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Collective Guilt, Conservation, and Other Postmodern Messages in Contemporary Westerns: *Last of the Dogmen* and *Grey Owl*

MAUREEN TRUELLE SCHWARZ

Lewis Gates [while sipping whiskey around the evening campfire]: *I am curious about one thing—Why Indians?*

Lillian Sloan: *Because I admire them and we owe them a tremendous debt.*

Gates: *How's that?*

Sloan: *Well they gave us romance, myths, legends. They gave us a history. The Indians shaped the character of our entire nation.*

Gates: *We picked a hell of a way to say thank you didn't we?*

Sloan: *What happened was inevitable. The way it happened was unconscionable.*

—dialogue in *Last of the Dogmen*, 1995¹

Pony [upon adopting orphaned beaver cubs]: *I am not trying to get at you Archie. You said it yourself. Soon there will be no beavers left. We can't just leave them to die.*

Archie Grey Owl: *Everything dies. Flies get eaten by fish. Fish get eaten by otters. Otters get eaten by wolves. I've seen a bear kill a wolf and rip out his guts to eat. I've seen men kill bears. And I have seen a man three weeks dead, covered with flies.*

Pony: *Kill a deer for meat, I understand that. Kill beaver to make yourself a coat so that you don't freeze to death, I understand that. But killing as a trade? To make money? You're better than that Archie.*

Grey Owl: *Forest Indians have always been trappers.*

Pony: *Did they always trap animals for trade?*

Grey Owl: *Sure.*

Maureen Trudelle Schwarz is on the faculty of the Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs at Syracuse University, where she specializes in Native North America. Since 1991 her research, conducted on the Navajo Reservation, has focused on the explanatory and predictive powers that Native histories and philosophies offer to people coping with contemporary problems.

Pony: *Archie, that is not true and you know it. The old Indian way was you killed only what you needed. It was the white trappers that taught us to kill for money. We never even had money before the white man came.*

Grey Owl: *You're a woman. You are town raised. You wouldn't understand.*

Pony: *Whatever you say Archie.*

—dialogue in *Grey Owl*, 1999²

Capable of simultaneously recalling past usage and responding to the present in new ways, culturally established genres serve as primary vehicles for shaping and carrying social experience from one generation to another.³ The Western genre encapsulates the myth of the frontier, which is at the core of American ideology. This myth and notions of American nationhood are premised on the belief that land-starved Europeans “discovered” an uninhabited wilderness, which they quickly pioneered and to which they had a God-given duty to bring civilization. As Richard Slotkin points out, “the conquest of the wilderness and the subjugation or displacement of the Native Americans who originally inhabited it have been the means to our achievement of a national identity, a democratic polity, an ever-expanding economy, and a phenomenally dynamic and ‘progressive’ civilization.”⁴ Western movies, which are often considered American cinema par excellence, usually involve stories about the history of the American West. This genre in all its permutations has, however, resonated with millions in countries around the world. “[T]his universal popularity is due not to global interest in American history, but rather to the fact that Westerns carry elements that evoke emotions and reflections from other local perspectives as well.”⁵

After using the language of the Western to situate where *Last of the Dogmen* and *Grey Owl* fit within the genre, I employ the notions of “imperialist nostalgia” and “collective guilt” to provide a critical assessment of overarching moral messages conveyed in these two contemporary films about the “White Man’s Indian.”⁶ The first, based rather whimsically on the 1864 Sand Creek Massacre, features Tom Berenger as Lewis Gates, a bounty hunter, and Barbara Hershey as Lillian Sloan, an anthropologist expert in Native American cultures, who together seek and find a group of Cheyenne that fled north after the incident and survived in an isolated Montana valley. Based on the story of Archie Belaney, the second film features Pierce Brosnan as Grey Owl, the most famous “Red Indian” in Canada during the 1930s, and Annie Galipeau as Pony, his Mohawk lover, who together launch a campaign to save the beaver.

My analysis demonstrates that, as a category of literary or visual composition characterized by a particular style, form, and content, the Western has been historically implemented to illuminate the Euro-American connection to a particular place—North America—and to the ongoing development of a North American identity as well as how it is retooled to address current concerns. In the cases under consideration, the concerns addressed are collective guilt over the demise and displacement of indigenous peoples and conservation of the environment and its animal inhabitants, respectively. The films examined in this article set up a complex dialogue between the sedimented memories of history and nationhood enshrined in the Western genre form and the alternative narratives of historical experience these particular renditions bring into sharp relief.

THE WESTERN GENRE

Within the structured marketplace of myths, the continuity and persistence of particular genres may be seen as keys to identifying the culture's deepest and most persistent concerns. Likewise, major breaks in the development of important genres may signal the presence of a significant crisis of cultural values and organization. The development of new genres, or the substantial modification of existing ones, can be read as a signal of active ideological concern in which both the producers and consumers of mass media participate. . . .

—Richard Slotkin, *Gunfighter Nation*⁷

According to Mikhail Bakhtin, genres function as “organs of memory” for particular cultures, providing crystallized forms of social and cultural perception that embody the worldviews of the periods in which they originated, while carrying with them “the layered record of their changing use.”⁸ Genres both remember the past and redefine present experience.⁹ Firmly grounded as it is in literature, dime novels, Buffalo Bill’s Wild West Shows, and silent films, a genre such as the Western offers a vivid realization of this concept, for it clearly functions as a “repository of social experience” that preserves certain historical perspectives even as it is adapted to new contexts.¹⁰

By the late eighteenth century, rebellion had stripped England of its external colonies in the Americas and consolidation of the American nation-state had begun.¹¹ “The West made a perfect crucible for the development of a mythology intrinsically American.”¹² The emphasis in arts and letters became that of creating the “national heritage” of the emerging state.¹³ An integral part of the legacy of this national heritage building is the Western.

Throughout the twentieth century, the Western in the form of novels, theatrical or television shows, and films has furnished much of the basic repertoire of national mythology for the United States, which depicts the carving out of a civilization in the midst of wilderness.¹⁴ As Slotkin notes, “The Myth of the Frontier is our [Euro-American] oldest and most characteristic myth, expressed in a body of literature, folklore, ritual, historiography, and polemics produced over a period of three centuries.”¹⁵ Through persistent usage the myth of the frontier has acquired the power of symbolizing and supporting American ideology and moral consciousness “with all the complexities and contradictions that consciousness may contain.”¹⁶ As a film genre, the Western has predictable devices which may include: movement from east to west, mirroring the supposed line of progress across the continent; a setting marked by a border dividing wilderness from civilization and the past from the present; a singular act of violence that provides regeneration to protagonists; a moral message; and predictable characters such as Euro-American settlers, cowboys, saloon girls, sheriffs, outlaws, schoolmarms, military personnel, men of the cloth, bartenders, store owners, and of course Indians and half-breeds. The latter are vital characters because Western mythology is inextricably linked to the often-contested relations amongst Euro-Americans and Native Americans. Plots typically present the wilderness as empty before

European conquest and indigenous peoples as one-dimensional stereotypes, while lionizing their displacement or subjugation.

IMAGES OF IMPERIALIST NOSTALGIA

For whites, Indians may represent the parts of themselves that have been lost in a competitive, materialistic, destructive society. Many Native Americans realize that even the sympathetic, comparatively accurate depictions of Indians in recent years follow from an understanding of Indians by negation; Indians represent what Euro-American culture does not have.

