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FANTASIES OF THE MASTER RACE

The Cinematic Colonization of American Indians

> Now those movie Indians wearing all those feathers can't come out as human beings. They're not expected to come out as human beings because I think the American people do not regard them as wholly human. We must remember that many, many American children believe that feathers grow out of Indian heads.
>
> —Stephan Feraca
> Motion Picture Director, 1964

THE CINEMATIC DEPICTION OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES IN AMERICA IS OBJECTIVELY racist at all levels. This observation encompasses not only the more than 2,000 Hollywood movies featuring or at least touching upon such subject matters over the years, but the even greater number of titles made for television.[1] In this, film is linked closely to literature of both the fictional and ostensibly nonfictional varieties, upon which most scripts are based. It is thus both fair and accurate to observe that all modes of projecting images and attendant conceptualizations of native people to the "mainstream" public fit the same mold.[2] Moreover, it is readily observable that within the confines of this mold are included only the narrowest and most negative range of graphic/thematic possibilities.[3]

While the same points might undoubtedly be made with respect to the celluloid portrayals accorded any/all "primitive" peoples, or even people of color per se, the vast weight, more than 4,500 productions in all, has fallen upon American Indians.[4] On balance, it seems no overstatement to suggest that throughout the twentieth century mass audiences have been quite literally saturated with very specific and repetitive dramatic characterizations of Indians. It follows, as with anything pursued with such intensity, that these characterizations themselves have been carefully contrived to serve certain ends.[5]

It would be well, then, to come to grips with the manner in which Indians have been displayed on both tube and silver screen, as well as the stimulus underlying it. And, since the former may be easily divided into several distinct but related categories of stereotyping—indeed, it virtually divides itself in this way—it seems appropriate to take each in turn, using the whole as a basis upon which to explore the question of motive(s).

INDIANS AS CREATURES OF A PARTICULAR TIME

Nothing, perhaps, is more emblematic of Hollywood's visual pageantry than scenes of Plains Indian warriors astride their galloping ponies, many of them trailing a flowing headdress in the wind, thundering into battle against the blue-coated troops of the United States. By now, more than 500 feature films and half again as many television productions have included representations of this sort.[6] We have been served such fare along with that of the tipi and the buffalo hunt, the attack upon the wagon train and the ambush of the stagecoach, until they have become so indelibly imprinted upon the American consciousness as to be synonymous with Indians as a whole (to nonindians at any rate and, unfortunately, to many native people as well).[7]

It's not the technical inaccuracies in such representations that are most problematic, although these are usually many and often extreme. Rather, it is the fact that the period embodied in such depictions spans barely the three decades running from 1850 to 1880, the interval of warfare between the various Plains peoples and the everencroaching soldiers and settlers of the United States.[8] There is no "before" to the story, and there is no "after." Cinematic Indians have no history before Euroamericans come along to momentarily imbue them with it, and then, mysteriously, they seem to pass out of existence altogether.[9]

So it has been since the earliest experimental flickers like *Buck Dancer* and *Serving Rations to the Indians* in 1898. Never, with the exception of the sublimely ridiculous *Windwalker* (1980), has an effort been made to produce a movie centering on the life of Native North Americans a thousand years before Columbus, a timeframe corresponding rather favorably to that portrayed in such eurocentric epics as Robert Wise's 1955 *Helen of Troy,* or Cecil B.DeMille's extravagant remake of his 1924 *The Ten Commandments* in 1956. Nowhere will one find a Native American counterpart to *Quo Vadis?*(1912; 1951), *The Robe* (1953), *Ben Hur* (1907; 1926; 1959), *Spanacus* (1960), *Cleopatra* (1917; 1934; 1963) or any of scores of less noteworthy releases set deep in what Euroamerica takes to be its own heritage.[10]

Much the same vacuum pertains to depictions of things Indian after conclusion of the so-called "Indian Wars" (they were actually settlers' wars throughout).[11] While a relative few films have been devoted to, or at least include, twentieth-century Native Americans, they have largely served to trivialize and degrade us through "humor." These include such "classics" as Busby Berkeley's *Whoopee!* (1930), the Marx Brothers' *Go West* (1940) and the W.C.Fields/Mae West hit *My Little Chickadee* (1940), as well as Abbott and Costello's *Ride 'Em Cowboy* (1942).[12] Other heavy hitters include the Bowery Boys' *Bowery Buckaroo* (1947), Bob Hope's *Paleface* (1948), *Son of Paleface* (1952) and *Cancel My Reservation* (1972), not to mention Lewis and Martin's *Hollywood or Bust* (1956).[13]

As Daniel Francis comments, Euroamericans "did not expect Indians to adapt to the modern world. Their only hope was to assimilate, to become White, to cease to be Indians. In this view, a modern Indian is a contradiction in terms: Whites could not imagine such a thing. Any Indian was by definition a traditional Indian, a relic of the past."[14] To find "real" or "serious" Indians, then, it was necessary to look back upon the "vanishing" species of the nineteenth century, a theme diligently pursued in early documentaries like Edward Sheriff Curtis' perversely titled *In the Land of the Headhunters* (1913–14) and Robert Flaherty's *Nanook of the North* (1922), and subsequently picked up in commercial movies like *The Vanishing American* (1925), *Eskimo* (1930), *The Last of the Redman* (1947), *Last of the Comanches* (1953), *The Last Frontier* (1955), *The Last Hunt* (1956), *The Apaches Last Battle* (1966) and, most recently, the Academy Award-winning *Dances With Wolves* (1990), *The Last of the Mohicans* (1992), and *Last of His Tribe* (1995).[15] All the while, untold thousands of doomed savages have been marched off to the oblivion of their reservations at the end of literally hundreds of lesser films.

In its most virulent form, Hollywood's "famous disappearing Indian" trick was backdated onto the nineteenth century's "crimsoned prairie" itself, rendering native people invisible even there. One will look in vain for any sign of an indigenous presence, even as backdrop, in such noteworthy westerns as *High Noon* (1952), *Shane* (1953), *Gunfight at the OK Corral* (1957), *Warlock (1959), Pat Garrett and Billy the Kid* (1973), *Heavens Gate* (1981), and *Tombstone* (1994). It's as if, observes Cherokee artist/aesthetician/cultural theorist Jimmie Durham, at "some point late at night, by the campfire, presumably, the Lone Ranger ate Tonto. By the time Alan Ladd becomes the lone ranger in *Shane,* his Indian companion has been consumed."[16]

In the alternative, when not being depicted as drunken buffoons, as in *Flap* (1970), or simply as buffoons, as in the 1989 "road" movie *Powwow Highway,* modern Indians have been mostly portrayed in a manner deriving directly from the straight jacket of temporal stereotype.[17] The ways in which this has been accomplished are somewhat varied, ranging from 1950s war stories like *Battle Cry* and *Never So Few* to monster flicks like *Predator* (1987) and 1998's *Deep Rising,* and they have sometimes been relatively subtle, as in *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* (1975), but the rule nonetheless applies.

CREATURES OF A PARTICULAR PLACE

Constricting the window of Native America's celluloid existence to the mid-nineteenth century, simply because it was then the locus of Indian/white warfare, has had the collateral effect of confining natives to the geographic region known generically as the "West." In truth, the area is itself subdivided into several distinct bioregional locales, of which Hollywood selected two, the Plains and the Upper Sonoran Desert region of New Mexico and Arizona (often referred to as the "Southwest"), as being representative. It follows that the bulk of tinseltown's filmstock would be expended in setting forth images of the peoples indigenous to its chosen domain(s).[18]

The Plains of Filmdom are shown to be inhabited primarily by "Sioux" (Lakotas) to the north, Cheyennes in the center, and Comanches to the south. Not infrequently, smaller peoples like the Arapahos and Kiowas (or "Kee-oo-wahs," as it was often mispronounced) make appearances, and, every now and again, Pawnees and Crows as well (usually as scouts for the army).[19] Leaving aside a host of glaring inaccuracies otherwise conveyed by filmmakers about each of these cultures, it can be said that they at least managed (or bothered) to get the demographic distribution right.

Not so the Southwest. Although the "empty desert" was/is filled with a host of peoples running the gamut from the Hopi, Zuni, and other "Puebloans" to the Pima, Maricopa, Cocopah, Yuma, Yaqui, and Navajo, anyone taking their ethnographic cues from the movies would be led rapidly to the conclusion that there was but one: The Apaches.[20] In fact, more films have been dedicated to supposedly depicting Apacheria than the domain of any other native people, the "mighty Sioux" included.[21]

The roster began with silent movies like *Apache Gold* (1910; remade in 1965), *The Curse of the Red Man* (1911), *On the Warpath* (1912), and *A Prisoner of the Apaches* (1913), was continued with talkies like *Bad Lands* and *Stagecoach* in the 1930s, and has most recently included Cherokee actor Wes Studi playing the title role in the third remake of *Geronimo* (1990; earlier versions appeared in 1939 and 1962). Along the way, there have been *Apache Trail* (1942) and *Apache Chief* (1949), *Apache Warrior* (1957), and *Apache Woman* (1955), *Apache War Smoke* (1952) and *Apache Uprising* (1965), *Apache Country* (1953), and *Apache Territory* (1958), *Apache Rifles* (1965) and *Fury of the Apaches* (1965), T*he Battle at Apache Pass* (1952), *Stand at Apache River* (1953), *Rampage at Apache Wells* (1966), and *40 Guns to Apache Pass* (1966). On and on and on. The count at this point is nearly 600 titles and rising, plus an untold number of skits made for TV.[22]

The reasoning here is true to form. The people of Victorio and Geronimo, Mangus and Cochise, sustained their resistance to Euroamerican invasion longer, and in a proportionately more effective fashion, than any group other than the Seminoles (who, fortunately or unfortunately for them, depending on one's point of view, did their fighting in the wrong place/time to fall much within the bounds of proper cinematography).[23] Give the duration and intensity of their martial interaction with whites, Apaches could be seen as "consequential," and therefore worthy of an equal intensity of cinematic attention.

There is a certain consistency to this prioritization, albeit a patently objectionable one. Things really become confusing, however, when one considers the approach taken by John Ford, perhaps the most esteemed director of the entire western movie genre. Simultaneously fixated on the beadwork, buckskins, and feather heraldry of Plains Indians and the breathtaking desert geography of the Southwest's Monument Valley, both for what he described as "aesthetic reasons," Ford exercised his "artistic license" by simply combining the two. Still, he and his publicists proudly, loudly, and persistently proclaimed his "unparalleled achievement" in capturing an ultimately "authentic" flavor in visually evoking the "Old West."[24]

Ford won Academy Award nominations for two of the seven pictures he shot in Monument Valley between 1939 and 1964, all of which received substantial critical acclaim.[25] Meanwhile, in *Stagecoach* (1939), *The Searchers* (1956), and *Cheyenne Autumn* (1964), two generations of American moviegoers were brought to understand that western Kansas looks just like northern Arizona, and, consequently, the environ ments of the Comanches and Cheyennes were indistinguishable from that of the Apaches. As Lakota scholar Vine Deloria, Jr., explains, "It's the same as if Hollywood were claiming to have made the most realistic movie ever about the Cossacks, and it turned out to have been filmed in fishing villages along the Irish coast, or with the Matterhorn as a backdrop. It makes a difference, because culture and environment are pretty intimately connected."[26]

The situation was even more muddled by the fact that before 1965, an era in which location shooting was beyond the budgets of all but the most prestigious directors, the very same Plains topography was represented in literally hundreds of B-movies and TV segments via the Spahn Movie Ranch and similar sets scattered across southern California.[27] By the seventies, when increasing attention began to be paid to the idea that films might be "validated" by way of the technical accuracy inhering in their physical details, the damage had long since been done. American Indians, already denied any sort of genuinely autochthanous history in the movies, had been thoroughly divorced from material reality as well.

