The transformative journey...
Magical Blend accepts the premise that society is undergoing a fundamental transformation. A new world is being born, and whether this birth is easy or a difficult one will depend largely on the individual. It is our aim to chart the course this transformation is taking, and to assist the individual to cope with and contribute to the birthing process. We believe that people’s thoughts influence their reality; if this is true then the world we live in is a combination of our highest hopes, our deepest fears, and the whole range of experience that falls in between. Our goal is to embrace the magical behind the mundane. In this way we hope to act as a catalyst to encourage the individual to achieve his or her highest level of spiritual awareness. We endorse no one pathway to spiritual growth, but attempt to explore many alternative possibilities to help transform the planet.”

When theorists of the left discuss the New Age movement, it is usually to dismiss it as individualistic, abstract and ideologically confused. While such charges are not untrue, such a dismissal overlooks the extent to which the New Age movement shares similar aspirations, histories and desires with what we call the left that may be instructive for us. The above “statement of purpose” of the New Age movement, published in the journal Magical Blend is a “New Age manifesto” in the sense that it, like other manifestos of the left, expresses the desire for a break with history for transformation, for change. However, what distinguishes New Age “manifestos” (besides their high level of abstraction, their valication of the “spiritual” and their failure to articulate concrete or collective strategies to accomplish their goal of transformation) is the frequency with which they use concepts such as rebirth, reclaiming, recharging and other images which imply that we have lost something which must be regained. In the New Age lexicon, “we” originally existed in a state of unity with each other, with “nature,” with our “selves,” a unity that was shattered by the serpent of civilization, the apple of technology. In this way the New Age positions “nature,” the “primitive,” the “spiritual” and, ultimately, the past as sites of wholeness, fulfillment, completeness, can be seen as one particular response to various “crises” of modernity, i.e. of “science,” “reason” and, more generally, the crisis that has accompanied the revaluation of the project of the Enlightenment. But, perhaps, this search for origins, this desire for reconsolidation, which appears in exaggerated form in the New Age, is something we need to be aware of in the project of reconstituting the left, and is a symptom of postmodernity, of a condition which some call postmodernism.

The “New Age” desire is the desire to “reconstruct” a community through reconciliation with various Others, with nature, with the Third World, with the aboriginal and with the divided parts of the self, which are posited as integral to the self. Insomuch as this New Age fantasy of reconciliation has emerged in reaction to various crises announced by postmodernism, it is, in a sense, a symptom of postmodernity, and can tell us a great deal about the extent to which we invest in various “origin myths” in order to consolidate our sense of continuity with both past and future. We will need to acknowledge the extent to which this fantasy is shared, to some extent by theorists of the left, if any reconstructive project of the left is to be in any way successful. My intention in studying the New Age is not only critical — I will also draw out how, despite what some would call the ideological confusion of the New Age, it provides an interesting point of departure for imagining a “postmodern politics”, for it is an arena of a critique of technological rationality and the desire for community, and for a revival of political agency that undermines the current attempts at reconstituting a politics of the left.

Furthermore, the New Age fantasy of reconciliation with various Others, with, for instance, the “Third World”, aboriginal, with “nature” (Lawway) and with the divided parts of the self (Lacan) provides a point of entry into the formulation of “difference” and the construction of the Other in contemporary social thought. The formulation of difference and the Other provides the most pressing challenge to our capacity to formulate a version of postmodern politics. First, in reaction to the coloniast impetus to consume and annihilate the Other, the New Age has responded by identifying with, or, in Bergson’s terms, “consuming” with, the Other, a strategy which ironically replicates the same denial of difference found in colonialist narratives of the Other. Second, the New Age desire to “protect” nature through its programme of “cleaning,” “detoxication—
giving, "decivilizing nature" constructs nature as the site of some idyllic, preindustrial, presensational past to which the postmodern subject, the alienated modern self, must retreat to find some kind of utopian society and return to nature. This is the romanticization of nature with the antagonism of the social and with the continous character of identity, as it is in a herz of environment.

The New Age's self-help technologies, which stress achieving "inner balance" and "harmony," represent the New Age fantasy of the unified, accessible, and coherent conscious self, in contrast to the diffusing desires of a chaotic unconscious. The Other in the New Age is coded through the "alien" the crystal and "aura," figures which reveal the realms of the "Third World," "nurtures," or the "spiritual" are sites in which bears and desires, in which projection and transference, regarded "difference" are played out.