—Steven Leuthold, “Native American Responses to the Western”¹⁷

During the last decades of the nineteenth century, Native Americans were no longer seen as a threat to white civilization or as possessors of a meaningful claim to property. Over time, the Indian became “a historical artifact of distinct value.”¹⁸ As pointed out by Robert Berkhofer in his now classic study of images of the American Indian, Euro-Americans have historically tended to grapple with their contested relationship with Native Americans through the use of oppositions. Two fundamental but contradictory conceptions have prevailed in representations of Native Americans in all media: the “ignoble” and the “noble” savage.¹⁹ The former embodied, “Nakedness and lechery, passion and vanity [which supposedly] led to lives of polygamy and sexual promiscuity among themselves and constant warfare and fiendish revenge against their enemies.”²⁰ The latter, based on Judeo-Christian and Greco-Roman notions of Paradise or the Golden Age, envisioned people of long ago or far away who “dwelt in an ideal(ized) landscape and gentle climate in harmony with nature and reason” and possessed “sexual innocence, equality of condition and status, peaceful simplicity, healthful and handsome bodies, [and] vigorous minds unsullied by the wiles, complexities, and sophistication of modern civilization.”²¹

Once Native Americans were no longer seen as a threat to white civilization, with images of noble savages in mind, Euro-Americans began to deify nature and its Native American inhabitants. As a result, in the language of the Western genre, whereas settlers, military personnel, cowboys, and men of the cloth stand for “civilization,” Indians stand for nature, the land, and the environment. Furthermore, “[t]he role of the white man at that stage is to learn as much as possible from the Indian—that is, to become as much as possible *like* the Indian without *being* the Indian—before the race of Native Americans disappears with the setting sun.”²²

Film images focused on this version of the narrative are part and particle of the machinery of “imperialist nostalgia”—that is, “the curious phenomenon of people’s longing for what they themselves have destroyed.”²³ As pointed out by Renalto Rosaldo,

Imperialist nostalgia revolves around a paradox: A person kills somebody, and then mourns the victim. In more attenuated form, someone deliberately alters a form of life and then regrets that things have not

remained as they were prior to the intervention. At one more remove, people destroy their environment, and then they worship nature. In any of its versions, imperialist nostalgia uses a pose of “innocent yearning” both to capture people’s imaginations and to conceal its complicity with often-brutal domination.²⁴

Imperialist nostalgia often conceals or assuages guilt over the brutal destruction of peoples and cultures. Within this framework, Euro-Americans can be said to glorify Indians as a means of mourning their own destruction of first this continent’s aboriginal inhabitants and subsequently the environment and its animal inhabitants.

In the mid-to-late 1960s and early 1970s, after decades of seemingly limitless economic expansion and political improvement, North Americans were asked to accommodate themselves to the limitations of “spaceship earth.”²⁵ Spaceship earth is a world of exhausted frontiers whose ever increasing population must draw on limited natural resources—a planetary ecology reduced to a zero sum game in which every gain involves a corresponding loss.²⁶

In direct response to these socioeconomic shifts, three types of alternative Westerns began to be produced alongside classic forms: the formalist, the neorealist, and the counterculture or “New Cult of the Indian” Western.²⁷ From a political perspective, the most important of the alternative types were films such as *Cheyenne Autumn* or *The Great Sioux Massacre*, which fall into the latter category.²⁸ As noted by Slotkin, “[W]here earlier films of this type had been content to demonstrate the ethical culpability of Whites and appeal for peaceful co-existence until the Native Americans could learn civilized ways, the new films suggested that Native American culture might be a morally superior alternative to ‘civilization.’”²⁹

LAST OF THE DOGMEN AND GREY OWL AS ALTERNATIVE WESTERNS

Narrator [describing the Montana Oxbow]: *Four thousand square miles of the roughest country God ever put on a map. There is not a road nor a town; hell there’s places out there that haven’t even seen a footprint.*

—dialogue in *Last of the Dogmen*³⁰

Archie [upon being asked to work at the soon-to-be created 3,000 square mile Prince Albert National Park]: *Do you know why I love the forest? I love the forest because it is the last place where men aren’t in charge—the last wilderness. Why would I want to be a park keeper?*

—dialogue in *Grey Owl*³¹

The original mythic story of the Western has been conventionalized and abstracted over time until it is reducible to a set of symbols, each of which is in effect “a poetic construction of tremendous economy and compression and a mnemonic device capable of evoking a complex set of historical associations by a single image or phrase.”³² The most essential cues are established through powerful connections between particular story-forms and particular

kinds of settings. Images of wide-open spaces, mountain ranges or passes, rivers, or other topological borders invite viewers to associate the story with others of the genre. Scenes evoking past Westerns, such as panoramic shots of beautiful, rugged, seemingly untouched country give depth and resonance. Those who understand the language of a genre can manipulate it. This is evident in the *Last of the Dogmen* and *Grey Owl*, in which classic elements of the Western are inverted and distorted to demarcate them as alternative.

Western plots are often constructed around movement across terrain from east to west, such as that of a military campaign or a wagon train. In both *Last of the Dogmen* and *Grey Owl*, this directionality is inverted with an emphasis on west to east or south to north, rather than east to west. For example, in its latter stages the storyline of *Grey Owl* revolves around Archie's travel from North America (west) to Europe (east) for a speaking tour. In the majority of the film, focus is on movement from the town of Elk River (south) to the Bear Lake Ojibway village, Archie's wilderness cabin, and the Prince Albert National Park (north).

In *Last of the Dogmen*, focus is initially on Gates's movement north into the Montana Oxbow in his search for escaped convicts. Just before Gates reaches them, warriors on horseback attack the convicts. Gates hears gunfire and rides toward it. When he gets to the scene of the shooting, the area is shrouded in fog. He finds unshod horse tracks, an arrow shaft, and evidence of violence—bloody torn clothing and bullet casings.

Gates goes to Dr. Sloan to ask for advice and show her the arrow shaft. She identifies it as that of a Cheyenne Dog Soldier, a member of a military society that included the strongest and bravest warriors within Cheyenne society. These fierce fighters often served "as a rear-guard, sacrificial decoys," so that the rest of the tribe could escape. She maintains that it is a reproduction even after he tells her his story.³³

The direction of Gates's journey mirrors the historic flight of the survivors of the Sand Creek Massacre. As Lillian explains, Lone Wolf, leader of the Dogmen, led twenty men, women, and children north. Soldiers chased them through two states into what is today northeastern Montana. A blizzard set in and the soldiers left the Cheyenne for dead. Gates asks, "What if by a fluke, or a miracle, what if Lone Wolf and those Cheyenne did survive? Isn't it possible that their descendants could have remained hidden in the Oxbow?"³⁴ Together Lillian and Gates travel north into the Oxbow wilderness in search of these Cheyenne.