SEEN ONE INDIAN, SEEN ’EM ALL

The space/time compression imposed by Hollywood upon Native America has generated other effects, to be sure. “You would think,” writes Cherokee law professor Rennard Strickland, “if you relied on the Indian films, that there were no [peoples] east of the Mississippi, none but the Plains Indians [and Apaches], except possibly the Mohawks, and that the country was unoccupied throughout the entire Great Lakes and central region except for an occasional savage remnant, perhaps a stray Yaqui or two who wandered in from the Southwest. We almost never have a Chippewa or a Winnebago or a… Hopi or even a Navajo on the screen.”[28]

In the few instances filmmakers decided, for whatever reason, to make a movie about native people in the East, the results have usually been bizarre. A prime example, pointed out by Strickland, is that of *Seminale Uprising* (1955), in which we “see Florida Everglades-dwelling Seminoles wearing Plains feathered bonnets and battling bluecoated cavalry on desert buttes.”[29] The same principle pertains in somewhat less blatant form to the attire displayed in four other films—*Distant Drums* (1951), *Seminole* (1953), *War Arrow* (1954), and *Yellowneck* (1957)—made about the Seminoles during the same period.[30]

Nor is the displacement of Plains Indian attributes onto other peoples the end of it. The Plains cultures themselves have become distorted in the popular conception, often wildly so, by virtue of a succession of cinematographers’ obsessions with conjuring up “great images” out of whatever strikes their fancy. Perhaps the best (or worst) example will be found in *A Man Called Horse* (1970), a movie prefaced with a scrolled testimonial from the Smithsonian Institution’s chief “ethnohistorian,” Wilcomb Washburn, that it was “the most authentic description of American Indian life ever filmed.”[31]

In actuality, borrowing its imagery willy-nilly from the full body of George Catlin’s graphic survey of northern Plains cultures during the 1830s,[32] director Eliott Silverstein’s staff had decided that the “Lakotas” depicted in the film should wear an array of hairstyles ranging those typical of the Assiniboin to those of their mortal enemies, the Crows. Their tipi design and decoration is also of a sort unique to Crows. About the only thing genuinely “Sioux” about these supposed Sioux is the name, and even then there is absolutely no indication as to which Sioux they are supposed to be. Oglalas? Hunkpapas? Minneconjous? Sicangus (Brûlés)? Bohinunpas (Two Kettles)? Ituzipcos (Sans Arcs)? Sihasapas (Blackfeet; not to be confused with the indigenous nation of the same name)? The Lakotas, after all, were/are a populous people, divided into seven distinct bands, at least as different from one another as Maine Yankees are from Georgia Crackers.[33]

Probably the most repugnant instance of transference in *A Man Called Horse occurs* when Silverstein has his “Sioux” prepare to conduct a Sun Dance, their central spiritual ceremony, in a domed below-ground structure of the sort unknown to Lakota culture but habituated by Mandans along the Missouri River. The ritual itself is then performed in a manner more or less corresponding to Catlin’s description of the Mandan, *not* the Lakota practice of it.[34] Finally, the meaning of the ceremony, sublimely reverential for both peoples, is explained as being something akin to medieval Europe's macho tests of courage, thence "manhood," by the ability to unflinchingly absorb pain.

Surveying the ubiquitousness of such cinematic travesties as "Delawares dressed as Sioux" and "Indians of Manhattan Island…dwelling in tipis," even an establishmentarian like Alanson Skinner, curator of the Department of Anthropology at the American Museum of Natural History, prefigured Deloria. Condemning such things as "ethnographically grotesque farces" in the pages of the *New York Times,* he posed the obvious question: "If Indians should stage a white man's play, and dress the characters in Rumanian, Swiss, Turkish, English, Norwegian and Russian costumes, and place the setting in Ireland, would their pleas that they thought all Europeans alike save them from arousing our ridicule?"[35]

Skinner might also have inquired as to the likely response had Indians portrayed High Mass as a Protestant Communion, interpreted the wine and wafers as symbolic cannibalism, and then implied that the whole affair was synonymous with Satanism. It matters little, however, since until very recently no Indians—with the momentary exception during the 1930s of Will Rogers, a Cherokee—have ever been in a position to make either "plays" or films in which they could personify themselves more accurately, much less parody their white tormentors.[36]

A major reason the "seen one Indian, seen 'em all" attitude had become quite firmly entrenched among the public by the end of the fifties was that the public was literally seeing no Indians of any sort in Hollywood's endless renderings of things native. Aside from Molly Spotted Elk, a Penobscot cast as the lead in *Silent Enemy* (1930), and Rogers, who filled the same bill in several comedies during the thirties, no Indian appeared in a substantial film role prior to 1970.[37] The same can be said with respect to directors and scriptwriters.[38]

Instead, pleading all along that it just couldn't find Indians capable of playing themselves on screen "convincingly," Hollywood consistently hired whites to impersonate native people in a more "believable" manner. As a consequence, the history of American cinema is replete with such gems as the 6'4" blond, blue-eyed former professional baseball pitcher Chuck Connors being cast as the swarthy, 5'3", obsidianeyed title character in *Geronimo* (1962). And, if this "makes about as much sense as casting Wilt Chamberlain to play J.Edgar Hoover," as one native actor lately put it, there are plenty of equally egregious examples.[39]

Take Victor Mature being cast as the great Lakota leader in *Chief Crazy Horse* (1955). Or Gilbert Roland and Ricardo Montalban as the no less illustrious Dull Knife and Little Wolf in *Cheyenne Autumn* (1946). Or Jeff Chandler cast as Cochise, an Apache of comparable stature, in *Broken Arrow* (1950). Or Rock Hudson cast in the title role of *Taza, Son of Cochise* (1954). Or Burt Lancaster as the Sac and Fox super-athlete in *Jim Thorpe—All American* (1951).[40] Or J.Carol Naish as *Sitting Bull* (1954). Or Tony Curtis cast as Pima war hero Ira Hayes in *The Outsider* (1961). Or Robert Blake in the title role of *Tell Them Willie Boy Is Here* (1969). Or how about Robbie Benson (no less) playing Lakota Olympic gold medalist Billy Mills in *Running Brave* (1983)? The list could obviously be extended to include thousands of such illustrations.[41]

Women? Try Debra Paget as Cochise's daughter in *Broken Arrow.* How about Mary Pickford as "the little Indian maiden [who] Paid Her Debt of Gratitude" to the White Man with sex in *Iola's Promise* (1912)? Or Delores Del Rio in the title role of *Ramona* (1928)? Or Linda Darnell as the "Indian" female lead in *Buffalo Bill* (1944)? Or Jennifer Jones as the sultry "half-breed" in *Duel in the Sun* (1946)? May Wynn as a nameless "Indian maiden" in *They Rode West* (1954)? Donna Reed as Sacajawea in *The Far Horizon* (1955)? And then there's Julie Newmar, complete with a pair of designer slacks, as the indigenous sex symbol in *McKenna's Gold* (1969). Again, the list might go on for pages.[42]

We should perhaps be grateful that John Wayne was never selected to play Red Cloud, or Madonna Pocahontas, but given Hollywood's overall record—Wayne *was* cast as the Mongol leader Genghis Khan in a 1956 release entitled *The Conqueror*— such things seem more a matter of oversight than of design.[43]

Even when Indians were deployed on-screen, usually as extras—a job Oneida actor/comedian Charley Hill likens to serving as a "prop" or, more accurately, "a pop-up target to be shot full of holes by cowboys and cavalrymen"[44]—little concern was ever given to accuracy. John Ford, for instance, habitually hired Navajos to impersonate the peoples of the Plains with no apparent qualms about the groups being as physically dissimilar as Swedes and Sicilians.[45] Cumulatively, Hill describes the results of Hollywood's and the television industry's imaging as the creation of "a weird sort of Indian stew" rather than anything resembling a valid apprehension of indigenous realities.[46]

PEOPLES WITHOUT CULTURE

The emulsification of native cultural content embodied in Hollywood's handling of it amounted, in essence, to its negation. As Rennard Strickland points out, "In the thou sands of individual films and the millions of frames in those films, we have few, if any, real Indians...who have individuality or humanity. We see little, if any, of home or village life, of the day-to-day world of Native Americans or their families."[47] Creation of this vacuum has, in turn, allowed filmmakers to figuratively reconstruct native culture(s) in accordance with their own biases, preconceptions, or senses of expediency and convenience.

Mostly, they elected to follow the quasi-official script traditionally advanced by the Smithsonian Institution, that Native North Americans were, until Euroamericans came along to "civilize" us, typically brutish Stone Age savages, maybe a million primitives wandering nomadically about the landscape, perpetually hunting and gathering our way along the bare margins of subsistence, devoid of all that might be called true culture.[48] An astonishing example of such (mis)perceptions at play will be found in the 1954 film *Apache,* in which the sullen southwesterners are taught to cultivate corn by a group of displaced southeasterners, Cherokees, who supposedly picked up the "art" from their benevolent white neighbors in Georgia.[49]

Never mind that it is an established fact that corn was hybridized from grass by indigenous Americans centuries before an Italian seaman, now revered as a "Great Navigator," washed up on a Caribbean beach half a world away from where he thought he was. Never mind that, like corn, two-thirds of the vegetal foodstuffs now commonly consumed by humanity were undeniably under cultivation in the Americas and *nowhere else* at the time of the "Columbian landfall."[50] Never mind that, as a matter of record, American military commanders from John Sullivan to Anthony Wayne, even Kit Carson, had to burn off miles of native croplands in order to starve Indians onto reservations where we could be "taught to farm."[51]

Agriculture is indicative of civilization, not savagery, and so, ipso facto, Indians could not have engaged in it, no matter how self-evident the fact that we did, or how extensively so.[52] In its stead, the Smithsonian, and therefore Hollywood, bestowed upon us an all-consuming and wholly imaginary "warrior mystique," that is to say, a certain propensity to use force in stealing from others that which we had, in their telling, never learned to do or make for ourselves. Thus were the relational roles of Indian and white in American history quite neatly and completely reversed so that those who stole a continent might be consistently portrayed as the victims of their victims' wanton and relentless "aggression."[53]

Such themes have always been exceedingly difficult to apply to the East where it had taken Europe fully two centuries of armed conflict with masses of native people to "win the day." How to explain that we who were supposedly so few had managed, generation after generation, to field so many in the course of our resistance? And how, once our real numbers were to some extent admitted, to explain either where we went, or how we'd been able to sustain ourselves for all those thousands of years before "the coming of the white man" supposedly endowed us with the miracle of growing our own food?[54]

To be fair, Hollywood *has* tried to incorporate such matters into its master narrative, especially during its formative years. From 1908 to 1920, not less than 28 feature films and perhaps a hundred one-reel shorts purported to deal with Indian/white relations during the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries.[55] Without substantially altering the structure of narrative itself, however, the task proved impossible, or nearly so, and thereafter the number of such pictures declined steadily, centering mainly in the above-mentioned "Seminole" movies and periodic remakes of James Fenimore Cooper's "Leatherstocking" fables.[56]

