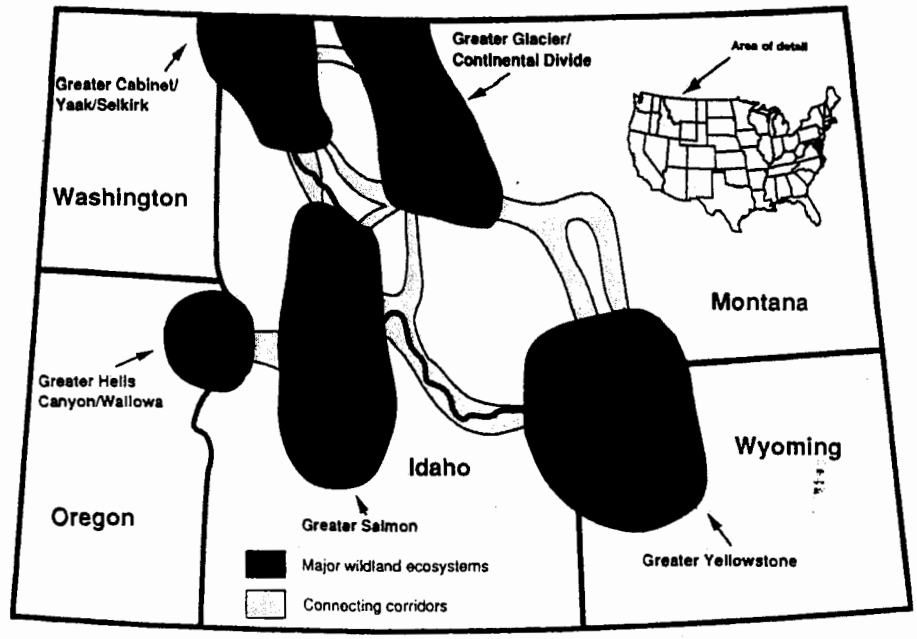


Figure 13. NREPA Map. Map Depicting the Proposed Northern Rockies Ecosystem Protection Act's preserves and corridors. From Bader 1992.

Conclusions

The preceding pages have introduced the "countercultural bioregionalism" that is the wellspring of contemporary bioregional thought and trends. I have highlighted three types of bioregionalism (evolutionary, revolutionary, and apocalyptic), its anarchistic roots and tendencies, and its deep ecological (and often pagan) spirituality. I have pointed to its limitations as a social philosophy, especially its reluctance to address the political arrangements that must be created if we are to protect the most critical life-region, the biosphere. I have also briefly examined some of the striking ways bioregional movements have already begun to wrest concessions from elites and influence environmental decision-making on local, state, and international levels. Although bioregionalism leaves many