The space within which all Westerns unfold is divided by "significant or signifying borders, usually marked by some strong visual sign: the palisade of the desert fort; a mountain pass or a river."³⁵ Borders are significant because through persistent association,

[they] have come to symbolize a range of fundamental ideological differences. The most basic of these is that between the natural and the human or social realms, "wilderness vs. civilization." This opposition is given depth and complexity by metaphors that liken it to social and ideological divisions: between White civilization and Red-skin savagery. . . . It is nearly always understood as a border between an "Old World" which

is seen as known, oppressive, and limiting, and a “New World” which is rich in potential or mystery, liberating, and full of opportunity.³⁶

In *Last of the Dogmen*, this “signifying border” is represented by a secret passageway to a hidden valley accessible only through a cave concealed under a waterfall through which Lewis and Lillian are taken by the Cheyenne Dog Soldiers they encounter. Sentimental music evoking nostalgia surges as they emerge from the dark cave and enter a seemingly pristine valley. The narrator tells viewers, “What everyone of us looks for, and what damn few of us gets to see, that’s what is just over the far horizon. The trick is to know it when you see it. The even bigger trick is to know what to do about it.”³⁷

The importance of this border is reemphasized later when Lillian and Gates are shown a buckskin painting with symbols documenting the history of the Cheyenne journey from Colorado. Translating for Gates and viewers, Lillian explains that, according to their Cheyenne hosts, after the Sand Creek Massacre, “there was a great storm, the Indians were lost and starving. A wolf appeared and led them to this valley. The wolf spoke, telling them to remain here, hidden from the white man forever. They survived. This was during the moon when the deer shed their horns—128 winters ago.”³⁸

In *Grey Owl*, the all-important border is represented by a river and a mountain pass which are traversed by canoe and snowshoes on the way to and from the Bear Lake Ojibway village of his adopted father, Archie’s winter cabin in the wilderness, and the Prince Albert National Park, a last bastion of Canadian wilderness.

This key element of the Western genre, the terrain of the so-called “wilderness,” is a place both destroyed and created in the popular Euro-American imagination. While members of some of the hundreds of diverse Native American nations differentiate or differentiated between the world of the community and that which picks up where human habitation leaves off, others do not now, nor did they in the past, see the natural world as wilderness. Rather, it is Europeans and Euro-Americans who routinely demarcate the lands they have “settled” from those they have left alone.³⁹ While destruction of wilderness is currently the process that most often makes newsworthy headlines—mining, roads, water works projects—the process of creation is every bit as real and violent.⁴⁰ In fact, as Chase Hensel points out, this wilderness was created through destruction of the aboriginal inhabitants’ knowledge of and ties to the land because with the exception of only the most inhospitable environments, the Age of Exploration took place when there were essentially no empty places left in the world to explore.⁴¹ Therefore, these places were always only symbolically untouched, pristine, and natural settings. The central presence of this symbolic form of wilderness in both *Last of the Dogmen* and *Grey Owl* clues viewers to the fact that they are derivatives of the Western genre.

Because Indians and the wilderness provide the new consciousness through which the protagonist or protagonists will transform the world, the Western plot requires that the protagonist “must cross the border into ‘Indian country’ and experience a ‘regression’ to a more primitive and natural condition of life so that the false values of the ‘metropolis’ can be purged and a

new, purified social contract enacted.”⁴² This association between travel and regression is no coincidence, for as Johannes Fabian has pointed out, distance is routinely equated with time in Euro-American representations of Others.⁴³ Thus, crossing these borders involves travel back into the past—that is, to an earlier phase of human development, to the symbolic childhood of humankind.

This is made clear in *Last of the Dogmen* when, after encountering Native warriors in the Oxbow, Lillian tells Gates: “You were right, they are Cheyenne Dog Soldiers. In my life, I never would have believed. And yet here we are, a step back into history. My god, I feel privileged!”⁴⁴ Scenes of traditional idyllic camp life, shown as Lillian and Gates are brought into the village in which the Cheyenne are represented as a tribe of “Noble Anachronisms” further reinforce this passage into the past.⁴⁵

Symbolic crossing of time boundaries is demonstrated through Grey Owl’s portrayal as a noble anachronism living as if in the past—that is, trapping in the backcountry. This is clarified through the following dialogue, which takes place when Pony’s father visits Archie to caution that against his wishes, she has decided to go “up north” with Archie to learn the life of her ancestors:

Pony’s Father: She’s got this Indian bug. Wants to live like her ancestors. It is all moonshine. Can’t turn back the clock. That life is over. Nobody lives in the forest anymore.

Archie: I do.

Pony’s Father: How the hell do you survive up there?

Archie: I don’t need much. The forest looks after me.

Pony’s father: Brave talk. Got my daughter all fired up.⁴⁶

As her father feared, Pony convinces a mutual friend to take her to Archie’s cabin where she stays against his wishes as winter sets in. Although she clearly does not approve of his ruthless trapping, as spring breaks they are lovers and Archie is concerned because they are short on furs due to the scarcity of beavers. While out checking his trap line, they find beaver kittens whose mother has been killed in one of Archie’s traps. Archie raises his gun to shoot them explaining that they will surely die because they are not yet weaned. Pony intervenes and takes them home to their cabin where she cares for them. Despite her attempts to engender an interest in him for the beaver kittens, he shows marked disinterest. When Pony asks, “Can’t you even look at them?” He responds: “What for? I am a trapper, remember?”⁴⁷ This heated exchange sets the stage for the growing concern over the fate of the beaver population. That night, they make up and Archie allows the baby beavers to crawl into bed with them during their lovemaking.

These borders are also important because Western storylines require that playing through a scenario of separation, temporary regression to a more primitive state, and spiritual or moral revival or rebirth through violence achieves redemption.⁴⁸ *Last of the Dogmen* opens with violence—law enforcement officials surveying the carnage of a crashed prison bus and dead guards killed by convicts before they fled into the Oxbow—and violence of one form

or another remains central throughout the story. The storyline of *Grey Owl* is likewise permeated with violence. Such violence is appropriate because a symbolic “savage war” is essential to the Western genre.

The characteristics of the individual protagonists have special import to this unfolding scenario. They must be men or women “who know Indians, . . . characters whose experiences, sympathies, and even allegiances fall on both sides of the Frontier.”⁴⁹ As Slotkin explains,

The action of the narrative requires that these borders be crossed by a hero (or group) whose character is so mixed that he (or they) can operate effectively on both sides of the line. Through this transgression of the borders, through combat with the dark elements on the other side, the heroes reveal the meaning of the frontier line (that is, the distinctions of value it symbolized) even as they break it down. In the process they evoke the elements in themselves (or in their society) that correspond to the “dark,” and by destroying the dark elements and colonizing the border, they purge darkness from themselves and from the world. Thus the core of the mythic narrative that traverses the mythic landscape is a tale of personal and social “regeneration through violence.”⁵⁰

To fulfill this requirement in the films under consideration, to the list of predictable characters are added, the Indian “wannabe” trapper-turned-conservationist and the city-raised Mohawk girl who seeks the life of her ancestors in *Grey Owl* and the hardened outdoorsman-turned-bounty-hunter and the well-meaning fluent-in-antiquated-Cheyenne anthropologist in *Last of the Dogmen*. The “dark” side of human nature of concern in both *Last of the Dogmen* and *Grey Owl* is the wanton destruction of living beings—that of Native Americans in the former and that of wildlife in the latter. That this specific type of violence will be the central focus becomes evident in *Grey Owl* when Archie coldly sets traps and kills game animals for his own gain (seemingly immune to the sheer brutality of his actions) and in *Last of the Dogmen* when Lillian itemizes the brutality of the Sand Creek Massacre.

By Lillian’s account, Black Kettle and his Cheyenne people were instructed to make camp near Lyons, Colorado. They feasted to celebrate a forthcoming negotiated peace. At dawn of the following day, November 29, 1864, groups of Colorado volunteers known as the Bloodless Third were instructed to take off their coats as they surrounded the camp. After the alarm was sounded, Black Kettle raised the American flag and the white flag of peace. The soldiers slaughtered those in the encampment, two-thirds of whom were women and children. Then,

the looting began. Scalps were taken, fingers, ears, noses cut off. Babies were cut out of their wombs, women had their uteruses cut off and the soldiers wore them on their hats. As a matter of fact when they put their clean coats back on, they paraded through Denver with body parts decorating their uniforms and horses.⁵¹

This riveting account sets the stage for the remainder of the film to focus on the survival of Native Americans in the face of the onslaught of European encroachments generally and protection of these Cheyenne specifically. This is later reinforced when Gates is involved in a dramatic shootout with Sheriff Deegan's men, after which the passageway to the Cheyenne's secret valley is dynamited and closed in order to protect those in the hidden valley from the outside, contemporary world.