Thus, by 1935 movieland had locked in all but monolithically upon the final round of wars in the West as its interpretive vehicle. The choice carried obvious advantages in that it placed Indians entirely within a geography remote from, and thus alien to, the vast majority of nonindians residing east of the Mississippi (and, later, along the west coast). From there, it seemed reasonable to expect that the people inhabiting the area might seem equally alien and remote. Also helpful was the fact that western lands did/do not appear suitable for farming, and that the events ostensibly depicted occurred at the very point when the native population, already reduced by some ninety percent and suffering severe dislocation from its traditional ways of life, was fighting most frantically to stave off being liquidated altogether.[57]

Having attained such utter decontextualization, filmmakers were free to indulge themselves—and their audiences—almost exclusively in fantasies of Indians as warriors. Not just any warriors, mind you, but those of a most hideously bestial variety. This is exemplified in John Ford's *Stagecoach,* where the director uses techniques common to monster movies of the era, and which would later be employed to great effect in the sci-fi flicks of the fifties, in building among his viewers a tremendous sense of dread long before any Indian is allowed to appear. Then, late in the movie, when the "Apaches" finally materialize, they are portrayed in an entirely dimensionless and inhuman fashion.[58]

Some directors went Ford one better, hiring actors known mostly for their portrayals of actual cinematic monsters to play native people. Bela Lugosi, for instance, who would later gain fame as the vampire in *Dracula,* was cast as Uncas in a 1922 German-made version of *Last of the Mohicans which* was received quite well in the U.S.[59] Cecil B.DeMille selected Boris Karloff, already famous as the creature in *Frankenstein,* to play an Indian in his 1947 movie *Unconquered.*[60] "Wolfman" Lon Chancy was also cast repeatedly in such roles, most notably in *The Pathfinder and the Mohican* (1956), *Along the Mohawk Trail* (1956), and *The Long Rifle* (1964), a ghastly trilogy pasted together from episodes of the *Hawkeye and the Last of the Mohicans TV series* (CBS; 1957–58).[61]

In other instances—Robert Mulligan's *The Stalking Moon* (1968) comes to mind—things are put even more straightforwardly. Here, a fictional Apache named "Salvaje," is withheld from view for most of the movie (à la *Stagecoach*) as he tracks a terrified Gregory Peck and Eva Marie Sainte across two states. Towards the end of the film Salvaje is finally revealed, but always from a distance and garbed in a strange and very un-Apachean set of "cave man" furs conveying the distinct impression that he is actually a dangerous form of animal life.[62]

Hundreds of movies and television segments follow more or less the same formula. Those that don't revolve around the notion of individual Indians being caught up in the full-time job of "menacing" unoffending whites most often have us far too busy *attacking* the same victims in "swarms," howling like "wolves," slaughtering and mutilating the innocent or carrying them away as captives upon whom we can work our animalistic wills at leisure.[63] And believe it or not, those, for Hollywood, are our *good* points.

The "down" side is that, even as warriors, we are in the end abysmally incompetent. Witness how gratuitously we expend ourselves while riding our ponies around and around the circled wagons of our foes (time after time after time). Watch as we squander our strength in pointless frontal assaults upon the enemy's most strongly fortified positions (again and again and again).[64] Worst of all, observe that we don't even know how to use our weapons properly, a matter brought forth most clearly in *A Man Called Horse,* when scriptwriter Jack DeWitt and director Silverstein team up to have an Englishman, played by Richard Harris, teaching his "Sioux" captors how best to employ their bows and arrows when repelling an attack by other Indians.[65]

Small wonder, given our continuous bombardment with such malignant trash, that by the 1950s, probably earlier, American Indian children had often become as prone as anyone else to "root for the cavalry" in its cinematic extermination of their ancestors (and, symbolically, themselves).[66] "After all," asked a native student in one of my recent film classes (by way of trying to explain the phenomenon to her nonindian peers), "who wants to identify with such a bunch of losers?" Yes, who indeed?

THE ONLY GOOD INDIAN…

"The only good Indians I ever saw," General Phil Sheridan famously observed in 1869, "were dead."[67] Filmmakers, for their part, brought such sentiments to life on the screen with a vengeance, beginning at least as early as D.W.Griffith's *The Battle of Elderbush Gulch* in 1913.[68] By the mid-30s, native people were being symbolically eradicated in the movies at a truly astounding rate, often with five or six of us falling every time a single bullet was fired by gallant white men equipped with what were apparently fifty-shot six-shooters.[69]

The celluloid bloodbath by no means abated until a general decline of public interest in westerns during the mid-to-late 1960s.[70]

So fixated was Hollywood upon images of largescale Indian killing by the military during the late nineteenth century that it transplanted them to some extent into western Canada, where nothing of the sort occurred. Apparently preoccupied with the possibility that the red coats of the North West Mounted Police (NWMP; now the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, RCMP) might look better on screen than U.S. army blue, directors simply shifted the Mounties into the role traditionally filled by the cavalry and cranked away.[71]

The first such epic, *The Flaming Forest,* appeared in 1926 and has the NWMP putting down the first Métis rebellion (1868) five years before the Mounties actually appeared on the scene. In 1940, DeMille made a picture entitled *North West Mounted Police,* about the second Métis rebellion (1885). Three features—*Fort Vengeance* (1953), *Saskatchewan* (1954), and *The Canadians* (1961)—were then produced on the theme of Mounties battling Sitting Bull's Lakota refugees during their brief Canadian sojourn in the late 1870s.[72]

> In the style of the shoot-'em-up western, Indians in the Mountie movies attacked wagon trains, burned settlers' cabins and roasted captives at the stake, all things that never took place in the Canadian West. The Canadian frontier had its problems: the illicit trade in alcohol, the disappearance of the buffalo, the spread of disease. But these were not the problems moviegoers saw. Rather the Mountie movie provided another opportunity for the Hollywood dream machine to act out its melodramatic fantasies about the American Wild West.[73]

Meanwhile, another sort of "good" Indian was being cultivated. Based archetypally on Fenimore Cooper's Chingachgook and/or Daniel Defoe's Friday in *Robinson Crusoe,* the character is exemplified by "Tonto"—the word literally means "fool, dunce, or dolt" in Spanish—"faithful Indian companion" of *The Lone Ranger* radio program's masked white hero from 1933 onward.[74] By 1938, the formula had proven so popular that it was serialized by moviemakers as Saturday matinee fare. The serial was condensed into a 1940 feature entitled *Hi-Ho Silver* before mutating into a longrunning ABC TV series in 1948.[75] Back in theater venues with *The Lone Ranger* in 1956 and *The Lone Ranger and the City of Gold in* 1958, the Masked Man and Tonto did not make their final big screen appearance (to date) until a 1979 remake of the 1956 film.[76]

As Cherokee analyst Rayna Green explains, the "good Indian [embodied in Tonto] acts as a friend to the white man, offering...aid, rescue, and spiritual and physical comfort even at the cost of his own life or status and comfort in his own [nation] to do so. He saves white men from 'bad' Indians, and thus becomes a 'good' Indian."[77] Or, to quote Canadian author Daniel Francis, the "Good Indian is one who stands shoulder to shoulder" with whites in their "settlement" of the continent, serving as "loyal friends and allies" to the invaders who were committing genocide to fulfill their self-assigned "Manifest Destiny" of possessing *all* native land and resources.[78] It is "their antiquated, stoic acceptance" of their own inherent inferiority to Euroamericans and, consequently, "their individual fate and the ultimate demise of their people that endeared these noble savages to white [audiences]."[79]

By 1950, the stereotype had been perfected to a point that director Delmer Daves was prepared to deploy it as the centerpiece of his *Broken Arrow,* usually considered to be the first major motion picture to attempt a "sympathetic" depiction of Indians.[80] Based loosely on the real life interaction during the 1870s between Cochise, a principal Chiricahua Apache leader, and a white scout named Tom Jeffords, the entire story is presented through the voice-over narrative of the latter while the former is reduced in the end to a Kiplingesque parody of himself.[81] So edifying was Daves' treatment to mainstream viewers that the film received a special award from the thoroughly nonindian Association of American Indian Affairs and Jeff Chandler, the then-unknown white actor cast as Cochise, was nominated for an Academy Award. Television quickly cashed in when NBC cloned a *Broken Arrow* TV series which ran for several seasons.[82]

Every cinematic good guy must, of course, be counterbalanced by a "heavy."[83] In *Broken Arrow,* the requirement is met by the film's handling of Geronimo, another important Chiricahua leader. Where Cochise's "virtue" is manifested in the lengths to which he is prepared to go in achieving not just peace but cordiality with whites—at one point Daves even has him executing another Apache to ensure the safety of his friend Jeffords—Geronimo's "badness" is embodied in the adamance of his refusal to do the same. In essence, capitulation/accommodation to aggression is defined as "good," resistance as "evil."[84] As S.Elizabeth Bird has framed the matter, wherever plot lines devolve upon "constructive" figures like *Broken Arrow's* fictionalized Cochise:

> [T]he brutal savage is still present in the recurring image of the renegade… These Indians have not accepted White control, refuse to stay on the reservation, and use violent means to combat White people, raiding farms and destroying White property. Although occasional lip service is paid to the justness of their anger, the message is clear that these warriors are misguided. [Enlightened whites] are frequently seen trying to persuade the friendly Indians to curb the ["hostiles'"] excesses. The renegades are clearly defined as deviant, out of control, and a challenge to the ["Good Indian"] who suffers all indignities with a stoic smile and acknowledgment that really there are many good, kind White people who wish this had never happened.[85]

The dichotomy of indigenous good and evil thus concretized in Daves' historically distortive juxtaposing of Cochise and Geronimo was almost immediately hammered home in *Taza, Son of Cochise,* another vaguely historical film in which one of the long-suffering Apache's two sons, Tahzay, who followed his father onto the San Carlos Reservation and ultimately succeeded him as principal Chiricahua leader, is employed as the vehicle for depicting native virtue. He is framed in harsh contrast to his brother, Naiche, a "recalcitrant" who was a noted figure in Geronimo's protracted resistance struggle.[86]

From there, such scenarios became something of an industry standard. As early as 1951, in *Across the Wide Missouri,* MGM cast Clark Gable in a role quite similar to James Stewart's portrayal of Tom Jeffords in *Broken Arrow.*[87] In 1952, the same studio had a youthful Charlton Heston playing an oddly Cochise-like Sioux in *The Savage.* In *Drum Beat* (1954), it was Alan Ladd's turn to emulate Stewart's performance, although no suitable counterpart to Cochise materialized. Other period films attempting more or less the same thematics included *The Big Sky* (1952), *The Great Sioux Uprising* (1953), *The Last Wagon* (1956), *Walk the Proud Land* (1956), *The Redmen and the Renegades* (1956), *The Oregon Trail*

(1959), *The Unforgiven* (1960), *The Long Rifle and the Tomahawk* (1964), *Last of the Renegades* (1966), and *Frontier Hellcat* (1966).[88]