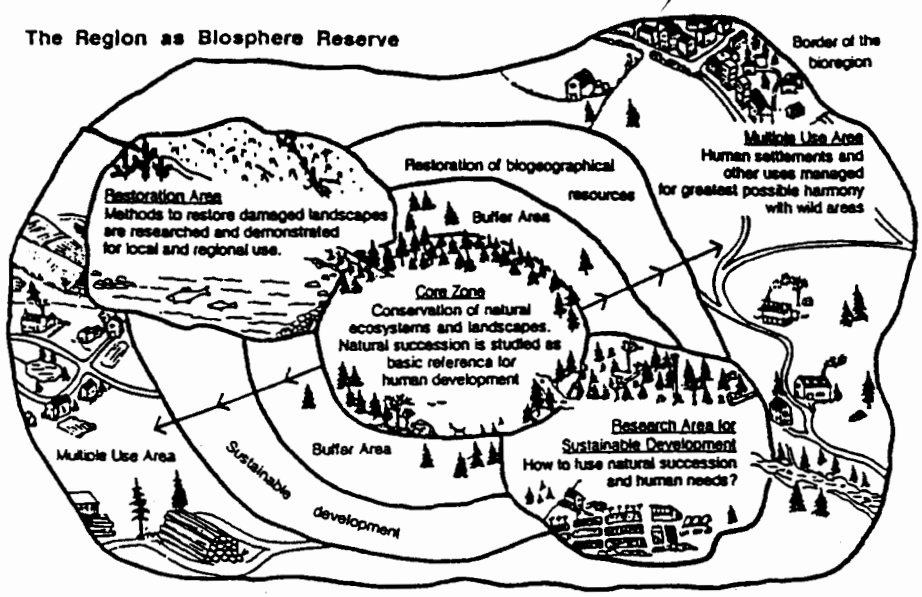


Figure 14a. Biological Preserves and Human Settlements. Envisioning how core reserves, buffer zones, and restoration areas can be integrated with human settlements in a way that protects all ecosystem types and species." From Aberle 1993, pp. 65,67.

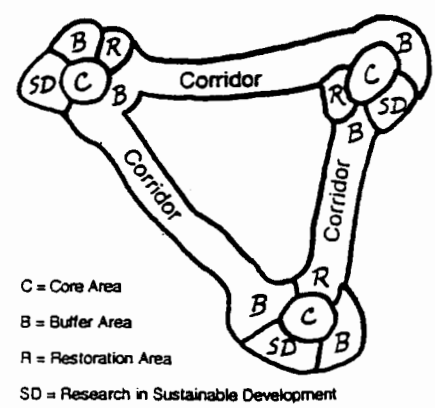


Figure 14b. Information from the wild core informs human activities at various intensities in the areas surrounding. Low intensity activities are designed to buffer core corridor.

unanswered questions as it is currently articulated and it will require substantial modification if it is to more fully address the complexity of the world's current political arrangements, it is already having a salutary effect by insisting on a widespread revisioning of political life.

More specifically, bioregionalism proposes that we behave in a way consistent with an affirmation of the intrinsic value of all life forms, an ethics grounded in a felt connection to all life, especially as it is manifested in the places we live. Bioregionalism promotes a rethinking about how to design and connect biosphere reserves in the midst of landscapes dominated by intensive human use. However, it also exhorts us to radically rethink everything: from human agro-ecosystems (suggesting that we replace non-native agricultural monocultures with more resilient and biologically diverse native species better adapted to the places in which they evolved); to fossil fuel intensive international trade (suggesting that we strive for regional or at least continental self-sufficiency); to hydro-electric projects (suggesting that moving large amounts of water between bioregions and constructing large-scale dams to do so should be abandoned in favor of regionally self-sufficient aquatic-economic systems); to issues such as transportation and the landscape design of suburbs and cities (suggesting that richer human and natural communities are possible where most people live if the human dependence on automobiles can be reduced); to name just a few specific issues.[51] And bioregionalism emphasizes "watershed organizing," namely, environmental education stressing intimate knowledge of the specific watersheds in which we live, and citizen action to protect and restore them.

The core insights of bioregionalism can be appropriated and developed by both state and non-state actors without embracing questionable anthropological assumptions, anarchistic romanticism, or postulating a perfect synergy among all life in nature. Bioregional sensibilities can be integrated into a variety of creative endeavors without abandoning the equally important task of promoting environmentally-responsible and socially-just national and international regimes that bridle, through democratically restrained coercive power, the abuses that inhere to unrestrained concentrations of economic and political power.

Those skeptical of the spiritual perceptions prevalent in its original and most countercultural forms might also, I suggest, have something to learn from the spiritual aspect of countercultural bioregionalism. Even if understood as "just poetry" or "creative religious invention," even if animistic perceptions are anthropomorphic or superstitious, bioregional spirituality might also be a salutary leap of human moral imagination, an important moment in the drama of human moral evolution.[52] Perhaps even those of us socialized primarily in the Enlightenment tradition could concede that such green spirituality might represent a mutation in the body politic that will prove to be adaptive. In any case, these movements propose a moral imperative, namely, that we develop ethics of place for the regions we inhabit. Their challenge deserves a thoughtful and creative response.