In *Grey Owl*, the defining moment of violence comes when Pony calls out to Archie that she cannot find one of the "mics" as they affectionately refer to the beaver kittens. Archie consoles her, saying that the mic is probably nearby. When Pony asks, "How far could it have gone? Might it have gotten as far as the trap line?" Archie utters, "Oh god!" and runs off to successively trigger each trap along the line. He hears a baby beaver and rushes to grab it before it walks into a trap but is too late. As he returns to camp gently cradling the lifeless body of the dead mic in his arms, Pony greets him with "Archie, I found him. They were playing in the cabin."⁵² He stands there weeping with the dead beaver baby in his arms while she consoles him. That evening, Archie tells Pony that he will quit trapping. This sets the stage for the film's moral message.

As pointed out by Slotkin, every Western protagonist is charged with discovering the inherent meaning of the frontier line in order to reveal the story's all-important moral message.⁵³ In *Grey Owl* the message is that the influence of capitalist society—in this case, the drive to trap and kill for profit—destroys nature. Archie carries his message from the natural environment to cities in an effort to eradicate the destruction of beavers. His goal is to protect the wilderness and its wildlife inhabitants for future generations.

The message in *Last of the Dogmen* is that the lifeways of Native people must be failsafed to right a wrong—the demise and displacement of Native Americans—and save ourselves. Since indigenous cultures are morally superior alternatives to civilization and social regeneration is only attainable through contact with pure "primitives" (that is, those supposedly untainted by outside influences), these last surviving true Native Americans must be protected so that a better way of life can be learned from them.⁵⁴ These moral messages demarcate *Last of the Dogmen* and *Grey Owl* as alternative or Cult-of-the-Indian Westerns.

IMAGES BORN OF COLLECTIVE GUILT

What was the underlying theme or consciousness of the various movements, organizations, and new ways of thinking that constituted cultural modernity as it circled the globe? Let me begin with an observation of the obvious which usually goes unsaid: the modern conscience was a guilty conscience. This was not an imagined guilt. There was a real basis for it in modern society's decadent assaults on savagery, peasantry, and on nature itself. Of course, as Freud and Alfred Hitchcock taught us, human beings refuse to live long with guilt as such. We carry guilt around in the guise of something else, usually a manic excess of distractive activity that is easy enough to spot as

symptomatic. Also, there are excuses, justifications, and accounts. The primitives had to be converted because they were different: namely, not Christian, white, or clothed. They had to be removed because they were in the way; there simply was not enough room on this planet for both primitive and industrial life. They were occupying valuable real estate. Or perhaps the savages had to be destroyed because they were evil.

—Dean MacCannell, *Empty Meeting Grounds*⁵⁵

The notion that land-starved Europeans “discovered” an uninhabited wilderness, which they quickly pioneered and to which they brought civilization, is a myth of the popular Euro-American imagination. This myth and American nationhood are premised on the belief that monarchs, explorers, and settlers had a God-given right to displace indigenous peoples. As Christians, these men and women considered themselves duty-bound to bring civilization and Christianity to “savages” and “infidels” wherever found and believed they possessed a superior right to the land. Since the Crusades, these beliefs have served to rationalize European behavior toward the inhabitants of the Middle East, Africa, the Far East, and Australia in addition to what has come to be known as the Americas.⁵⁶ Coupled with bonafide military engagements and food shortages, disease played a critical role in the European conquest and colonization.

Early writers assumed that history started with the arrival of Europeans and that the earliest written accounts were applicable to what Native life was like for generations prior to contact. This is an essential and critical flaw in our received wisdom on Native America. We now know that Native life changed dramatically before face-to-face contact with Europeans due to epidemic diseases.⁵⁷ Although the full toll of European-introduced diseases on the aboriginal inhabitants of the Americas was virtually if not completely ignored until the 1940s, the 1947 publication of P. M. Ashburn’s *The Ranks of Death* and William McNeill’s 1976 *Plagues and Peoples* brought increased historic, demographic, and anthropologic focus to this area.⁵⁸

Starting in 1518 or 1519 with the introduction of smallpox in the Central Valley of what is today Mexico, the diseases introduced by Europeans had devastating effects. This is due in part to the fact that from the perspective of European-introduced pathogens, Native Americas were a “virgin soil” population.⁵⁹ After its introduction, the smallpox pathogen is estimated to have traveled hundreds of miles per year through Native-to-Native contact, quickly accelerating from an epidemic to a pandemic, which swept across the American continents between 1520 and 1524.⁶⁰ This first pandemic was followed by wide-ranging epidemics such as measles (1513–1533), typhoid (1528), bubonic plague (1545–1548), influenza (1559), typhus (1586), diphtheria (1601–1602), scarlet fever (1637), malaria (1830–1833), and cholera (1832–1834).⁶¹

Because pathogens traveled in advance of Europeans, many Native communities were overwhelmed by cyclic waves of pathogens on an average of every three to four years, during what is referred to as the “protohistoric period.”⁶² Biological and sociocultural factors contributed directly or indirectly to

a 90 to 95 percent reduction in population in the first one hundred years after exposure to diseases.⁶³ Using a conservative estimate of five million as the base, a 90 to 95 percent loss would mean that the total Native North American population was reduced to half a million.⁶⁴

The cumulative effect of such high mortality over such a short period of time shattered or distorted Native belief systems, disrupted their political and social institutions, discredited their medical practices and practitioners, produced psychological disorientation and demoralization, killed off most of the elders who were repositories of tribal history and traditional knowledge, demanded the simplification of cultural inventories and technologies, forced migration and regrouping of remnant populations often in areas far from sacred lands, and increased the likelihood of warfare either in the clash of migrating groups or in the search for new populations.⁶⁵

During this same time, it became increasingly difficult for survivors of the European-introduced diseases to find food as their hunting grounds were overtaken by the burgeoning Euro-American population, the enormous appetite of the European markets for animal skins and pelts led to the demise of many animal populations, thousands of bison were slaughtered from train cars by Euro-American sportsmen, and European weapons such as repeating rifles and cannons increasingly turned battles into slaughters. Furthermore, Native people faced acts of systematic ethnocide such as the Sand Creek Massacre, which precipitated the flight north into Montana by ancestors of the Cheyenne encountered by Lillian and Gates in the Oxbow.

Shortly after their arrival in the Cheyenne village, Lillian and Gates learn that a young warrior is mortally ill due to wounds inflicted by the escaped convicts. Gates goes back to town, steals penicillin, and is chased by the sheriff and his men. Gates returns with the medicine, Lillian administers it, and the boy heals. Soon after, warriors spot Sheriff Deegan and his posse a half-day's ride out. Spotted Elk, leader of the Cheyenne, wants to leave and go farther into the valley. Yellow Wolf, the up-and-coming leader, wants to stay and fight, but Gates recommends he create a diversion to buy them more time.

Just when we begin to think that we will be spared the timeworn motif of the "Vanishing Americans," Lillian Sloan decides to stay in the secret valley with the Cheyenne and offers as her rationale:

Lillian: I want a living record set down. A memorial to the *last of their kind*.

Gates: Have you lost your mind?