Although the drop in the number of westerns produced after the latter years has resulted in a corresponding diminishment in the number of such "statements" by Hollywood, there is ample evidence that the Good Indian genre remains alive, well, and firmly entrenched. Prime examples will be found in the parts assigned Squamish actor Dan George in such acclaimed films as *Little Big Man* (1970) and *The Outlaw Josey Wales* (1976), Lakota AIM leader *cum* actor Russell Means in the latest version of *Last of the Mohicans,* Graham Greene, an Oneida, in *Thunderheart* (1991), Eric Schweig as *Squanto* (1994), and, most recently, the character portrayed by Cree actor Gordon Tootoosis in *Legends of the Fall* (1996).[89]

Television also followed up on the early success enjoyed by ABC's *Broken Arrow* with a CBS effort, *Brave Eagle* (1955–56) and NBC's dismal *Hawkeye* series. In 1957, ABC weighed in again with *Cheyenne,* staring *Yellowstone Kelly's* Clint Walker as a part-Indian cowboy/scout obviously inclined towards his "better" genetics (the series was highly popular and ran until 1963). NBC finally scored in 1959 with *Law of the Plainsman,* an utterly incongruous saga in which a fourteen-year-old Apache boy "about to scalp a wounded army captain, inexplicably relents and nurses the soldier back to health. The captain adopts the supposedly nameless boy, christening him Sam Buckhart. Sam eventually goes to Harvard, then becomes a lawman in New Mexico [serving] the larger society in trying to calm angry natives."[90]

So well was the latter theme received that ABC countered in 1966 with *Hawk,* a series starring part-Seminole actor Burt Reynolds as a contemporary New York police lieutenant of mixed ancestry. There being no Indian uprisings to quell in the Big Apple, the program folded after only three months, only to be replaced in 1974 with *Nakia,* a series focused on a Navajo, played by stock Indian stand-in Robert Forster, who hires on as a rural New Mexico deputy sheriff in furtherance of his struggle to "bridge" himself from the anachronism of his own society to the "modern world" of Euroamerica.[91]

The latest in televisions seemingly endless variations on the "Good Indian" theme came with CBS's *Dr. Quinn, Medicine Woman* in 1992. A transparent genuflection to the "postmodern" mainstream sensibilities of the nineties, the series' predominantly white cast is peopled by "several strong, independent women; a male population of bigots and weaklings, who receive their comeuppance from Dr. Quinn on a weekly basis; and one African-American couple, who provide opportunities for Dr. Quinn to display her progressive fervor."[92] An interesting setting is provided by a nearby "Cheyenne village" whose mostly anonymous inhabitants engage themselves for the most part in looking perfectly serene and "natural," although the show is set in Colorado during the very period when the territorial government was waging what it called a "campaign of extermination" against them.[93]

The main Indian character is "Cloud Dancing," a supposed traditional healer played by Larry Sellers who spends most of his time alternately passing his secrets to and trying to learn from the *real* "Medicine Woman"—who is of course a white M.D.—all the while looking sad and, most of all, being "friendly." He is "a calm, noble person who never fights back and is grateful for the attentions of heroic White individuals."[94] As the series progresses, Cloud Dancing loses an unborn child because of his wife's malnutrition (caused by white buffalo hunters' killing off the Cheyennes' main food supply); his adult son is killed while saving Dr. Quinn's life; 45 members of his village die hideous deaths due to the whites' distribution of typhus-infested blankets; finally, he suffers the butchery of the remainder of his people, including his wife, first during the 3rd Colorado Volunteers' infamous Sand Creek Massacre of 1864 and then at the at the hands of Custer's cavalry during the 1868 Washita Massacre. The handling of the last incident is indicative of the rest.

> While Sand Creek has received only passing mention, [the] Washita was finally addressed in an episode broadcast late in the 1994–95 season. The episode was revealing in the characteristic way in which it showed the massacre—not as a catastrophe for the Cheyenne, but as a trauma for Michaela Quinn. She fails to talk Custer out of attacking and she and Sully [her boyfriend], along with Cloud Dancing, come upon the village, completely wiped out, with everyone dead. Cloud Dancing's wife, Snowbird, dies in his arms. Everything from then on continues from Michaela's point of view. She withdraws from her family, blames herself for the massacre, and goes into a depression. Finally, Cloud Dancing comes to her and assures her that it was not her fault, then spends several days passing on his medical skills to her, before leaving for South Dakota. Michaela returns to her family, and happiness reigns again.[95]

At another point, after Sully professes to being "sorry for everything my people are doing to yours," Cloud Dancing replies that the "spirits tell me anger is good [but] hate is not. There are good men, there are bad men. You're a good man, Sully. You're still my brother."[96] Every Indian-focused segment of *Dr. Quinn* is salted with comparable gestures of absolution and forgiveness from victim to victimizer. The "role of the Cheyenne is to provide an exotic, attractive backdrop for the heroes and, subtly, to suggest that they are willing to fade away in the face of White [superiority]. Part of that role is to die, sometimes in great numbers, in order to move the plot along [while] showcasing Michaela and Sully. The show has a knack for touching on some of the most horrific episodes in the history of Indian-White relations, yet nevertheless suggesting that everything really came out all right."[97]

What a wonderful tonic for a body politic beset during the Great Columbus Quincentennial Controversy of the early '90s by flickerings of doubt about the honor and even the legitimacy of "The American Heritage."[98] Small wonder, all things considered, that *Dr. Quinn* became the most popular new TV series of the 1992–93 season.[99] Someone out there has clearly found it expedient to ignore the response of a character played by Creek actor Will Sampson after being made the butt of Tonto jokes one too many times by his white partner in the 1977 CBS television movie *Relentless:* "Hey…Buck," sighs Sampson. "That's enough…No more."[100]

VOICES OF THE VOICELESS

All of this is, to be sure, pure nonsense. Real Indians—as opposed to Reel Indians—even of the Tonto variety, would never actually have said/done what Hollywood has needed us to say and do. Occasional snatches of autonomous dialogue such as that of Sampson quoted above make this abundantly clear. Hence, it has been necessary to render us either literally voiceless, as with the "Chief Broom" character Sampson played in *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest,* or effectively so.

A standard means to the latter end ties directly to the more general nullification of indigenous culture addressed earlier. This takes the form of a pretense that native "tongues," despite their typically being just as intellectually refined and expressive as European languages, often more so—Micmac, for instance, evidences much more semantic precision and contains five times as many words as English[101]—are extraordinarily crude or "primitive." A classic example of how this is accomplished will be found in *The Way West* (1967), where director Andrew McLaglen has a "Sioux chief" wearing a Mohawk haircut and a woman's shawl address a group of whites with a string of Lakota terms selected seemingly at random (translated, they make up a meaningless word salad).[102]

One director went further, presenting his audiences with English language recordings played in reverse to signify the exotic sounds of spoken "Indian." Most often, however, filmmakers have simply followed historian Francis Parkman's notoriously ignorant comment that the word "How!" constitutes "a monosyllable by which an Indian contrives to express half the emotions of which he is susceptible."[103] Or, in fairness, they have elected to enrich Parkman's vocabulary by adding "Ugh," "Ho," and a smattering of guttural grunts. To this has been added a weird sort of pidgin English best described by Ralph Stedman as comprising a "Tonto School of Communication."[104] Consider as sufficient illustration the following four consecutive lines delivered by the faithful Indian companion during a *Lone Ranger* program aired on June 30, 1939.

> Who you?
> Ugh.
> You see-um him?
> Me want-um him.[105]

With Indians thus rendered functionally mute in our own right, however, it remained nonetheless necessary that audiences often be informed as to exactly how they should understand many of the celluloid savages' otherwise inexplicable on-screen actions. This problem was solved when, early in *Broken Arrow,* Delmer Daves has James Stewart peremptorily announce that "when the Apaches speak, it will be in our language."[106] From that point on, everything is explained "through the eyes of"—which is to say, from the point of view and *in the voice of*—Stewart's white character.

The same can be said of Audie Murphy's John Clum in *Walk the Proud Land,* the Britton Davis character in the latest remake of *Geronimo,* or any of a host of other real-life soldiers, settlers, and frontiersmen whose memoirs, letters, and diaries have been used as the basis for scripts purportedly telling "Indian" stories.[107] Completely fictional variants of the same device have also been used with such regularity over the past fifty years as to establish a cinematic convention. Sometimes it is adhered to in unorthodox ways, as when John Ford gratuitously appended a white female school-teacher to the body of fleeing Indians in *Cheyenne Autumn,* but inevitably there is a central white character to "tell the story of the Indians" in a manner familiar and ultimately comfortable to Euroamerican audiences.[108]

This is as true of *Soldier Blue* and *Little Big Man,* the so-called "revisionist" or "protest" flicks of 1970, and such successors as *Dances With Wolves,* as it is of the most blatantly reactionary John Wayne western.[109] Indeed, it may well be more so. John Wayne movies, after all, don't pretend to be *about* Indians, or even sympathetic to us. Rather, they are for the most part unabashed celebrations of our "conquest" and, in that sense at least, they are honest enough.[110]

The subgenre of "protest" or "progressive" films *do,* on the other hand, purport to be about native people, and sympathetically so. To this extent, they are fundamentally *dishonest,* if for no other reason than because the whole purpose of their persistent injection of nonindian narrators into indigenous contexts amounts to nothing so much as a way of creating the illusion of sympathetic *white* alternatives to Wayne's triumphalist status quo.

The most topical examples undoubtedly reside among the ever so enlightened and sensitive Euroamerican leads of *Dr. Quinn.* In fact, as S.Elizabeth Bird has observed with regard to the male character in particular, "Sully's ongoing role is to stand in for the Cheyennes, so that their culture can be represented, while they as a people can be pushed into the background. After all, he is a better Indian than the Cheyenne, as is made abundantly clear in the opening scene of one episode, when he beats Cloud Dancing at a tomahawk-throwing contest."[111] The principle applies equally to all such figures, from Dustin Huffman's Jack Crabbe in *Little Big Man* to Richard Harris' Lord Morgan in *A Man Called Horse* to Kevin Costner's Lieutenant Dunbar in *Dances With Wolves* to Daniel Day-Lewis' Hawkeye in the most recent iteration of *Last of the Mohicans.*

Having thus contrived to substitute whites for Indians both verbally and to some extent physically as well, filmmakers have positioned themselves perfectly, not just to spin their yarns in whatever manner strikes their fancy at a given moment but to make them appear to have been embraced by all sides, native and nonnative alike. Hence, white story or Indian story, they become indistinguishable in the end, following as they do a mutual trajectory to the same destination within the master narrative of an overarching "American Story."[112]

THOSE CAVALIERS IN BUCKSKIN

The ways in which this has been accomplished have plainly undergone a significant metamorphosis through the years. In the "bad old days" of unadulterated triumphalism, plot lines invariably orbited around the personas of noble and heroic white figures, whether ostensibly real or admittedly invented, with whom it was intended that audiences identify. Such projections were never as easily achieved as it may seem in retrospect, entailing for the most part a wholesale rewriting of history. Irrespective of the false and degrading manner in which native people were depicted, it was still vitally important that cinematic whites be portrayed in ways which posed them as embodying some diametrically opposite set of "traits." This was no mean feat when it came to things like the 1890 Wounded Knee Massacre, still a vividly current event during the movies' early days, where U.S. troops had slaughtered more than 300 disarmed Lakota prisoners, overwhelmingly composed of women, children, and old men.[113]

The problem of how such behavior might come to be perceived was addressed, experimentally, by a group calling itself the Colonel W.F.Cody (Buffalo Bill) Historical