Taking a long view despite his antipathy toward large states, Gary Snyder recently wrote, "I am not arguing that we should instantly redraw the boundaries of the social construction called California, although that could happen some far day." Instead, he asks us to consider how bioregional thinking "leads toward the next step in the evolution of human citizenship" (Snyder 1992, p. 67). This is certainly a reasonable suggestion. Snyder concluded this meditation on living in place with further words worth pondering:

> Watershed consciousness is not just environmentalism, not just a means toward resolution of social and economic problems, but a move toward a profound citizenship in both the natural and the social worlds. If the ground can be our common ground, we can begin to talk to each other (human and non-human) once again. (Snyder 1992, p. 70)

FOR ALL
Ah to be alive
on a mid-September morn
fording a stream
barefoot, pants rolled up
holding boots, pack on,
sunshine, ice in the shallows,
northern rockies

Rustle and shimmer of icy creek waters
stones turn underfoot, small and hard on toes
cold nose dripping
singing inside
creek music, heart music
smell of sun on gravel.

I pledge allegiance.
I pledge allegiance to the soil
of Turtle Island
one ecosystem
in diversity
under the sun—
With joyful interpenetration for all.

Gary Snyder in *No Nature* [1992, p. 308), originally in *Axe Handles* (1983)].

Notes

1. Literally, as bioregional theorist Jim Dodge has explained, "'Bioregionalism' is from the Greek bios (life) and the French region (region), itself from the Latin regia (territory), and earlier, regere (to rule or govern)." So bioregion means "'life territory' or 'place of life,' or perhaps by reckless extension, 'government by life.'" (Dodge 1981, reprinted in Andruss 1990, p.5).

Since I submitted this article in December 1997, David Aberley (1999) published a good introductory history of bioregionalism that complements the present analysis, especially in revealing some of the movement's earliest expressions. He gives no attention, however, to the overlapping ideas and personnel found among radical environmental and bioregional groups. The present effort corrects this oversight and expands our understanding of the religious and apocalyptic dimensions of these movements while offering more in the way of critique of the movement's theoretical

weaknesses. For other recent publications illuminating bioregionalism see especially McGinnis (1999) and House (1999). For another article criticizing in more depth what I call "bioregional deep ecology" see Taylor (2000).

2. Some scholars eschew the term animism due to its origin as a term used by Christian anthropologists to describe and characterize as primitive the spiritual perceptions of tribal peoples. Since the term is widely appropriated and used as self-description by many in the countercultural bioregional movement, a refusal to employ the term would provide an inaccurate portrait.

3. For a detailed treatment of the historical and conceptual tributaries to radical environmentalism and bioregionalism, see "Tributaries" in my forthcoming book, *On Sacred Ground: Earth First! and Environmental Ethics*.

4. In 1978 biologist Michael Soulé, organized the "1st International Conference on Conservation Biology" at the San Diego campus of the University of California, subsequently publishing in 1980 an anthology that functionally heralded the emergence of this "new" discipline. He organized a second such conference (at the University of Michigan in 1985), and edited another book further advancing the discipline (Soulé 1986). Such collaborations led to the formation of the Society for Conservation Biology in 1986 (Soulé, is credited with founding the society by some participants in this endeavor) and the inaugural publication of its journal in 1987. Not long afterward, in 1989 the Society for Ecological Restoration formed (House in Andrus et al. 1990). Among its various efforts in the 1990s, the society developed an interest in and promoted discussion of "traditional ecological knowledge" (or TEK), sponsoring conferences and discussions about Native American land stewardship. After retiring from his university position in the late 1990s, Soulé took on scientific duties with The Wildlands Project.

5. For details see the chapter entitled "tributaries" in *On Sacred Ground* (Taylor, inpress).

6. Noss had written regularly for *Earth First!* during the 1980s explaining conservation biology and writing wilderness proposals. From 1993 through December 1997, he served as the editor of *Conservation Biology*.

7. Within these subcultures there is a strong sense that the United States and other nation states are too large and complex for responsible decision making. "A government where one person represents the interests of 220,000 is absurd," Dodge concludes (1981, p. 8). Freeman House considers the bioregionalist "new settlers" in the Mattole River watershed "anarchist to the bone" (1999, p. 185).