Lillian: I have spent half my live teaching others. Now, out here, with these people I am the student, I am living [pauses]. I belong with them. I am staying.⁶⁶

Viewers are apparently expected to celebrate the survival of these Cheyenne, while simultaneously acknowledging their ultimate demise. Further on, the purpose of their survival becomes clear as the narrator intones:

Now I don't know for certain what Lillian found with those Cheyenne and I can't say she found anything. But I figure that once she got among 'em, at least she came upon a better idea about what she was looking for. Maybe some piece of an Old World in the new, a better world, a better one for her anyway.⁶⁷

It seems then that these Cheyenne survived because they are people amongst whom non-Natives can find a better life.

Gates takes dynamite from a storage hut where the Cheyenne have gathered items taken from Euro-Americans encountered in the Oxbow over the years, kisses Lillian goodbye, and leaves to confront the sheriff and his posse. He is captured and handcuffed. One of Deegan's men finds the cave halfway up the waterfall that "goes all the way through."⁶⁸ Sheriff Deegan tells the men to pull out. Knowing that they are headed into the secret valley, Gates charges ahead and climbs up to the cave with Deegan in close pursuit.

In the cave, Gate aims to shoot dynamite he has left in the passageway. Just as Deegan comes up behind him and tells him to drop his weapon, Yellow Wolf appears in the cave entrance and shoots the dynamite with his bow and arrow. The blast throws Gates and Deegan down the waterfall. Gates saves Deegan from drowning, but severely injures himself. The entire party is forced to return to town. The narrator explains that search parties were sent out all over the Oxbow after Lillian until the snow shut them down. The charges against Gates are subsequently dropped and in the closing shots, he returns to the hidden valley to join Lillian and the Cheyenne. While *Last of the Dogmen* addresses collective guilt over the demise of Native Americans, through use of clichéd stereotypes of Native Americans as noble savages incarnate, *Grey Owl* addresses collective guilt over the demise of the wilderness and its animal inhabitants.

IMAGES OF THE ULTIMATE ECOLOGIST

Archie: *This used to be a beaver dam. Those stinking white men, call themselves trappers, been using dynamite in my territory. No Indian would do this. We don't take the kittens. We don't destroy the lodges. Soon there will be no beaver left.*

—dialogue in *Grey Owl*⁶⁹

Since first contact Native Americans have been consistently pressed into service as symbols in a variety of political and cultural controversies—from taxation that led to the Boston Tea Party to sentiments against the war in Vietnam—chiefly of concern to Euro-Americans.⁷⁰ Part of the myth generated by such Euro-American usage is the notion that Native Americans are the ultimate ecologists. Contemporary beliefs about the "ecological Indian" arguably have historical antecedents in the 500-year legacy of European ideas of the noble savage, Aldo Leopold's notion of a "land ethic," and the aesthetic view of nature held by members of the Transcendental movement and landscape painters of the first half of the last century, but they have far less to do with the diverse beliefs of actual Native Americans.⁷¹

Encouraged by the environmental movement of the 1960s and 1970s, people tended to view Indians—who were already symbolic embodiments of nature, land, and environment—as the “original conservationists,” or “people so intimately bound to the land that they have left no mark upon it.”⁷² For adherents of the environmentalist movement, the religious bond Native Americans supposedly maintain with nature “symbolized an ecological critique of the exploitation and pollution of the natural world that accompanied industrial progress.”⁷³

A prime byproduct of these sentiments is the well-known speech attributed to Chief Seattle, which includes memorable prose such as, “We love this earth as a newborn loves its mother’s heartbeat. So, if we sell you our land, love it as we have loved it, care for it as we have cared for it.” Popular accounts maintain that Sealth, a leader of the Duwamish and Suquamish peoples of Puget Sound, gave this oration to Isaac Stevens, then the governor of the Washington Territory, in 1854 or 1855, at the site of what is today Seattle. The main source for the contents of Sealth’s monologue appears to be an article in a Seattle newspaper from 1887 in which a Dr. Henry Smith reconstructed a speech given at a meeting with Governor Stevens in December 1854. A search of Bureau of Indian Affairs and secretary of the Interior records at the Library of Congress in an effort to piece together the historical circumstances of the event at which it was supposedly given has uncovered no evidence that such a speech was ever delivered to Governor Stevens.⁷⁴

Smith, who claimed fluency in the Duwamish language and the ability to transcribe Sealth’s words verbatim, was by all accounts, “a minor poet given to flowery images and the romantic verbiage of the Victorian Era.”⁷⁵ Smith cannot be credited with all the evocative phrases in this speech, however, because authors tinkered with it in the 1930s and a man named Ted Perry substantially revamped it after hearing it read at the first Earth Day in 1970.⁷⁶

Impressed by the narrative, Perry incorporated the essence of Sealth’s supposed sentiments into a script for *Home*, a 1972 film about ecology written for the Southern Baptist Radio and Television Commission. The film’s producers subsequently Christianized Sealth’s sensibilities and dropped Perry’s name from the script, leaving the impression that these were Sealth’s own words. Since release of *Home*, Perry’s version has been widely quoted in books, on television, from pulpits, at Earth Day events, and in *Brother Eagle, Sister Sky* (1991), a popular children’s book which sold 280,000 copies in its first year.⁷⁷ The sentiments expressed in this speech are in harmony with those professed by individuals upset at the damage to the natural environment perpetrated by our consumer-oriented industrial society. But the speech is littered with so many anachronisms that the only real mystery is why no one realized its fraudulence sooner.⁷⁸

Another highly successful image generated by the environmental movement is that of Iron Eyes Cody crying over pollution of the earth used in the Keep America Beautiful, Inc., anti-pollution campaign launched across the United States in 1971.⁷⁹ Posters portrayed Iron Eyes Cody weeping under the stirring caption, “Pollution: It’s a crying shame.” As the embodiment of the iconic Plains warrior, Iron Eyes Cody presumably wept for an America “shattered by European settlers and their successors, for animals hunted to extinc-

tion by people of European descent, and for trashed and burning rivers, littered and scarred landscapes, and oil-slicked and tarred seas.”⁸⁰

Through its focus on wilderness and animal conservation, *Grey Owl* carries this legacy forward into the present. As expected, when they bring their furs into town Archie comes up \$20 short of paying off last year’s debt. He asks the trader for a loan and uses the funds to mail a book manuscript he has written over the winter. While telling Pony the outcome of his visit to the trading post he bemoans, “I don’t know what we will do now.” Seeing a touring car emblazoned with the name of a local lodge, Pony says, “I do.”⁸¹ She suggests that he earn money speaking to tourists at the lodge. In the next scene, Pony dresses Archie up with a feather in his hair for his first presentation. He is stiff and unsure until Pony sends the baby beavers out to join him. Stooping to pick them up, he says “Hello you two. Come to help me out?” He goes on to explain, “These little fellas live with us. We call them the ‘mics.’ The Ojibway name for beaver is amic, little talking brother, and they do talk too.” Warming up, he wins the crowd with the following monologue detailing the story of his personal reformation:

Well the fact is, I used to trap beaver, but a few weeks ago I quit. Never thought I would. Now I know it is wrong. They are almost extinct. Too many trappers and not enough beaver. When the beaver have gone from the north. Well, maybe you don’t know it but these little fellas make the north the way it is. They build their dams, and make their ponds, and the moose feed, the muskrats, and the waterfowl. And come spring, they open up their dams. Let the melt water run, and you’ve got an irrigation system a thousand miles wide. You take away the beaver, and you break the chain. So I am speaking up for the beaver now. If we don’t watch out they’ll just be another extinct species. I guess I feel it more than most because well people like me are pretty much an extinct species too. I guess you can get along without me, but these little fellas, the world would be a poorer place without them.⁸²

Archie is herewith launched into a new career.