Picture Company in 1914. Retaining General Nelson A.Miles, renowned as an expert Indian fighter, to verify the accuracy of their endeavor in much the same fashion Wilcomb Washburn would authenticate *A Man Called Horse* more than a half-century later, they produced a film entitled *The Indian Wars Refought.* In it, the "Battle of Wounded Knee" was reenacted in such a way as to show how the defenseless Lakotas had themselves "picked a fight" with the hundreds of well-armed soldiers surrounding them. The Indians had thus brought their fate upon themselves, so the story went, the troopers having "had no choice" but to defend themselves with Hotchkiss guns.[114]

Heavily promoted by its makers for use in, and widely adopted by, the nation's schools as a medium of "truth," the film set the "standard" for much of what would follow.[115] Within a few years, the reversal of reality was complete: the massacre at Wounded Knee was popularly understood to have been a "battle" while the 1876 annihilation of a portion of "General" (actually Lt. Colonel) George Armstrong Custer's 7th Cavalry Regiment in open combat was habitually described as a "massacre."[116] Indians were "killed" by whites while whites were always "murdered" by Indians; Indians "committed depredations" while whites "defended themselves" and "won victories."[117]

The same sort of systematic historical falsification was of course brought to bear on the records of individual whites, notably Custer himself. This was epitomized in director Raoul Walsh's casting of Hollywood's premier swashbuckling glamour boy, Errol Flynn, to play "the boy general" in *They Died With Their Boots On* (1941). Here, Custer, whose pedigree included the documented cowardice and desertion for which he was court-martialed and at one point relieved of his command, and whose main claim to fame as an Indian fighter rested in having perpetrated the Washita Massacre, is presented in an altogether different light.[118]

Actually, Walsh saw to it that neither the court martial nor the Washita were so much as mentioned, while Flynn's Custer was quite literally backlit with a Christ-like halo at various points in the film. Meanwhile, the man who broke the 1868 Fort Laramie Treaty with the Lakotas, Cheyennes, and Arapahos by leading an 1874 expedition into the Black Hills, the very heart of their homeland, was presented as its staunchest defender.[119] Similarly, although Custer personally instigated the war of conquest against these same peoples in which he was killed two years later—a gambit meant to further his presidential ambitions[120]—he is depicted as having gallantly sacrificed himself and his men to prevent just such a war.

And so it went, from Edward Sedgwick's *The Flaming Frontier* (1926) to DeMille's *The Plainsman* (1936), from Michael Curtiz's *The Santa Fe Trail* (1941) to Charles Marquiz Warren's *Little Big Horn* (1951), from Ernest Haycox's *Bugles in the Afternoon* (1952) to Joseph H.Lewis's *Seventh Cavalry* (1956), from Lewis R.Foster's *Tonka* (1958) to Sidney Salkow's *The Great Sioux Massacre* (1965). As late as 1967, director Robert Siodmak cast the dashing Irish actor Robert Shaw in the lead role when making his conspicuously Walsh-style *Custer of the West.*[121]

Although paleohistorians like Robert Utley persist to this day in describing the wretched Custer as a "cavalier in buckskins,"[122] the preferences of an appreciable portion of the U.S. viewing public had begun to undergo a sea change by the time Siodmak released his movie. Horrified at the prospect of being conscripted to serve as fodder in Vietnam, and taking their cue from the military's own references to enemyheld territory there as "Indian Country," millions of young whites began, increasingly, as a part of their own resistance, to analogize the ongoing carnage in Southeast Asia to that of the Indian Wars and to revile the leaders presiding over both processes.[123]

Sensing that the potential for a vast audience/market was bound up in the desire of America's baby boomers to emotionally/figuratively distance themselves from the status quo, hip directors like Arthur Penn and Ralph Nelson were quick to cash in. In catering to the new "countercultural" sensibility, Penn opted to display the Custer of *They Died With Their Boots On* in virtual reverse image. Where the Walsh/FIynn approach decreed Custer's intrinsic nobility, hence that of the tradition he was mustered to represent, the characterization offered in *Little Big Man* was that of a vulgarly egotistical psychopath.[124] Nelson followed suit in *Soldier Blue,* albeit using a somewhat amorphous representation of Colonel John Chivington, the already infamous commander at Sand Creek, to make his point.[125]

Chivington had previously received such cinematic packaging under the name "Colonel Templeton" in a somewhat innovative Arthur Hiller movie, *Massacre at Sand Creek* (1956), and he would again, as "Colonel Schemmerhorne," in a TV miniseries made from James Michener's *Centennial* during the late '70s. As for Custer, he has continued to be portrayed primarily in accordance with the negative model established by Penn, most recently in 1995, in the episode of *Dr. Quinn* discussed earlier.

While *Little Big Man* and *Soldier Blue* certainly punched large holes in the triumphalist stereotype, as critics Ralph and Natasha Friar observed shortly after the films were released, this merely signified that Hollywood had shifted from glorifying the extermination of native people to "excusing genocide by attributing it to the whims of a few unbalanced people, i.e., General Custer."[126] More precisely, by making such attribution filmmakers were both acknowledging the obvious—admitting, that is, that genocidal events had occurred in the course of American history and that they were wrong—and presenting it as something abnormal and therefore exceptional.

When this was combined with sympathetic white characters like Hoffman's Jack Crabbe in *Little Big Man,* Candice Bergen's Christa Lee and Peter Strauss's Honis Gant in *Soldier Blue,* Costner's Dunbar in *Dances With Wolves,* or Michaela Quinn and Sully in *Dr. Quinn,* the appearance of a fundamental polarity within Euroamerican society itself is created. This serves a very useful purpose, especially when stirred in with the Good Indian (friendly)/Bad Indian (hostile) stereotypes already discussed. As Elisabeth Bird explains:

> [While] *Dr. Quinn* goes along with notions of White guilt, it equally clearly allows White audiences to see the destruction of Indian culture as both inevitable and as somehow accidental. The show holds on to the "renegade" image, for example, because it helps assuage guilt: After all, some of the Indians drove us to it, helping to bring about their own destruction. Thus there were good and bad guys on both sides, and the bad things happened because of bad guys like Custer and the renegades, but good guys like Michaela and Sully are who *we* are [emphasis added].[127]

Thus, psychologically at least, genuinely sympathetic white figures, who did exist but who were historically anomalous at best, are rendered normative in terms of audience identification.[128] Conversely, men like Custer and Chivington, who were in fact normatively expressive of public sentiment—virtually the entire citizenry of Denver *did* turn out to cheer when the "Bloody Third" returned from Sand Creek, parading its scalps, genitalia, and other anatomical "trophies"; Custer *was* an extraordinarily popular public figure after the Washita; bounties on Indian scalps *were* proclaimed in *every* state and territory of the continental U.S. at one time or another—become the anomalies.[129]

The result is in no sense a transformation but instead a much more potent reconfiguring of the Euroamerican status quo. What Penn, Nelson, and their colleagues accomplished was to find a means to let the "protest generation" of the 1960s off the hook of its own professed dissidence. What they provided was/is a convenient surrogate reality allowing whites to symbolically disassociate themselves from the intolerable ugliness of "Custerism" (whether in the Wild West or Vietnam), thereby "feeling good about themselves" even while continuing to participate in and benefit from the very socioeconomic order Custerism has produced.[130]

This "reconstitution of imperial ideology" as a "friendlier" form of fascism has been expressed in a variety of ways, both on-screen and in the real world, but nowhere more clearly than in an exchange between Sully and Michaela's young son, Brian, during a special two-hour episode of *Dr. Quinn* broadcast during the 1993–94 season.[131] Toward the end, having just listened to a thoroughly triumphalist explanation of why the Cheyennes were being exterminated, the boy asks whether these weren't lies. Sully, the "White Indian," responds: "I'm afraid so, Brian; they lie to themselves. But this is still the best country in the world. . . . "[132]

Although the style of delivery is obviously different, such lines might easily have been uttered by John Wayne at the conclusion of any John Ford western. In fact, it seems no stretch at all to suggest that The Duke would have been proud to pronounce them. So much for the alleged "critical distinctions" between films like *Little Big Man* or *Dances With Wolves* on the one hand, and *They Died With Their Boots On* or *Custer of the West* on the other. "Meet the new boss," as Pete Townsend of The Who once put it with admirable succinctness, "same as the old boss."[133]

RAVAGES BY SAVAGES

As Eldridge Cleaver brilliantly explained in *Soul on Ice,* the structure of sexual relations imposed by Euroamerica upon African Americans can be understood as a metaphor for the broader relational matrix of domination and subjugation defining the social positions of whites and blacks respectively. In this formulation, white men are accorded a self-assigned status as "Omnipotent Administrators," primarily cerebral beings who, by presuming to monopolize the realm of thought itself, have assigned black men the subordinate status of mindless "Ultramasculine Menials."[134]

To complete the figurative disempowerment of the latter, and thus to signify their own station of unimpeachable supremacy, the Administrators proceed first to constrain and then to preempt the Menials in that most crucial of all physical arenas, their sexuality. Black men are, by white male ordination, categorically denied sexual access to white women ("Ultrafeminine Females") while, concomitantly, white men grant themselves unrestricted rights to the black female "Booty" deriving from their posture of domination. Black men are thereby reduced to a degraded status as "social eunuchs" while black women, transformed into sexual commodities, are dehumanized altogether, and white women, consigned to serve as desexualized objects adorning the omnipotence of their men, fare little better.[135]

The great fear for the Administrators, according to Cleaver, is that the Menials might somehow discover a means of breaking the psychic bounds of their oppression, that is, of liberating themselves from their state of emasculated debasement by allegorically turning the tables and violating the "purity" of white womanhood.[136] So deep seated was this dread that it assumed the form of an outright cultural psychosis leading, among other things, to the ubiquitousness of a myth that black men are imbued, innately and insatiably, with a "need" to rape the Ultrafeminine Female. Several thousand lynchings were carried out in the U.S. between 1889 and 1930, mainly to deter black men from acting upon this supposed compulsion.[137]

With only minor transpositions, the paradigm can be as readily applied to Euroamerica's perception of its relationship to native people as to imported African chattel. Indeed, the evidence strongly suggests that transposition occurred in reverse order; the model was developed with respect to Indians, then modified to some extent for application to blacks. In any event, preoccupation with the idea that native men were animated by the "darkest" desires vis-à-vis white women can be traced back to the earliest writings of the New England Puritans.[138] By the end of the nineteenth century, the theme had long been a staple of American literature and drama, both high-brow and low.[139]

Once movies became a factor, the situation was exacerbated substantially. In *The Battle at Elderbush Gulch,* for example, only the timely arrival of the cavalry saved a trembling Lillian Gish from a "mercy slaying" meant to save her from a "fate worse than death" at the hands of surrounding savages.[140] The scene was repeated with some regularity over the next forty years, most prominently in Ford's *Stagecoach.* By the early fifties, white women were accorded a bit more autonomy, as when director Anthony Mann has James Stewart hand actress Shelley Winters a weapon in *Winchester* 73 (1953) so that she may participate in their mutual defense. "Don't worry," she assures him, "I understand about the last [bullet]."[141] Better death than "suffering ravage by a savage," as Charley Hill puts it.[142] In *Fort Massacre* (1969), Joel McCrea's wife goes everybody one better by killing not only herself but her two children rather than allow any of them to be taken captive by Apaches.