8. It should be noted, however, that *Alarm*, unlike *Live Wild or Die*, has stressed nonviolence against all life forms as central to its struggle.

9. The origin of this term is discussed in part three of this paper.

10. Conservation biologist Edward Grumbine (1987) has argued similarly that bioregionalists and Earth First! activists need each other and their complementary emphases, "Bioregionalists need to hear from us about big wilderness and we must listen to them about healthy human economies embedded in the natural world" for "if, as Gary Snyder suggests, the bioregionalist vow 'is to say to yourself that you won't move anymore,' then the Earth First! vow might be 'defend the territory'." Both perspectives are critical, Grumbine concludes.

11. There are a number of sources for bioregional thought that are beyond the present task to explore but to which I will briefly point. Brian Tokar credits the German Greens for major contributions to green political thought, including bioregionalism. He writes that German Greens "became known by their Four Pillars: ecology, social responsibility, democracy, and nonviolence. Greens [and bioregionalists] in the United States have generally expanded this list to [emphasize] decentralization [of] politics and economics toward the local community level," feminist views on the need for personal transformation, and often "a new ethical and spiritual orientation . . . that reaffirms the place of human cultures within the natural world and seeks to heal the cultural rift between people and the earth that our civilization has imposed" (Tokar 1992, p. 2). Jim Dodge provides another list of bioregional precursors and sympathizers, stating that it is the following groups who are involved: pantheists, Wobblies, reformed Marxists, diggers, Kropotkinites, animists, alchemists (especially the old school) lefty Buddhists, syndicalists, Taoists, outlaws, "and others drawn to the decentralist banner by raw empathy" (Dodge 1981, p. 9). Native Americans and other indigenous (earth) peoples are also often seen as precursors to the bioregional vision.

12. Indeed, Doug Aberley claims that "respect for indigenous thinking and peoples is a tenet fundamental to bioregionalism" (1999, p. 20).

13. If anything, because of the suspicion among Earth First!ers toward spiritualities that do not encourage direct action defense of nature and ridicule of religious ritual in the movement, there is probably more *overt* "earthen spirituality" within the main streams of bioregionalism than there is in Earth First! itself.

14. Abram also asserts, in a way that further illustrates the mystical metaphysics at work here, that "Bioregionalism is inevitably, unavoidably, involved in magic processes. Many individuals . . . are beginning to feel strange sensations, sudden bursts of awareness, communications from other dimensions." Indeed, "The body itself [is] waking up" and these "communications from other embodied forms of sensitivity and awareness [have been] too long ignored by human civilization." Abram went on to become a prominent environmental philosopher, providing a provocative theoretical defense of animistic and pantheistic perception in a 1996 book that was promptly and widely celebrated as a landmark contribution.

15. I have heard such beliefs expressed on a number of occasions by different Native American activists attending events organized by radical environmentalists.

16. An anonymous reviewer made this worthwhile point.

17. As does the publication of excerpts from the Council of All Being's instruction manual, *Thinking Like a Mountain*, in Andruss et al. 1990, pp. 95–98.

18. Abram concluded this 1988 report to the readers of *Earth First!*, commenting on the relationship between Earth First! and bioregionalism, and providing another example of ecological apocalyptic thinking within these movements, writing, "While Earth First! does the urgent work of resistance . . . bioregionalists are [working out] the ways we might begin to live once the megamachine grinds to a halt."

Abram also noted "creative friction" as Native Americans and their ceremonies "collided and then jived with wiccan and pagan" ones. These comments understate the tensions emerging from the controversial borrowing of spirituality and ritual practices from Native American cultures. For an analysis, see Taylor 1997b.