Shortly thereafter, Archie and Pony move into a perfect replica “trapper’s cabin” in the newly created 3,000 square mile Prince Albert National Park. Once they are settled in, Jim Wood, the park manager, arrives with Mr. Champlin, Archie’s publisher, Walter Perry, his promotions manager, and Bill Oliver, a filmmaker, and Archie’s first book entitled *Pilgrims of the Wild*. They explain that a fifty-town-and-city British speaking tour is planned. On tour, Archie bedazzles everyone with his ground-length eagle-feather headdress and elaborately beaded buckskin costume. A teepee and a canoe were set up on stage, and a film of the mics playing in the lake with Pony was shown.⁸³

At one presentation, Archie spies Aunt Carrie and Aunt Ada, his two paternal maiden aunts who raised him, in the audience. When he returns to his childhood home to visit with them, he finds his room just as he left it. During this sentimental scene, when viewers come to realize that Archie is an impostor, insights are given into the stereotype-promulgating articles of popular culture that influenced his desire to become an

Indian—a Buffalo Bill Wild West show poster, a map of North America, photographs of proud chiefs on the walls, a school-project model of an Plains-style Indian winter camp on the dresser, a child-sized feather war bonnet (much like the one he wears while on tour), books of Indian lore by Seton, Walkey, and Kingston on the shelf, and of course, *Hiawatha* on his bedside table.⁸⁴

After his return to Canada, Cyrus Finney, a newspaper reporter from the North Bay Nugget, tracks Archie down in his dressing room just before a performance to let him know that he has discovered his true identity. That night, while on stage, Archie abruptly asks the audience “What’s the big attraction? This?” as he removes his Bear Island Ojibway beadwork belt. “This?” he says as he removes his buckskin shirt. “This?” as he removes his headdress. Stripped down to his buckskin pants, he faces the audience and says:

Is it me? I don’t think so. I am not entitled to wear this warbonnet. I am not a hero or a prophet. Like most of us, I’ve done what I’ve had to do to get by. The only thing that gives me the courage to stand before you tonight is the knowledge, the certainty, that what I am saying is crucial to our survival. We are not the lords of this earth, we are its children. We lie in the lap of creation. In the strong arms of a spirit greater than our own. You know I am going to say protect the beaver, you know I am going to say stop cutting down the forests, you know I am gonna say, the money you get isn’t worth the price you pay. But here’s some more. If we can say that there are some things that are not for sale, that there are some things that belong to all of us and to future generations, then maybe other people will hear us and begin to say it too. And some day there will be enough of us, and we will believe that it can be done, that we can change the world. So why don’t we start in our own country, in Canada, here tonight?⁸⁵

In a voiceover, Cyrus Finney explains that this was Archie’s last speaking engagement. “He never spoke in public again. That night, when we watched Archie strip away all pretense of being an Indian, I knew that what he was saying was far more important than who he really was.”⁸⁶ Out of respect for the message Archie was trying to convey, Finney’s paper held the story until after Archie’s death two years later from pneumonia. Once the public learned that Grey Owl was a European, interest was lost in his environmental message. Yet, as pointed out by Finney, in the end his conservationist message is portrayed as more important than his chicanery.

CONCLUSIONS

Indians, the original possessors of the land, seem to haunt the collective unconscious of the white man and to the degree that one can identify the conflicting images of the Indian which stalk the white man’s waking perception of the world one can outline the deeper problems of identity and alienation that trouble him.

—Vine Deloria Jr., “Foreword: American Fantasy”⁸⁷

No matter how hard we try to forget, modern civilization was built on the graves of our savage ancestors, and repression of the pleasure they took from one another, from the animals and the earth. I suspect our collective guilt and denial of responsibility for the destruction of savagery and pleasure can be found infused in every distinctively modern cultural form.

—Dean MacCannell, *Empty Meeting Grounds*⁸⁸

As organs of memory, genres simultaneously remember the past and reshape the present.⁸⁹ *Last of the Dogmen* and *Grey Owl*, as examples of the New-Cult-of-the-Indian Westerns, suggest that Native American cultures offer morally superior alternatives to civilization. The indigenous North American peoples portrayed in them are noble savages; that is, nobler than the hundreds of thousands of contemporary Native Americans living in cities or on reservations across the continent who are completely left out of these filmic equations. In each case, the protagonist crosses into Indian Country and experiences a regression to a more primitive and natural condition of life, enabling him or her to debunk the false values of civilization and prophesize a new social contract. Through words and actions, these protagonists tell their audiences that through contact with these particular Native Americans, we can learn to live a better way of life, appreciate our place in the world, and come to understand that man is not the lord of this earth. *Last of the Dogmen* implies that, while unfortunate, destruction of the indigenous peoples and cultures of North America is ultimately forgivable because one refugee band of Cheyenne Dog Soldiers and other survivors of the Sand Creek Massacre found sanctuary in the Montana wilderness.

Grey Owl, on the other hand, proclaims Archie Belaney's message more important than his fraudulent identity. In the film, Archie goes to great lengths to embody his understanding of the fundamental characteristics of the noble savage. When living with Pony, he is portrayed as mildly tormented or concerned with his own fraudulent behavior and claims. Due to her abhorrence for non-subsistence-driven hunting, Grey Owl is forced to grapple with his role as a trapper, which Pony sees as counter to her understanding of the "old ways." In the end, however, it is the cliché characteristics of noble Native Americans that secure his celebrity while the complex and intriguing sociocultural issues driving someone like Archie to pass himself off as a mixed-blood Native American as well as the issues surrounding actual Native American identity and who can play Indian are swept under the carpet to foreground his environmental message.⁹⁰ In the scene depicting his closing performance, Grey Owl proclaims, "I am not a prophet," yet he is represented as a prophet of environmentalism when the narrator tells the audience that what he said was far more important than who he was.

Substantial alterations of a genre such as occurred to the Western in the mid-to-late 1960s and early 1970s signal significant crises of cultural values and organization or active ideological concern on the part of producers and consumers.⁹¹ The development of alternative Westerns in direct response to the diverse socioeconomic shifts that occurred in these decades has already

been addressed.⁹² Additionally, I would like to suggest that on the heels of the collapse of colonialism in many countries around the globe and the concomitant decentering of beliefs that were previously considered God-given rights and used for centuries to rationalize expansion and conquest, North Americans paused to rethink their own colonized peoples—Native Americans. This awareness, coupled with new scholarship and awareness about the precontact size of the Native American population, the devastating effects of European-introduced diseases, military engagements, and food shortages, resulted in unease regarding the ways in which these people have been treated historically and fostered imperialist nostalgia. While I cannot ascertain the exact motivations of the respective filmmakers for making these movies (beyond obvious aesthetic and profit motives), I believe that part of their appeal to American audiences lies in their ability to consciously or unconsciously assuage collective guilt over the treatment of the indigenous peoples, cultures, and ecosystems of North America.

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NOTES

1. Joel Michaels, *Last of the Dogmen*, Videocassette (Savoy Pictures, 1995).
2. David Attenborough, *Grey Owl*, Videocassette (Columbia Tristar, 1999).
3. Robert Burgoyne, *Film Nation: Hollywood Looks at U.S. History* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 9.
4. Richard Slotkin, *Gunfighter Nation: The Myth of the Frontier in Twentieth-Century America* (New York: Atheneum, 1992), 10.
5. Hannu Salmi, "The Indian of the North," in *Hollywood's Indian*, eds. Peter Rollins and John O'Connor (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1998), 40.
6. On the language of the Western genre see Slotkin, *Gunfighter Nation*; on notions of "imperialist nostalgia" see Renato Rosaldo, *Culture and Truth: The Remaking of Social Analysis* (Boston: Beacon, 1993); on "collective guilt" see Dean MacCannell, *Empty Meeting Grounds: The Tourist Papers* (New York: Routledge, 1992); and on the "White Man's Indian" see Robert Berkhofer, *The White Man's Indian: Images of the American Indian from Columbus to the Present* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1978).
7. Slotkin, *Gunfighter Nation*, 8.