Despite a veritable mountain of evidence that rape was practiced in few if any native societies, a diametrically opposed "truth" was presented in hundreds of Hollywood westerns.[143] "Did you ever see what Indians do when they get a *white* woman?" asks a seasoned scout portrayed by James Whitmore in *Chato's Land (1972).* "Comanches," another scout explains to an army captain trying to figure out whether it was they or the Apaches who had perpetrated a massacre, in *A Thunder of Drums* (1961), "rape their own women" rather than whites, "so it was likely Apaches." "If we stop now," one beleaguered cavalry officer tells another in *The Gatling Gun* (1971), "all those women have to look forward to is rape and murder."[144]

"You *know* what Indians do to women," declaims a trooper at the beginning of *Soldier Blue.* "They're going to rape me, Soldier Blue, and then they're going to kill you," Candice Bergen clarifies to a horrified Peter Strauss after the pair are captured by Kiowas later in the same film. "They're going to rape me, Jack," explains Crabbe's older sister in *Little Big Man,* shortly after they'd been taken home by a Cheyenne who'd happened upon the two children after their family had been massacred by Pawnees.[145] Most recently, in a 1994 episode of *Dr. Quinn,* Cloud Dancing's son proves that he, like his father, is a "Good Indian" by sacrificing himself to save the white heroine from being raped and murdered by "Dog Soldier renegades."[146]

In both *The Searchers and Ulzana's Raid* (1972), white women are depicted as having been "raped into insanity" by Indians.[147] In *Land Raiders* (1969), Apaches attack a town and, despite the ferocity of the fighting and the severity of their casualties, still find time to rape white women. In *The Deserter* (1970), the hero's wife is not only raped but skinned alive and left for her husband to kill.[148] Who could blame white men for having responded to such unrelenting horror by exterminating those responsible?

Often the rescue of white women taken by Indians comprises the entire plot of a movie, or a substantial part of it. Such is the case with *Iona, the White Squaw* (1909), *The Peril of the Plains* (1911), *The Pale-Face Squaw* and *The White Squaw* (both 1913), *Winning of the West* (1922), *Northwest Passage* (1940), *Ambush* (1950), *Flaming Feather* (1951), *Fort Ti* (1955), *The Charge at Feather River* (1953), *Comanche* (1956), *Comanche Station* (1960), *The Last Tomahawk* (1965), and *Duel at Diablo* (1966), among scores of others.[149] Sometimes, as in *Two Rode Together* (1961), the idea is handled with at least a semblance of sensitivity.[150] The worst of the lot is Ford's *The Searchers,* in which John Wayne is scripted to track down his abducted niece so he can kill her because she's been so irredeemably "soiled" by her experience.[151]

Even where the intended fate of the "rescued" is not so grim, it is often made plain that the purpose of their recovery is not so much to save *them* as it is to deny Indians the "spoils" they represent. Just as the effrontery of having "known" a white woman constitutes a death sentence for a native man and frequently his entire people, so too does the fact of her "fall from grace" license punishment of the woman herself. The scorn of townspeople visited upon the former "Indian's woman" portrayed by Barbara Stanwyck in *Trooper Hook* (1957), for example, forces her to live outside *any* society, white *or* native. Much the same principle applies to Linda Cristal's character in *Two Rode Together,* that of Eva Marie Sainte in *The Stalking Moon,* and many others.[152]

The only occasion prior to 1975's *Winterhawk* in which the American cinema had a native male actually marrying a white female was in the 1909 short, *An Indians Bride.* The reasons for this glaring bias were none too subtle.

> Zane Grey originally published his novel, *The Vanishing American* (1925), as a magazine serial in 1922 in *The Ladies Home Journal,* a Curtis publication… At the conclusion, Grey had his heroine, a blonde-haired, blue-eyed school-teacher marry his full-blood Navajo hero. This set off such an outraged reaction among the magazine's readers that, henceforth, Curtis publications made it a stipulation that Indian characters were never again to be characterized and *Harper's* refused to publish the novel until Grey agreed to have the Navajo die at the end.[153]

The second ending, of course, was the one used in the movie. Probably the most ridiculous contortion undertaken with respect to this squalid convention came in Lambert Hillyer's *White Eagle* (1932). In this oat-burner, the hero, played by Buck Jones, is supposedly a full-blooded Bannock pony express rider who falls head over heels for a white woman. Just before the movie ends, "Buck's father tells him the truth: he is white!

He was stolen from his family as a child. This permits Buck, without violating the color line, to embrace the heroine."[154]

Native women, of course, are another matter entirely. Not uncommonly they are depicted as appropriate objects of Euroamerican sexual aggression; the James Whitmore line quoted above was uttered to justify the fact that two white men were busily raping an Indian woman just offscreen.[155] Apache actress Sacheen Littlefeather was able to fashion something of a cinematic career for herself only by her willingness to portray indigenous rape victims, as she did in *Winterhawk,* in one movie after another.[156] The same pertained, albeit to a lesser extent, to her contemporaries, women like Dawn Little Sky, Princess Lois Red Elk, and Pablita Verde Hardin.[157]

At the same time, Indian women have been consistently limned as suffering a hopeless, usually fatal, attraction to the omnipotence of white men. It's a story as old as the legend of *Pocahontas* (1908) coined by John Smith in 1624,[158] and has been repeated on the big screen hundreds of times, beginning with films like *An Indian Maidens Choice* and *The Indian Girl's Romance* (both 1910), *Love in a Tepee* (1911), *Broncho Billy and the Navajo Maid* (1912) and *The Fate of the Squaw* (1914), and continuing right up to the present moment with such fare as *Captain John Smith and Pocahontas* (1953), *Fort Yuma* (1955), *Fort Bowie* (1958), *Oklahoma Territory* (1960), *Wild Women* (1970) and, of course, Disney's 1995 animated version of *Pocahontas.*[159]

Such romantic yearnings were doomed from the outset, or, more properly, the female characters who expressed them were. It was one thing for white men to gratify themselves sexually at the expense of native women, not only by raping them but, sometimes more tenderly, by cohabiting; it was quite another for "mere squaws" to be accorded the dignity of actually marrying one of their racial/cultural "betters." The consequence of Pocahontas's wedding an Englishman was, after all, her death by smallpox.[160]

Fenimore Cooper made it even plainer: the *only* possible outcome of such romantic entanglements was/is death.[161] Although the theme was first explored in *The Indian Maidens Sacrifice* (1910), it is *The Squaw Man* (1913, 1918, 1931) which really serves as the cinematic prototype for all that would follow.

> Based on Edwin Milton Royce's very successful stage play of 1905, the film concerns an English noble, falsely accused of a crime his brother actually committed, who ventures into the American west in an effort to clear his name. He falls in love with an Indian maiden of the Pocahontas stereotype variety and they have a child. Years pass and his brother, on his death bed, makes a confession exonerating the hero… The hero, now able to return to England and claim his title, accidentally shoots the Indian maiden (in the play she is a suicide); she dies in his arms, happy, because, as she tells him, she knows white culture to be superior and their child need not be held back because of her primitive ways.[162]

And so it went. Debra Paget, as James Stewart's Apache bride in *Broken Arrow,* dies tragically, the victim of an ambush by "Bad Whites." In *Drum Beat,* "Marisa Pavan, among the noble savages, has a crush on the white hero, Alan Ladd. Ladd sets her straight: she must marry within her own people. Then he pays court to the white heroine while Pavan, apparently in despair, loses her life trying to save his."[163] Linda Darnell does herself in when she can't ride off into the sunset with *Buffalo Bill;* Marie Elena Marques does pretty much the same in *Across the Wide Missouri*. Even Donna Reed's Sacajawea considers it when she realizes she'll never fit into the world of Charlton Heston's William Clark in *The Far Horizon*.[164]

All told, then, the panorama of Indian/white sexuality presented in movies has always been far more akin to what one might have expected from the Marquis de Sade's sick pen than from anything socially constructive or redeemable.[165] Foundationally, there is little to distinguish even the best of Hollywood's productions from *Jungle Blue* (1978), *Sweet Savage* (1979), *Kate and the Indians* (1979), *Deep Roots* (1980), and other such X-rated, Indian-themed filth spewing from America's thriving porn-video industry.[166]

LUST IN THE DUST

Carnality, whether packaged as rape or love, "true" or unrequited, inevitably results in offspring. When the progenitors are of different races, such progeny will obviously be endowed with an interracial admixture of "blood" and thence, presumably, of culture as well. Hollywood, as much as the dominant society of which it is part, has from the first exhibited an abiding confusion as to how it should respond to the existence of such creatures, especially since their numbers have tended to swell at rates much greater than those of any "purer breeding stock" throughout the course of American history.[167]

At one level, it might be argued, as it has been by American thinkers like Thomas Jefferson and Henry Lewis Morgan, that a "touch of Indian" in the country's then preponderantly Caucasian makeup might serve to create a hybrid superior to the original strain (even as it diluted native gene stocks to the point of extinction and beyond).[168] On another level, it has been argued, and vociferously, that any such process of "mongrelization" results only in a dilution and consequent degradation of the "white race" itself.[169]

The best of both worlds or the worst? That is the question, never resolved. Typically, filmmakers have followed the lead set by D.W.Griffith in *Birth of a Nation* (1914), his aesthetically groundbreaking cinematic exaltation of the Ku Klux Klan.[170] By and large, children of mixed parentage have been consigned either to their mother's society rather than their father's—movies figuring upon the spawn of unions between native men and white women having for reasons discussed above been exceedingly rare—or to drift in anguish through an existential netherworld located somewhere between.

Such has been the case, certainly, with films like *The Halfbreed,* first released in 1916, and then remade as *The Half Breed in* 1922 and *The Half-Breed* in 1952. And so it has been with *The Dumb Half-Breed's Defense* (1910), *The Half-Breed's Atonement* (1911), *Breed of the North* and *End in the Bone* (both 1913), *Indian Blood* (1914), *The Ancient Blood* and *The Quarter Breed* (1916), *The Great Alone* and *One Eighth Apache* (both 1922), *Call Her Savage (1932), Wagon Wheels* (1934), *Daughter of the West* and *Colorado Territory* (both 1949), *The Hawk of Wild River* (1952), *The Proud and the Profane* (1956), *Nevada Smith* (1966), and well over a hundred others.[171]

Most frequently, those of mixed heritage have been depicted as a sort of antimiscegenist's incarnation of evil, as in *The Halfbreed, The Half Breed,* and *The Half-Breed.* Films produced using this motif have included *Half Breed's Treachery* (1909, 1912), *The Half-Breed's Way* (1912), *Bring Him In* (1921), *The Heritage of the Desert* (1924), *The Verdict* *of the Desert* (1925), *Hawk of the Hills* (1927), *Pony Soldier* (1952), *Reprisal* (1956), *War Drums* (1957), and *Last Train from Gun Hill* (1959). Sometimes the "breeds" turn out wrong because of the influence of dubious white men, as in *Broken Lance* (1954). On other occasions, our malignity is even explained as having been pre cipitated by white atrocities, as in the *Centennial* miniseries' (mis) representation of Charlie Bent and his brothers.[172] But the resulting impression is essentially the same. Breeds are bad, as is explained in *The Barrier of Blood* (1913) and *The Apache Way* (1914), because we "naturally" incline towards our "Indian side." Nowhere is this brought out more clearly than in the "wholesome family entertainment" provided by cinematic adaptations of Mark Twain's *Tom Sawyer* and *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn,* books in which the most malevolent character, a half-breed called Injun Joe, readily explains that his evil deeds are due to the fact that his "Injun blood ain't in me for nothing."[173]

The Unforgiven, a film that remains arguably the most venomously racist of all Hollywood's treatments of native people, was anchored by this premise. A few lines from the 1957 Alan LeMay novel upon which it was based should prove sufficient to carry the point.