Past the appeal of the New Age can be explained by its positioning of the subject as a traveller who can potentially transcend the epistemological limitations of the body and social location, through access to another dimension. The figure of the traveler is a figure of the self's desire and freedom to traverse space, spaces with increasing regularity in contemporary popular culture in movies, television shows and even advertisements. This positioning of the subject as a time traveler reveals our desire to recreate our origins, to rewrite or re-discover our "roots" and, in a sense, to consolidate the fantasy of "outsiderhood." The fantasy of time travel is one of the most dazzling of the desire to reconstruct our origins. The transatlantic traveler is a symbol of the postmodern conflict between origin myths and the relevance of the present to the dissolution of grand narratives. It reveals the chaotic and contradictory desires of the past years for the sacred, the absolute, the community and the totality.

The desire of the traveler as played out in the yearning to recreate our origins is inextricably related to the technologies of identity in a contemporary context. The West has constructed nature, the Third World, women, primitives, aboriginals and Others as the site of the "primitive" in an attempt to reconstruct our "past" in order to come to terms with our "present." What gets coded as "primitivism" is constituted into a self-reflective consciousness, which becomes central to consolidating the Western sense of self and Other. The primitive becomes a repository for the learnt and desires of the Western subject: it is nature to our culture, the field of the unexpressed to our "disciplined" society. However, the Third World travels, a rip-off trip through a postmodern version of the Archimedes' point, the God's eye view, this traveler is the historian who accurately captures our "essence." This construction of the Other in the New Age is at the heart of our collective desire to replicate our annihilation of difference and its lack of concern for the Other through merging with the Other. For example, only one of these motifs is used by an impetus to find ourselves through identification with the "supreme," the "shaman," the Celt, the Indian, and one of our "primitive," the "animal," crystals, etc, as ways of seeing ourselves as possessing these figures. Among the researches these figures become "secrets" that we have lost but can regain. These figures are adaptations of the self, to prop up the identity of the Western subject and to patch the gaps of the exhausted narratives of the Western subject.

The New Age, then, can be seen as a "symptom" of postmodernity. In order to avoid dealing with the messiness of multiplicity and of polyvalence, the New Age deals with difference by trying to eradicate it. However, the idealization of the primitive in the New Age, in its most generous moments, is symptomatic of an "anthropological nostalgia," a mourning for what we have "lost," and, in a sense, an attempt at reconciliation with others that have been hurt by colonialism and industrialization. The fantasy behind the movement, however naive and ideological, is to make reparation with those we have wronged by giving them an excused, purified status. The figure of the primitive in the New Age is an apology for the past.

Similarly the New Age figure of the alien is a repository for our hopes for the future and an expression of our desire for a postcolonial imaginary. The figure of the alien, reified in both the New Age and contemporary science fiction, reveals the intense anxiety and racism of the Other's otherness and the logical fantasy that the Other is really us in disguise. In new right movements such as neo- Nazi Front, the "primitive" is formulated as the Other, the object which is dehumanized. The same anxiety which is at the moment of the disinterested in which the Other, for instance what is coded as the "primitivist" is must be consumed with Third World cultures, which do not resort to "primitivism," "orientalism," or other oppressive tendencies that have been the World's Third World window to develop their positions in the post. A simple critique of the alien as "ideological" overlooks the extent to which the fantasy of alien contact is representative of a new postcolonial imaginary.

Since the alien represents the "most Other of the Others," he/she is nothing, the characterization of this figure can tell us a great deal about how we view difference. For instance, in popular science fiction, aliens are often portrayed as terrifying, breathe, and therefore threaten the very existence of the alien is benign, friendly and helpful. Many New Age gurus profess to be able to "tune in" and understand aliens in the same manner. New Age literature is littered with references to "telepaths" and other aliens entities which offer spiritual advice.

A recent Commercial is an attempt to shift the tendency to transform the strange into the everyday has influenced popular culture and advertising. Here the Pyramids, Stonehenge and other "unexplained natural wonders" are explained as being merely a good-natured but colored joke on the part of the superior alien entities that created them merely to have a bit of fun! This theme is also apparent in the Reeve's Peanut Butter Cups of which presents circles left in wheat fields in England as an example of "mysteries" being challenged. Both of these examples reveal the New Age desire to minimize the threatening, unaccountable aspects of the alien by denying the alien's "alienness," making this Otherness appear in the realm of the explainable, mundane, and in fact, consumerable everyday. They show how the New Age incorporation of the alien into the everyday has been a recent and undeniably popular marketing strategy that has infiltrated mainstream advertising. The appeal of this strategy of anthropomorphizing the alien resides in its capacity to alleviate anxiety regarding difference by domesticating it. The alien is really human, perhaps different ethnic character but we have domesticated women, are also really the same.