19. The following December 1996 email dialogue is worth quoting at length to illustrate the tensions between forms of bioregionalism that prioritize spiritualityy and ecology, respectively. It occurred between David Haenke and Phil Ferraro of the Institute for Bioregional Studies, Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island, Canada (on the internet's "bioregionalism" discussion group). They were discussing the 1996 "Turtle Island Bioregional Congress" in Mexico (the acronym had changed from the NABC to the TIBC). Their exchange provides a very good sense of the increasing tensions over the tendency for ecologically oriented individuals in anarchistic, pagan radical environmental subcultures, to become marginalized. It also helps explain why many of them eventually withdraw from these movements. (The text of their exchange is reproduced here verbatim but with misspellings corrected; my inserted transitions and comments are in brackets.)

> Haenke: The questions come in when I try to associate this gathering directly and fully with the bioregional movement and the tradition we have created from past bioregional gatherings . . . [up until recently] the bioregional movement and its gatherings have been [clearly] ecocentric. This is the powerful distinction that sets it apart from all other movements except deep ecology/ecosophy and permaculture, both of which I consider to be aspects of bioregionalism. [But] This gathering had so much rainbow, gypsy, and new-age content in both the people attending and what was presented that it diluted the ecological focus profoundly,

more than the definition of bioregional eco-centrism can stand.

Ferraro: I am not surprised to hear this at all. If you re-read the brochures and scan the archives the Rainbow Caravan updates you would have realized that this gathering had an unusually strong commitment toward the new-age spiritualism that has infected so many of the previous eco-movements. . . . I refer to as the 'anti-intellectual' aspect of the movement.

Haenke: . . . There has been an ongoing attempt since TIBC V in Texas to pull the Bioregional movement in under the New Age Rainbow movement, and merge them together. This is not good for either movement. The bioregional movement has the potential to reach, in time, the majority of people on Earth, and to do something constructive under ecological design principles and practices to halt and reverse the destruction of the Earth. It cannot do this if it is believed to be associated with something as far out on the countercultural fringe as the new age rainbow movement. At the same time the rainbow/new age movement(s), as I see it, have no serious, practical or functional dimensions related to protecting, or restoring Earth or helping human beings to do this and live in place. Using vast amounts of fossil fuel to move rootlessly around the Earth, have giant parties, and then do a good job of cleaning up afterwards do not qualify as particularly helpful to me. In fact the aggregate result is to do a lot of damage to the Earth. Also, to believe—as the New Age and Rainbow seem to do—that real Earth healing can come about just through celebration, rituals, ceremonies and wishful thinking is both absurd, misleading, and actually destructive to the Earth.

Ferraro: I agree completely. . . . This is an avenue of the movement that has always been a concern of mine. If bioregionalism truly hopes to remain environmental, political and spiritual how do we address the spirituality of the earth without going off the end by attracting the 'countercultural fringe.' This is something that has always concerned me with bioregionalism's ready acceptance/allegiance to deep ecology, which is a self-described religion, highly anti-intellectual that relies more on intuition than history and more on ritual than political action. [Ferraro is reading deep ecology more through the eyes of a Social Ecology critique that does not recognize that bioregionalism has become the de facto social philosophy of the deep ecology movement; on this see Taylor 2000.]

Haenke: To establish this association between the rainbow/new age movement and the bioregional movement will lead to marginalizing the Bioregional movement out of existence. If I were working for some government and I was looking for a way to neutralize bioregionalism as a viable force without using violence, this is just what I would do. Why should we do this to ourselves? While Mexico is more open and tolerant than the north, the new age rainbow is still on the far and marginalizing fringe. In my belief, the bioregional movement has better things to do than continue to indulge fantasies of 1960s and 70s counterculture. There are other outlets specifically for doing that.

Ferraro: If bioregionalism is ever going to be attractive to masses of people we need to be more mainstream in the marketing of our product. I would never agree to ignore the Rainbow/new-agers but the real movers and shakers are going to be the activists, the architects, the biologists, the planners, the social scientists, etc. It is these people, IMHO [cyber talk for "in my humble opinion"], who will bring about change locally and globally . . . .