8. Gary Morson and Caryl Emerson, *Mikhail Bakhtin: The Creation of Prosaics* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990), 280, 292.
9. Burgoyne, *Film Nation*, 48.
10. On silent films see Jacquelyn Kilpatrick, *Celluloid Indians: Native Americans and Film* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1999), 1–35; on how the Western genre form operates as a “repository of social experience” see Burgoyne, *Film Nation*, 48, and Morson and Emerson, *Mikhail Bakhtin*, 293.
11. Ward Churchill, *Fantasies of the Master Race: Literature, Cinema and the Colonization of American Indians* (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1998), 11.
12. Kilpatrick, *Celluloid Indians*, 5.
13. Churchill, *Fantasies of the Master Race*, 11–12.
14. Burgoyne, *Film Nation*, 48.
15. Slotkin, *Gunfighter Nation*, 10.
16. *Ibid.*, 5.
17. Steven Leuthold, “Native American Responses to the Western,” *American Indian Culture and Research Journal* 19, number 1 (1995): 169.
18. Louis Owens, *Mixedblood Messages: Literature, Film, Family, Place* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1998), 109.
19. *Ibid.*, 28.
20. *Ibid.*, 28. Filmmakers routinely endorse and promulgate similar perspectives on Native Americans as Other. For analysis of these perspectives, see Gretchen Bataille and Charles Silet, eds., *The Pretend Indians: Images of Native Americans in the Movies* (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1980); Michael Marsden and Jack Nachbar Marsden, “The Indian in the Movies,” *Handbook of North American Indians* vol. 4, ed. Wilcomb Washburn (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1988), 607–616; and Peter Rollins and John O’Connor, eds., *Hollywood’s Indian: The Portrayal of the Native American in Film* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1998).
21. *Ibid.*, 72.
22. *Ibid.*, 109.
23. Rosaldo, *Culture and Truth*, 87.
24. *Ibid.*, 69–70.
25. Kenneth Boulding, “Earth as a Space Ship” Kenneth E. Boulding Papers, Archives Box #38 (Boulder: University of Colorado Libraries, 1965).
26. *Ibid.*
27. Slotkin, *Gunfighter Nation*, 628.
28. John Ford, *Cheyenne Autumn*, Videocassette (Warner Brothers, 1964); Sidney Salkow, *The Great Sioux Massacre*, Film (Paramount 1965).
29. Slotkin, *Gunfighter Nation*, 629.
30. Michaels, *Last of the Dogmen*.
31. Attenborough, *Grey Owl*.
32. Slotkin, *Gunfighter Nation*, 5, 6.
33. Michaels, *Last of the Dogmen*.
34. *Ibid.*
35. Slotkin, *Gunfighter Nation*, 351.
36. Slotkin, *Gunfighter Nation*, 351.
37. Michaels, *Last of the Dogmen*.
38. *Ibid.*

39. Vine Deloria Jr., "Trouble in High Places," in M. Annette Jaimes, ed., *The State of Native America* (Boston: South End Press, 1992), 281.
40. On the process of creation, see Walter Mignolo, "Misunderstanding and Colonization: The Reconfiguration of Memory and Space," *The South Atlantic Quarterly* 92, number 2 (1993): 209–260; and Tzvetan Todorov, *The Conquest of America: The Question of the Other* (New York: Harper & Row, 1984). On its violence, see Chase Hensel, *Telling Our Selves: Ethnicity and Discourse in Southwestern Alaska* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 51.
41. Hensel, *Telling Our Selves*, 51.
42. *Ibid.*, 14.
43. Johannes Fabian, *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes Its Object* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983), 1–35.
44. Michaels, *Last of the Dogmen*.
45. Marsden and Nachbar, "The Indian in the Movies."
46. Attenborough, *Grey Owl*.
47. Attenborough, *Grey Owl*.
48. Slotkin, *Gunfighter Nation*, 12.
49. *Ibid.*, 14.
50. *Ibid.*, 351–352.
51. Michaels, *Last of the Dogmen*.
52. Attenborough, *Grey Owl*.
53. Slotkin, *Gunfighter Nation*, 351–352.
54. *Ibid.*, 629.
55. MacCannell, *Empty Meeting Grounds*, 20 (emphasis added).
56. See Mignolo, "Misunderstanding and Colonization"; and Todorov, *The Conquest of America*.
57. Henry Dobyns, *Their Number Become Thinned* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1983), 25–26.
58. P. M. Ashburn, *The Ranks of Death: A Medical History of the Conquest of America* (New York: Coward-McCann, 1947); William McNeill, *Plagues and Peoples* (New York: Anchor Books, 1976). Using a variety of sources including early travelers' accounts, colonial-period documents, Native American oral histories, archeological excavations, and the study of human skeletal remains, a substantial new corpus of data has been generated. Results of this research reveal the dynamics infectious diseases among European, African, and Native American populations had on patterns of colonization, economic development, and social interaction in the Americas. Moreover, recent research by archaeologists and physical anthropologists provides important new information on patterns of health, disease, and demography in the Americas before 1492 (see John Verano and Douglas Ubelaker, "Health and Disease in the Pre-Columbian World," Herman Viola and Carolyn Margolis, eds., *Seeds of Change* [Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1991], 209–210). We now know that prior to 1492, rheumatoid arthritis, rickets, tuberculosis, pneumonia, and intestinal parasites were in the Americas (see Charles Merbs, "A New World of Infectious Disease," *Yearbook of Physical Anthropology* 35 [1992]: 3–42; and Verano and Ubelaker, "Health and Disease"). But there were no "crowd diseases" like those to which Western Europeans had been exposed for generations.
59. That is, a human population with no immunity to a particular disease because it has not been previously touched by the pathogen. Thus, they produced virgin soil

epidemics, “those in which populations at risk have had no previous contact with the diseases that strike them and are therefore immunologically almost defenseless” (Alfred Crosby, “Virgin Soil Epidemics as a Factor in the Aboriginal Depopulation in America,” *William and Mary Quarterly* 33 [1976]: 289).

60. An epidemic is a highly infectious disease that is easily transmissible, has a high rate of infection, and eventually burns itself out. In contrast, an illness that is endemic is almost constantly present, like the common cold in America today. A pandemic is of a larger scale than an epidemic. On spread of smallpox after its introduction, see Dobyns, *Their Number Become Thinned*, 11–16.

61. *Ibid.*, 8–26; and Russell Thornton, *American Indian Holocaust and Survival* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1987), 46.

62. That is, the months or years between first contact (not necessarily face-to-face) and “the creation of full, written records of intercultural contact in any area” (Dobyns, *Their Number Become Thinned*, 26). The exact time between the arrival of diseases and the start of an historic record varies from three to three hundred years in duration depending on area.

63. Only about 30 to 40 percent of the total depopulation is directly attributable to disease. Many people died due to a variety of indirect effects. The treatments used to counter these previously unknown diseases sometimes exacerbated their effects. For example, sweatbaths, a popular means of treatment in Native North America, are deadly to persons with smallpox because they cause increased eruptions and dehydration (Dobyns, *Their Number Become Thinned*, 251–252; Thornton, *American Indian Holocaust*, 47). Also, while Europeans knew that quarantine was appropriate, it was a foreign concept to Native Americans who brought family and friends to visit and sit with an ill person to show concern.