Furthermore, the fantasy of the alien is constituted into a self-reflective consciousness, which becomes central to consolidating the Western sense of self and Other. The primitive becomes a repository for the learnt and desires of the Western subject: it is nature to our culture, the field of the unexpressed to our "disciplined" society. However, the Third World travels, a rip-off trip through a postmodern version of the Archimedes' point, the God's eye view, this traveler is the historian who accurately captures our "essence." This construction of the Other in the New Age is at the heart of our collective desire to replicate our annihilation of difference and its lack of concern for the Other through merging with the Other. For example, only one of these motifs is used by an impetus to find ourselves through identification with the "supreme," the "shaman," the Celt, the Indian, and one of our "primitive," the "animal," crystals, etc, as ways of seeing ourselves as possessing these figures. Among the researches these figures become "secrets" that we have lost but can regain. These figures are adaptations of the self, to prop up the identity of the Western subject and to patch the gaps of the exhausted narratives of the Western subject.

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However, the point I am trying to make is not that these aliens reveal the awareness with which we have not been a "local" community, but rather, our profound fear that we are not. In the context of global conflict, imagining the aliens imagining us amounts to constituting ourselves as a community, for, from the vantage point of the alien, we are a community, a "global village" of the "different." It is from this point of view of the aliens that we can conjure up Earth Day slogans such as "one people, one planet," alongside the satellite/alleen view of the planet earth. Ecology is not, then, a human or even an "earthly" imaginary; it is rather an alien imaginary. The figure of the alien reveals the desperation with which we are trying to revive various discredited narratives: the human as essentially "good" and the global community as a postmodern age: we cannot believe in these narratives ourselves, so we let the aliens believe them for us.

The New Age, like several left and feminist theorizations of community, ultimately subscribes to a closure of the gap between subject and object, and articulates difference as something that has to be overcome. For instance, Dorothy Allison, in a collection of articles edited by Doris Young, proposes on ideal feminist community as characterized by a "shared feeling of merging and belonging," with an emphasis on community. In the same collection, Leon Balbus represents the goal of radical politics and the establishment of community as overcoming the "Otherness" of the Other in reciprocal recognition. This is not to say that all attempts to achieve a recognition of collective interests should be abandoned, but rather, that such formulations must take account of the necessity of "fixing" difference, the contingent character of identity and, in particular, of the extent to which the subject is not so much a subject to come to mediate relations between itself. For instance, in some versions of the New Age, "attunement" with nature or natural symbols (such as the crystal) takes precedence over human relations. In this version of the New Age, some crystals are called healers and others are conditioners and cleaners. This strategy of "attunement" in ecological discourse essentially ascribe to hair products drawn out the New Age emphasis on "cleaning," "clearing away of debris," and to the extent to which it is frequently linked to a New Age concept of "the self." This refers to the "self" or the New Age's new identity myth, as the self is understood to be the subject of the emphasis on purity and unity in the New Age.

The emphasis on the coherent, unified essentialized subject is also clearly symbolized by the "aura," a metaphysical "field" that is supposed to reveal, for clearly identifiable boundaries between self and Other, which some New Age practitioners believe in. For instance, the desire for attunement with a crystal is supposed to reveal that some animals and inanimate nature, actors are a part of our community, and that nature, like the primitive, becomes the source of purity, beauty, happiness and harmony in response to the corrupting influence of "culture" and of technology. Nature, like the primitive, is opposed to the "other," the origin myths, or on original "unity" which we lost, a "state" from which we become separate. The New Age concept of nature as opposition to culture, to technology and as "a force" within ourselves struggling against the "alienating," frequently dehumanizing, effects of culture. Thus, the New Age "Aura" is an instance of the unity of the whole, or the "other," the subject that recent psychoanalytic lit- erature has called into question. In effect, the new perspective on the aura is an example of the desire to omit the Other in the self. The New Age subject is, then, to become truly comprehensible, similar to itself, for once the subject is "read" through aura readings, astrological readings, etc., unconscious and conflicting desires, multi- layered meanings, ambiguities, all convenc- tionally dissemble into one description, one reading which rocesses them. The split sub- ject is superimposed with a "reading" which "outlines" her action behavior and gestu- re into a unifying framework which explains "them." Thus the chaotic unconscious, contradictory confused desires of the self are projected onto the inaccessible, incomprehensible, ambiguous, or in other words, the parts of the self that we designate as Other, are omitted.

The phenomenon of the aura on one hand reveals the history of the opacity of the social, the desire for unconditional subjectivity, unsecured by language, social location, or cultural specificity. On the other hand, aura readings stress individual interpretation and the active participation of the subject in setting itself/herself into the "reading." In effect, aura readings are often characterized as a form of "listening" to the self, as if one can "read" the aura and other such "readings" can be seen merely as emblematic of the analytic situation in which the subject is placed. In the same way, aura readings are frequently "channelized" through "spirits" or "aliens." Other aspects of the New Age, as in other postmodernist readings, are, however, regarded as making possible the possibility of another kind of subjectivity and alterity:...