Haenke: . . . In my belief, all the activities that we do at a bioregional gathering, whether in process or ceremony, or cultural sharing, should be a result of consensual agreement. I don't recall myself or anyone else being asked if a major event in the evening involving the Rainbow Gypsies and their leader—having nothing to do with Bioregionalism at all —would be acceptable to the gathering. [He then described some Gypsy-style ritualizing that he found offensive. Haenke then added:] . . .The relentless assault of the drumming was destructive to the health of all beings subject to it who were unable to sleep through it, and to all our relations in our host community. Some among us I believe condoned the drummers right to drum whenever and wherever they wanted right up to the end. This insensitivity reminded me of what I heard about the situation at Maruata. [A previous TIBC] If this kind of attitude has anything to do with bioregionalism it won't be long before no one will want to have anything to do with it . . . The use of the derivative Mayan Calendar/Astrology game for orienting affinity/volunteer work groups was a hugely complicated, unworkable flop, and, to me, an imposition of another layer of new age irrelevancy . . . I suspect that a lot of others were variously as puzzled or put out by the whole thing as me, and it surely messed up the capacity of the whole gathering to get vital work done. . . . I intend for this discussion to be positive, and to inform the planning for future gatherings, if what I say can meet with any agreement. I don't say these things for any other reason but that I care so much about the possibility of realizing the potential for Earth honoring, healing, restoration, and protection that Bioregionalism holds, and thus for the health of all species. I'm happy to continue a dialog with anyone who cares to about this.

Ferraro: Thanks David. I think you opened up an important discussion.

20. Along these lines, Peter Berg notes that bioregionalists have a "natural affinity" for Native Americans as well as renewable and appropriate technology advocates, "earth-spirit women's groups, radical conservationists, natural living advocates and deep ecology adherents"—in other words, with all those who "envision a similar bio-centric future" (Berg Summer 1986).

Don Alexander expressed a related, interesting perception of the 1988 Congress, that it was evolving beyond a deep ecology that "often ignores or belittles human problems" toward "a new synthetic perspective—a radical ecology— . . . where human and natural systems are treated as both autonomous and interrelated . . . , The Congress did much to make me feel that I am working . . . as part of a continent-wide resistance movement that is committed to radical change" (Alexander in Zuckerman 1989).

21. See Garreau (1981) for another such work that Frenkel implies was even more influential (1994, p. 291).

22. For a broader overview of conceptual tributaries to bioregionalism than just provided, see Brian Tokar (1992, pp. 159–79) and Van Andruss (in Andruss et al. 1990, pp. 171–75). See also Kennedy and Greiman on "the real bioregionalists" (in Lipshutz 1996, p. 105).

23. For an announcement regarding this effort, see the box at the end of the article by Raymond Dasmann (1978, p. 37).

24. See Berg and Dasmann (1978) for a reprint.

25. For this Snyder quote, see the rare bioregional magazine, *Upriver Downriver* (#10, 1987) or the reprint in Andruss et al. 1990). In my 1994 interview with him, Snyder told me that the injunction to stay home does not mean that one does not travel, it means that one *has* a home.

Some of this summary is drawn from or reinforced by Sessions (1981), an essential source for understanding the diverse conceptual origins of deep ecology, radical environmentalism, and bioregionalism.

26. 7 June 1993 interview with Gary Snyder, Davis, California.

27. In *Raise the Stakes* #3, 1974, reprinted in Andruss et al. 1990. New Society Publishers has become the most prominent publisher of bioregional books, with its "New Catalyst Bioregional Series."

28. This was published by Berg's Planet Drum Foundation in *North Pacific Rim Alive*, bundle #3 and is reprinted in Andruss et al. 1990.

29. These terms were probably invented by House and Gorsline, (future primitive) and by Gary Snyder and Michael McClure (back to the Pleistocene). During my 7 June 1993 interview with him, Snyder traced this latter slogan back

to himself and Michael McClure, the other personality from the "beat" movement who was most directly promoting a biocentric perspective. I suggested later that Snyder changed his desired period to the upper or late Paleolithic. He responded, "Actually I was interested in Neolithic, and only later refined it to late-Paleolithic." To my inquiry about his view of the various radical environmental views of the fall of humans from a primordial state of harmony within nature, he responded, "Agriculture may be argued to be the central fall. [But] Paul Shepard likes the idea of the upper Paleolithic as the basic model for appropriate life on this planet." "Talk about utopian," Snyder laughed, "that's pretty utopian, but it's a charming thought. And the way to experiment with it, is to experiment with it yourself. And the way to do this is to experiment with a little upper-Paleolithic living. It feels great. Your body really goes for it [laughs again]. I think that's why we like backpacking, it's touching our upper-Paleolithic [memory]. . . . It's not that far back." He concluded this line of thought noting that Wendell Berry, a well known farmer and nature-essayist, "is totally Neolithic."