The side effects of many European-introduced illnesses included blindness and infertility, which influence the ability of survivors to reproduce. Differential mortality resulted from the fact that some diseases strike the very young or the very old. When the disease sickened the majority of the able-bodied adult population at critical points in the subsistence cycle, there might not be enough well people to hunt, gather, or harvest foodstuffs. Furthermore, at any point in the subsistence cycle, if most of the adults were ill, there would not be enough healthy people to prepare food and administer water. As a result, many people died from hunger and dehydration.

64. Based variously on the calculated carrying capacity of the land, documentary records of the early contact period (such as journals, travelers’ accounts, and warrior or household counts), Native American oral histories, archaeological excavations, and human skeletal remains, estimates of the precontact population of North America vary widely. Alfred Kroeber arrives at an estimate of 900,000. Based on an exhaustive analysis of anthropological evidence and agricultural techniques, by the early 1960s, Woodrow Borah, Leslie Simpson, and Sherburne Cook completed a thorough evaluation of pre-Columbian demography which led them to project a hemispheric total of some 100 million at the point of first contact (see Lenore Stiffarm and Phil Lane, “The Demography of Native North America,” M. Annette Jaimes, ed., *The State of Native America* [Boston: South End, 1992], 25–26). Henry Dobyns proposes a continental estimate of eighteen million Native people living north of civilized Mesoamerica (Dobyns, *Their Number Become Thinned*). Russell Thornton offers a seven to nine million continental estimate with more than five million people occupying what is today the conti-

mental United States and two million more occupying what is now Canada and Alaska (Thornton, *American Indian Holocaust*, 32). And Kirkpatrick Sale estimates that fifteen million people lived north of Mexico (Kirkpatrick Sale, *The Conquest of Paradise* [New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1990], 316). For a point-by-point critique of the methods employed by many of these scholars, see David Henige, "Their Numbers Become Thick: Native American Historical Demography as Expiation," *The Invented Indian*, ed. James Clifton (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Transaction Publishers, 1990), 169–191; and id., *Numbers from Nowhere: The American Indian Contact population Debate* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1998).

65. Ibid., 304–305.

66. Michaels, *Last of the Dogmen* (emphasis added).

67. Ibid.

68. Ibid.

69. Attenborough, *Grey Owl*.

70. Philip Deloria, *Playing Indian* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998).

71. On European ideas of the noble savage see Berkhofer, *The White Man's Indian* and Krech, *The Ecological Indian*, 16–19. On the "land ethic" see Aldo Leopold, *A Sand Country Almanac* (London: Oxford University Press 1966), 237–251. On the views of nature held by members of the Transcendental movement and nineteenth-century landscape painters see Martin, *Keepers of the Game*, 158, and Barbara Novak's *Nature and Culture—American Landscape and Painting 1825–1875* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980). For a comprehensive discussion of the origin and efficacy of this idea, see Krech, *The Ecological Indian*. As pointed out by an anonymous reviewer for *American Indian Culture and Research Journal*, in the face of the changes wrought on their societies and peoples since contact, some Native Americans have maintained their own beliefs to a remarkable extent while others have adopted the Euro-American ethic and still others are somewhere in between. Only research into contemporary Native American beliefs and practices could expose a more nuanced perspective.

72. On the environmental movement of the 1960s and 1970s see William Cronon and Richard White, "Ecological Change and Indian-White Relations," in *Handbook of North American Indians* vol. 4, ed. William Washburn (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1988), 417; and Calvin Martin, *Keepers of the Game* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), 158. On Indians as the "original conservationists" see Cronon and White, "Ecological Change," 417.

73. Slotkin, *Gunfighter Nation*, 629.

74. For more information on the authenticity of this speech see Jerry Clark, "Thus Spoke Chief Seattle: The Story of an Undocumented Speech," *Prologue: Quarterly of the National Archives and Records Administration* 18 (1995).

75. Murray Morgan, quoted in Linda Marsa, "Talk is Chief," *Omni* 15, number 3 (1992): 18.

76. Linda Marsa, "Talk is Chief," 18.

77. Malcolm Jones and Ray Sawhill, *Newsweek*, 4 May 1992, 68.

78. For example, a popular version of the speech says, "I have seen a thousand rotting buffaloes on the prairies left by the white man who shot them from a passing train." Bison did not live on Puget Sound, which is over a thousand miles from the Great Plains, and the speech was supposedly given fifteen years before the transcontinental railroad connection was completed. Furthermore, the great buffalo slaughter

peaked in 1872, after Sealth had died.

79. Shepard Krech, *The Ecological Indian* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1999), 13.

80. *Ibid.*, 56. Ironically, rather than being of Cherokee-Cree heritage as he claimed, like Grey Owl, the veteran actor Iron Eyes Cody was an impostor. In 1996, based on an interview with his half-sister May Abshire, baptismal records and other documentation, the *New Orleans Times-Picayune* revealed that Mr. Cody was actually Oscar DeCorti, a second-generation Italian-American from Louisiana (*New York Times*, 5 January 1999, Section A, 15, column 5; *Evening Standard*, 13 April 1999, 23; *The Guardian*, 22 February 2000, 16).

81. *Ibid.*

82. *Ibid.*

83. It is no coincidence that although he claims to be Apache and adopted by the Bear Lake Ojibway, Archie is shown resplendent in a full-length Plains-style war bonnet while on the lecture circuit for, as John Ewers has pointed out, over time this picturesque costume has come to symbolize Indianess in the minds of Native Americans and whites alike (John Ewers, "The Emergence of the Plains Indian as the Symbol of the North American Indian," in *American Indian Stereotypes in the World of Children*, ed. Arlene Hirschfelder [Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1982], 16).

84. The issue of Archie's true identity creates tension throughout the film. Audience members must continually ask themselves, Does Pony know that he is not a real Indian? Numerous clues are given: He can write well; he is an accomplished pianist; and he dyes his hair. In addition, a drunk in Elk River keeps claiming that he knows Archie and that in fact they came over on the boat together. Archie tells Pony that his mother was Scottish and his father Apache; he tells Walter Perry that his father was Scottish and his mother was Apache.

In this day and age, the first clue to the audience that Archie is an impostor is that Pierce Brosnan plays the role. While formerly, non-Natives typically filled lead roles due to the Hollywood star system (Michael Marsden and Jack Nachbar, "The Indian in the Movies," in *Handbook of North American Indians* vol. 4, ed. William Washburn [Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1988]), today Native actors typically fill these roles. It seems preposterous that viewers would not know that Archie is a fraud.

85. Attenborough, *Grey Owl*.

86. *Ibid.*

87. Vine Deloria, "Foreword: American Fantasy," in *The Pretend Indians: Images of Native Americans in the Movies*, eds. Gretchen Bataille and Charles Silet (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1980), x–xi.

88. MacCannell, *Empty Meeting Grounds*, 25.

89. Morson and Emerson, *Mikhail Bakhtin*, 280.

90. On the complex and intriguing sociocultural issues driving individuals to pass themselves off as members of a racialized group other than that to which they were born, see Laura Browder, *Slippery Characters: Ethic Impersonators and American Identities* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000).

91. Slotkin, *Gunfighter Nation*, 8.

92. Boulding, "Earth as a Space Ship"; Slotkin, *Gunfighter Nation*, 628–629.