> This is one thing I know. The red niggers are no human men. Nor are they beasts, nor any kind of earthly varmint, for all natural critters act like God made them to do. Devil-spirits, demons out of red kill, these be, that somehow, on some evil day, found a way to clothe themselves in flesh. I say to you, they must be cleansed from the face of this earth! Wherever one drop of their blood is found, it must be destroyed! For that is man's most sacred trust, before Almighty God.[174]

This transparently Hitlerian statement is made to a young woman played by Audrey Hepburn, presumably a child captive brought up by the Kiowas and then recovered by whites, who is mortally afraid that she might in fact be of mixed ancestry. Her self-protective response is to try and sound even worse. At one point, when queried by her adoptive white mother about the people in the village where she was raised, she replies, "There weren't any *people* there, Mama. Those were Indians."[175]

Ironically, it is this very same DNA structure, deemed so dangerous by D.W.Griffith and his ilk, which has been seized upon by more "progressive" filmmakers to project mixed-bloods as being good, or at least better than native "fullbloods," simply by way of inclining us towards our "white side."[176] This countering interpretation was manifested in all four versions of *Ramona* (1910, 1914 [reissue], 1916, 1928, 1936), as well as such early releases as *Red Wings Constancy* and *Red Wing's Loyalty* (both 1910), *An Indian Hero* (1911), *The Half-Breed's Sacrifice* (1912), *The Half-Breed Parson,* and *The Half-Breed Sheriff* (both 1913).[177]

By the 1960s, Hollywood was even prepared to cast actual mixed-bloods like Elvis Presley in such roles, once in the passable *Flaming Star* (1960) and again in *Stay Away Joe* (1968), a movie "so bad that one is tempted to shout: 'John Wayne, where are you now that we need you?'"[178] Things have improved little in portrayals of mixed-bloods in the 1990s, as is witnessed by Val Kilmer's role in the idiotic *Thunderheart* and the even more recent characterization offered in the *Walker, Texas Ranger* TV series.[179]

Regardless of whether they've been oriented towards the notion of "breeds" as good, or convinced that we're inherently bad, however, one thing most directors seem to have been able to agree upon is that, as the fruit of illicit matings, we're somehow sexy.

> The screen almost burst into flames with Jennifer Jones as half-breed Pearl Chavez. Her sultry walk captured the eye of Gregory Peck in *Duel in the Sun* (1946), a film one sharp-tongued critic called "Lust in the Dust" …Dimitri Tiomkin recalls creating the musical score… He rewrote and rewrote it. Finally, in a meeting with [David O.] Selznik he said he had done all he could or would do. In desperation, he asked the producer what he really wanted. "I want it to sound like an orgasm," [Selznik replied].[180]

And it's not just women. As Peter van Lent has lately pointed out, "In current popular culture the exoticism of the Native male is always carefully controlled. For example, most of the heroes of the Indian romance novels are of mixed blood—'halfbreeds.' This convention provides a safety net against several sexual pitfalls. First, it checks the exotic image from being too alien and keeps it within the bounds of 'tall, dark and handsome.' Second, it avoids any sqeamishness about miscegenation on the part of the reader. Since the hero is half-white, the romantic-sexual bond is not truly interracial and… 'the half-breed's' appearance can be quite comfortably Caucasian. In the words of one romance author: 'Bronson could pass as a white man.'"[181]

Van Lent, while correct in the main, is wrong about mixed-bloodedness quelling qualms among Euroamerican readers about miscegenation. In the same novel he quotes—Fabio's *Comanche*—the plot line devolves upon a white wife's rejection of her husband once she discovers the truth of his gene code.[182] The book is a bestseller in its niche, likely to be made into a movie, at least for TV consumption. Moreover, it is but one among scores of comparable tracts lining bookstore shelves and grocery store checkout lanes across the country.[183] The more things "change," the more they stay the same.

COWBOYS AND…

"From 1913 to the present, Hollywood has produced thousands of feature films on cowboys and Indians," wrote native documentary producer Phil Lucas in 1980. "These films, coupled with a preponderance of supportive literature (dime novels, poems, books, essays, journals, and plays), art, and more recently, television and advertising erase the varied cultural and ethnic identities of over 400 distinct…nations of the original inhabitants of the Americas, and have successfully replaced them with a fictional identity… the Hollywood Indian."[184]

The process began much earlier than either cinema or the twentieth century. Robert Berkhofer, for one, dates its inception from the earliest writings by Europeans about Indians.[185] Daniel Francis, a more visually oriented analyst, finds the point of origin somewhere among the renderings of George Catlin, Karl Bird King, Karl Bodmer, and Canadian counterparts like Paul Kane.[186] Extending Susan Sontag's observa tion that "to photograph is to appropriate the thing photographed" to cover painting, drawing and, ultimately, cinema, Francis concludes that when "they drew the Indians or took their photographs, artists…were taking possession of the Indian image. It was [then] theirs to manipulate and display in any way they wanted."[187]

> When…cultures meet, especially cultures as different as those of western Europe and indigenous North America, they inevitably interpret each other in terms of stereotypes. At its best, in a situation of equality, this might be seen as a phase in a longer process of familiarization. But if one side in the encounter enjoys advantages of wealth or power or technology, then it will usually try to impose its stereotypes on the other. That is what occurred in the case of the North American encounter between European and aboriginal. We have been living with the consequences ever since.[188]

"Images have consequences in the real world," Francis sums up, "ideas have results. The Imaginary Indian does not exist in a void. In their relations with Native people over the years, non-Native[s] have put their image of the Indian into practice."[189] This is true, whether the image is that of Cassily Adams' famously howling hordes in Budweiser's "Cluster's Last Stand" poster or the nobly vanishing savage of James Fraser's equally famed 1914 sculpture, "The End of the Trail."[190] Both are false, and have the effect of dehumanizing those thus depicted, one no less than the other.

A consequence has been that, while Native North Americans have today been consigned to a degree of material destitution and attendant physical degradation comparable to that evident in most areas of the Third World, hardly a glimmer of concern emanates from the vast settler population benefiting from both our historical decimation/dispossession and the current régime of impoverishment imposed upon us. Why, after all, should those conditioned to see us as less or other than human, or even at some level to believe us nonexistent, care *what* happens to us?[191]

Euroamerican cinema's defending aestheticians have typically sought to skirt such issues by asserting, as Robin Wood did in 1971, that however erroneous and "unpleasant" the dominant society's portrayals of Indians, they are nonetheless defensible in "mythic terms."[192] On this score, one can do no better than to quote John Tuska's rejoinder that, "To put it bluntly, what apologists mean by a 'mythic' dimension in a western film is that part of it which they know to be a lie but which, for whatever reason, they still wish to embrace."[193]

Other comers have tried to varnish such polemics with a patina of belated "balance" or "equity," as when John H.Lenihan attempted to justify Delmer Daves' extravagantly inaccurate and anti-Indian *Drum Beat* on the basis that since the director had already "presented the Indian's point of view in *Broken Arrow*," it was necessary for him "to offer the settler's side of the story" in the later film (as if a couple of thousand movies already doing exactly that weren't enough to "offset" Daves' single "proIndian" picture).[194]

Somewhat more sophisticated have been the superficially critical arguments ad vanced by Jack Nachbar and others, holding that it is time for Hollywood to transcend the "appealing but shallow concepts of right and wrong" altogether, offering instead "a new synthesis of understanding" in which, historically speaking, Indian or white, "ain't none of us right."[195] While such suggestions undoubtedly resonate quite favorably with social élites increasingly desirous of decontextualized "I'm okay/you're okay" historical constructions,[196] and a mainstream saturated with cinematic dramatizations of how the disempowered poor tend to victimize the rich and powerful, they plainly beg more than a few significant points.

Foremost in this regard is the fact that if Wood/Lenihan/Nachbar-style prescriptions were to be applied equally to all sets of historical relations, it would be "necessary" that the Holocaust, for example, be depicted in such a way as to show that nobody was right, nobody wrong. The SS, as much as the inmates at Auschwitz, would be as cast victims; the Jews and Gypsies as much aggressors as the SS.[197] Having told "the Jewish side of the story" for so long, Hollywood would "need" at last to "balance" its record by representing "the nazi side."[198] In such an endeavor, filmmakers could reply in the "mythic terms" advanced by Julius Streicher and others of Germany's more noteworthy antisemitic publicists as plot devices.[199]

Then, perhaps, as Navajo activist John Redhouse once recommended, instead of being restricted merely to playing "Cowboys and Indians," American children could with as much gusto play "Nazis and Jews."[200] In addition to dressing their third graders up in greasepaint and turkey feathers on "Indian Day" each "Thanksgiving," maybe the country's public school teachers could also observe "Jewish Day" on Yom Kippur each year by adorning their more Nordic-looking pupils in construction paper yarmulkes and fake beards; an annual "Himmler Day" could be celebrated along with "Columbus Day"; professional athletics could franchise "Rabbis" and "Kikes" sports teams to compliment the already existing "Chiefs," "Braves," and "Redskins"; the automotive industry could add models like the "Yid," the "Hebe," and the "Jew" to the "Cherokees," "Cheyennes," and "Apaches" rolling with such regularity off its assembly lines.[201]

Contra Nachbar and his colleagues, it should "be required of filmmakers, if they expect their films [not to be] classed as a form of racist propaganda, to be truthful not only to the period and the place [they depict] but to the people as well."[202] Nothing of the least positive value "will become possible until screenwriters and filmmakers generally are willing to present audiences with historical reconstructions, until there is a legitimate historical reality informing both the structure and the characters in a western film."[203]

"If Indians' are not to be considered as victims of colonial aggression," Jimmie Durham once queried, "how are we to be considered" at all?[204] And since, as Sartre insisted, the meaning of colonial aggression can only be fully understood as genocide,[205] American Indians must be viewed as being on the receiving end of both. There are to be sure clearcut dimensions of right and wrong in any realistic appraisal of both historical and topical circumstance, dimensions which are not ultimately reducible to the superficialities of good guys and bad.

As more than one native analyst has commented in this connection, "you can look at somebody like Custer as an evil person, but the fact [is] that it was a deliberate policy... these things were [and remain] institutional."[206] As Indians have heretofore been portrayed by Hollywood, and as we would continue to be portrayed in Nachbar's "new synthesis," we serve as the simulacrum by which Euroamerica has been best able to hide the truth of itself *from* itself in order to continue to pretend that it can do what it does in "all good conscience."[207]

THE SONG REMAINS THE SAME

One of the very few genuinely poignant and meaningful Hollywood movies ever made about modern Indian life is *Geronimo Jones* (1970), the story of an Indian youngster agonizing over whether to keep an old Indian medal, his only inheritance from his grandfather, or to trade it for a new TV. Decision made, he lugs the tube home, gathers his family and turns it on. The first image appearing on the screen is that of a savage "redskin" in an old Hollywood western.[208]

There have been a few other such efforts, as with the superbly well-intentioned *Journey Through Rosebud* (1972) and the Canadian *Fish Hawk* (1980), but, overwhelmingly, nonindian filmmakers have opted to pursue the formula advanced in *Indian in the Cupboard* (1995), a children's movie, implying that to be an Indian man even in the contemporary era is still "naturally" to be a warrior. This is the case, obviously, with the fictional native characters, invariably dubbed "Chief," routinely included in the World War II All-American platoons of films like *Battle Cry* (1955) and *Never So Few* (1959), and with Tony Curtis's supposedly more factual Ira Hayes in *The Outsider.*[209] Figuratively, the rule might also be applied to Burt Lancaster's *Jim Thorpe* and Jack Palance's boxer in *Requiem for a Heavyweight* (1962).