Paul Shepard's last book provides the best introduction to his thinking and includes fascinating reflections on his differences with Snyder and other bioregionalists (1998, p. 107).

30. Similarly, in "Devolutionary Notes," Michael Zwerin celebrates groups and movements of "Balkanization," those seeking to overturn "occupation . . . the imposition of rule by aliens" (1980, reprinted in Andruss et al. 1990).

31. "In subverting bigness, we save the planet," Roszak concluded (in Wapner 1996, p. 35).

32. For some of the key texts in the contemporary ecopsychology movement see Roszak 1972, 1978; Shepard 1982; Walsh 1985, 1990; Fox 1991; Keepin 1991; Walsh and Vaughan 1993; Glendinning 1994; Roszak, Gomes, and Kanner 1995; Metzner 1994; Wilber 1995; Adams 1996.

33. See Frenkel 1994 for an analysis of similarities and differences between "environmental determinism" and bioregionalism and for different inconsistencies in some bioregional thought than I take up here.

34. These can be compared to Kirkpatrick Sale's distinctions between ecoregions, georegions, and morphoregions 1991, pp. 56–58).

35. Dodge cites the work of Raymond Dasmann (1973, 1978a) as especially helpful in addressing the conundrums of determining bioregions. There is also certainly some merit to Gary Snyder's claim that oftentimes differences in bioregions are obvious to the attentive observer.

36. See also Wapner (1996, p. 38) on such assumptions.

37. I am using "countercultural" as a modifier to distinguish this form of bioregionalism from some of the other forms that have more recently emerged.

38. Andrew Schmookler (1986, 1995) argues that the failure to recognize such dynamics is the central flaw of all anarchism, green or not.

39. Kirkpatrick Sale, again, provides a good example of this short-sighted propensity, in a chapter on "scale," arguing that "The obvious second law of Gaia with regard to scale [is that]. . . All biotic life is divided into communities . . . [this] is the single basic building block of the ecological world" (Sale 1991, p. 62). As Deudney's remark makes clear, such rhetoric is sheer nonsense, for without the biosphere-habitat no community can exist. Equally problematic is Sale's claim that "For the ecologist, a community is an essentially self-sufficient and self-perpetuating collection of different species that have adapted as a whole to the conditions of their habitat" (1991, p. 62).

A few pages later, Sale seems to make a concession, obliquely, regarding the need for international political cooperation. Quoting from the well known, collaboratively written *A Blueprint for Survival*, Sale acknowledges "the interrelatedness of all things and the far-reaching effects of ecological processes and their disruption [which] should influence community decision-making . . . and [promote] sensitive communications network[s] between all communities." He then comments in a way that suggests he did not fully get their point that humans need to cooperate throughout the biosphere, not only within the contours of large bioregional demarcations: "Such network[s], operating at one or more *bioregional* levels [my emphasis], would in fact be a neat enlargement of other sorts of networks around us daily" (Sale 1991, p. 66).

40. For one appalling example, Kirkpatrick Sale (like Kroptkin) claims to deduce a bioregional polity from nature: "The lessons of the law of complementarity from the animal world and traditional societies seems obvious enough as applied to bioregional polity. Hierarchy and political domination would have no place; systems of ruler-and ruled, even of elected-president-and-electing people, are nonecological" (Sale 1991, p. 101). It is hard to imagine a more absurd lesson to draw from ecology than that human hierarchies are somehow unnatural.

41. Wapner (1996, pp. 36–37) discusses another way that bioregionalism is naive "as a strategy for approaching global environmental problems." It assumes "that all global threats stem from local instances of environmental abuse and that by confronting them at the local level they will disappear." Although attacking environmental problems where they occur might make sense at first glance, Wapner argues, "this assumes the problems . . . are not acute, . . . that humanity has decades or [even] centuries to split itself up into small communities and to begin to tackle the causes of environmental decay." Unfortunately "this is not the case," Wapner concludes, citing the widespread alarm about environmental deterioration within the scientific community.

42. This refers to the proliferation of grassroots groups and international non-governmental organizations struggling against globalization, and for social justice and environmental sustainability.

43. Several of the chapters in a recent collection (McGinnis 1999) provide appreciative but corrective criticisms of bioregionalism compatible with and extending my own. See especially the chapters by Feldman and Wilt, Lipschutz, and Thomashow. Their inclusion by McGinnis suggests that an important dialogue between bioregionalists and their critic-sympathizers is underway.

44. The draft begins: "Earth is our home and home to all living beings. Earth itself is alive. We are a part of an evolving universe. Human beings are members of an interdependent community of life with a magnificent diversity of life forms and cultures. We are humbled before the beauty of Earth and share a reverence for life and the sources of our being. We give thanks for the heritage that we have received from past generations and embrace our responsibilities to present and future generations." (*Earth Ethics* 8 (2 and 3):1–23, 1997).

45. Among the many principles that followed are: "Respect Earth and all life [for] each life form, and all living beings possess intrinsic value and warrant respect independently of their utilitarian value to humanity; Care for Earth, protecting and restoring the diversity, integrity and beauty of the planet's ecosytems . . . precautionary action must be taken to prevent harm; Live sustainably . . . ; Establish justice . . .; Share equitably . . . ; Promote social development . . . ; Practice Non-violence . . . ; [and] Do not do to the environment of others what you do not want done to your environment" (see *Earth Ethics* 8 (2 and 3):1 and 3, 1997).

46. E.g., federal agencies with different mandates and cultures often clash one with another, all while being threatened and pummeled in the political arena by diverse non-state actors. Putting it mildly Ronnie Lipschutz comments, "The lines of power, authority, and jurisdiction in northern California are exceedingly confused and confusing" (1996, p. 84).

47. She writes, pessimistically, "The apparent importance of crises for catalyzing environmental regime change bodes poorly for those problems of a more gradual and cumulative nature. This observation is particularly alarming because the damage associated with these problems is often irreversible [such as with] the loss of global biodiversity." Her argument illuminates the potentially salutary effects of grassroots resistance movements (Taylor 1995), for if such losses are not dramatized, "profound ecological degradation could go virtually unnoticed by an urbanized humanity" (Litfin 1993, p. 102).

48. For the best account of this period see House 1999. Lipschutz agrees that California's receptivity to a bioregionalization process is grounded in more than two decades of bioregional writing and activism that has had widespread intellectual impact. "More to the point," he suggests, "bioregionalism is about local control, and this has broad appeal" (1996, p. 87).

49. For excellent introductions to the science governing such proposals, see Noss 1992, Noss

and Cooperrider 1994, Noss, LaRoe and Scott 1995, and Trombulak 1996.

50. See, e.g., Klyza 1999; House 1999. According to Huey Johnson (1995) New Zealand may be engaged in the most significant example of state-supported bioregionalization. Johnson was one of the early supporters of bioregional initiatives in the United States as the director of California's Resources Agency under Governor Jerry Brown.

A reviewer of this manuscript mentioned government-sponsored bioregional efforts in "Cascadia" (the northwestern United States) as another example of the mainstreaming of bioregionalism, that may be related to the City of Seattle voting to end commercial logging in its 90,000 acre, city-owned Cedar River watershed (12 July 1999 press release from the Pacific Crest Bioregional Project).

51. On this latter point see Kunstler 1993.

52. And perhaps interspecies communication *is* possible, to those open and attentive to the possibility, as Gary Snyder and many other bioregionalists confess.

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