Most assuredly, it finds another resonance in the mixed-blood former Green Beret karate expert turned ersatz native traditionalist/friend of flower power central to Tom Laughlin's moronic but initially very popular series of countercultural ditties: *Billy Jack* (1971), *The Trial of Billy Jack* (1974), and *Billy Jack Goes to Washington* (1977).[210] The same can be said of the Indians cast more recently as members of élite military units, Sonny Landham's "Billy" in *Predator* being a case in point. Wes Studi's character in *Deep Rising,* although technically a civilian, fits very much the same mold. Probably the clearest, and most asinine, example of such thematics will be found in director Franc Roddams' *War Party* (1989), in which three young Blackfeet get themselves killed in the best John Ford manner while trying to "become" their nineteenth-century ancestors.[211]

Other nonindian-made pictures have gone in the already discussed direction embodied in 1990s releases like *Dances With Wolves, Last of the Mohicans, Geronimo,* and TV's *Dr. Quinn.* These include several somewhat more sensitive and marginally more accurate—but aesthetically very flimsy—Turner Network Television productions like *Son of the Morning Star* (1991), *The Broken Chain* (1993), *Lakota Woman* (1994), and *Crazy Horse* (1996),[212] as well as such quincentennial epics as *Christopher Columbus—TheDiscovery and 1492: The Conquest of Paradise* (both 1992).[213]

Television did much better than most big screen filmmakers with its *Northern Exposure* series (1990–97), the ensemble cast of which included two native actors, Elaine Miles and Darren E.Burrows, who portrayed contemporary indigenous Alaskans as fully dimensional human beings. Nonetheless, the show was a disaster in terms of its cultural characterizations.

> Despite the variances among real Alaskan Natives, *Northern Exposure* dilutes native identity to one generic form. Marilyn [Miles] comes simply from "Marilyns tribe," and Ed [Burrows] comes from "Ed's tribe," which for four years remained anonymous. Although refusing to name the cultural base for Cicely [the town in

> which it is set], *Northern Exposure* has nevertheless progressively appropriated a Tlingit culture. Since the premier episode, the town has featured totem poles, which are found only among the Tlingits and the Haidas, and various artwork and artifacts in the Tlingit black, form-line style. However…all geographic references since the premier have put Cicely north of Anchorage…in the Alaskan interior, home primarily to Athabascans in real life… By the 1994–1995 season, Cicely had shifted west and seemed very close to being in an Inupiat Eskimo area. Creating a Tlingit identity for an Alaska interior village is akin to fabricating a Canadian town in Mexico or identifying New Yorkers as the majority population of Louisiana: It is ridiculous.[214]

Hence, while it can be said that Geronimo Jones might do somewhat better at the beginning of the new millennium than he did during the early 1970s, tuning his new TV to *Northern Exposure* or its superior Canadian counterpart, *North of 60,* rather than watching endless reruns of *The Searchers* and *The Stalking Moon,* the improvement is hardly sufficient to warrant the metaphorical exchange of his heritage for access to popular culture any such swap implies.

FROM REEL TO REAL

Probably the only white-constructed cinema to date which represents a genuine break with convention in its handling of Indian themes has been that of such offbeat writer/directors as Sam Shepard, whose independently produced *Silent Tongue* (1994) is at points too surreal to allow coherent analysis. Somewhat better was Frank Perry's *Rancho Deluxe* (1975), which features Sam Waterston as a young mixed-blood prone to parodying Hollywood stereotypes with sardonic suggestions that he and his cattle rustler partner go out to "rape and pillage" during moments of boredom. Television has also had its avant-garde moments in this connection during the 1980s, each time Michael Horse put in an appearance as the enigmatic Deputy Hawk in David Lynch's eccentric series, *Twin Peaks.*[215]

The most promising efforts have come from Canada, as with Richard Bugajski's *Clearcut* (1991), a deliberately ambiguous tale tracing the desublimation of the guilt-ridden understandings of a white liberal lawyer presuming to help his native clients obtain a modicum of justice in modem Euroamerican society.[216] Best of all is undoubtedly Jim Jarmusch's *Dead Man* (1997), featuring Gary Farmer and Johnny Depp in a well-crafted and accessibly surrealistic black and white travelogue across late-nineteenth-century North America, replete with biting literary metaphors and analogies to contemporary circumstance.[217]

While such examples demonstrate that at least some Euroamericans are capable of producing worthwhile films on the theme of Indian/white relations, a greater potential would seem to reside in a still embryonic native filmmaking scene, pioneered by actors like Will Sampson and Chief Dan George, which has been slowly gathering steam since 1970. Although the truly accomplished acting of men like Graham Greene and Gary Farmer, and to a somewhat lesser extent women like Tantoo Cardinal, Sheila Tsoosie, and Irene Bedard, remains definitive of the milieu, indigenous documentarists, scriptwriters, producers, and directors have recently asserted an increasing presence.[218]

Evidence of this came as early as 1969 with Duke Redbird's *Charley Squash Goes to Town,* a breakthrough followed by George Burdeau's *Buffalo, Blood, Salmon and Roots* (1976). In 1982, Creek director Bob Hicks came out with *Return of the Country,* a film produced through the American Film Institute in Los Angeles which hoists Hollywood on its own petard by satirizing "almost every cliché of the Indian in film, from the over-heated love sequence by wig-bedecked white actors to the elaborate musical dance sequences and the late-night talk-show promotion."[219]

> A brilliant, ironic perspective dominates the sequences, done as if in a dream. *Return of the Country* turns the tables, with an Indian President of the United States and the formation of a Bureau of Caucasian Affairs, which is instructed to enforce policies to help little Anglo boys and girls into the mainstream of Indian culture. The performances of Native American actors offset the old Hollywood stereotype of emotionless players incapable of deep, varied, and mature performances. Actor Woodrow Haney, a Seminole-Creek musician and tribal elder, infuses his role as a Native American leader with both humanity and dignity.[220]

Hicks's comedy followed close behind a five-part series put together by Choctaw director Phil Lucas for Seattle television station KCTS/9 in 1980 and covering much of the same ground in documentary fashion. Entitled *Images of Indians* and narrated by Will Sampson, the series' segments include "The Great Movie Massacre," "Heathen Indians and the Hollywood Gospel," "How Hollywood Wins the West," "The Movie Reel Indians," and "War Paint and Wigs." To call it a devastating indictment is to substantially understate the case.[221]

Another such short film, Chippewa novelist/postmodern critic-writer Gerald Vizenor's *Harold of Orange* (1984), with Charly Hill cast in the lead role, gores the ox of the federal funding agencies upon which Indians have been rendered dependent. Still another, Chris Spotted Elk's *Do Indians Shave?* (1974), "uses the man-on-the-street-interview technique to probe the depth of stereotypes about Native Americans; of what one reviewer called the 'potpourri of inane myths, gross inaccuracies, and inadvertent slander...used to justify genocide, and the mindless indifference... that makes possible the continuing oppression of Indian people.'"[222]

More serious still was Spotted Elk's *The Great Spirit in the Hole* (1983), a compelling look at "the efficacy of Native American religious practices in rebuilding the lives of a group of Indian [prison] inmates. This is a significant film that shows how cinema can be used as a powerful tool for displacing negative stereotypes. A number of courts and prison boards have been persuaded by this film to allow religious...freedom to Native [prisoners] in using their traditional sweatlodges."[223] Other fine work has been done by individuals like George Horse Capture *(I'd Rather Be Powwowing,* 1981); Arlene Bowman (*Navajo Talking Picture,* 1986) and Victor Massayesva, Jr. *(Hopiit,* 1982; *Itam Hakim, Hopiit,* 1985; *Hopi Ritual Clowns,* 1988; and others), as well as collectively: the Creek Nation's *Green Corn Festival* (1982), for example, and the American Indian Theater Company's *Black Elk Speaks* (1984).[224]

Strong as some of these films are, however, they are of the sort shown mainly at indigenous confabs like Oklahoma City's Red Earth Festival, in film and native studies courses, and occasionally on the Discovery Channel or PBS. They thus have little or no possibility of attracting and influencing a mass audience. To do that, it is necessary for native filmmakers to penetrate the cost-intensive venue of commercial feature films, a realm from which a combination of Hollywood's history of anti-Indian bias and their own community's endemic poverty have always served to exclude them.

This has been understood all along, of course, and attempts have been made to address the issue. In 1972, for instance, Kiowa author N.Scott Momaday managed to organize the filming of his Pulitzer Prize-winning novel, *A House Made of Dawn,* casting Harold Littlebird as the lead. Completed on a veritable shoestring budget, the film "captured a real sense of Indianness. Unfortunately, it did not receive the support and promotion necessary to reach the audiences that the quality of production warranted."[225] The same could be said for Will Sampson's independently produced *Pieces of Dreams* (1970) and others.

It was not until 1996 that Indians finally got on the commercial feature map, albeit through the side door, when the Home Box Office (HBO) cable channel came out with *Grand Avenue,* a beautifully constructed picture, the screenplay for which was adapted by Pomo/Miwok writer/UCLA professor Greg Sarris from a volume of his own short stories bearing the same title.[226] Coproduced by Sarris along with Paul Aaron of the Sundance Institute—Robert Redford served as executive producer—*Grand Avenue* featured uniformly excellent performances by native actors like Sheila Tsoosie and Irene Bedard, received the highest viewer ratings of any HBO program for the season, and was described in the *New York Times* as "a giant step toward offering a gritty and unsparing depiction of urban Indian life."[227]

In 1998, this auspicious beginning was followed by Chris Eyre's *Smoke Signals,* released by Miramax, the first major motion picture since Edwin Carewe's *Ramona* (1928) to be directed by an American Indian.[228] Eyre, an Arapaho, coproduced the film with Spokane author Sherman Alexie, who developed the screenplay from the short stories contained in his *The Lone Ranger and Tonto Fistfight in Heaven.*[229] Al though hardly as challenging as *Grand Avenue, Smoke Signals* is a nonetheless wellcrafted film, highlighted by the solid lead acting of Adam Beach and Evan Adams, both slotted in such roles for the first time, as well as fine support work by Tantoo Cardinal, Irene Bedard, and Gary Farmer.

At present, *Smoke Signals* appears to be as well received as *Grand Avenue,* perhaps better, a matter heartening the prospect of other such productions in the future. This is all the more true in that these movies' success has attracted the attention of the Mashantucket Pequots, a small but suddenly very wealthy people in Connecticut—their revenues derive from a casino operation established during the mid-1980s—who have expressed interest in underwriting big screen ventures by other native filmmakers.[230] The degree of indigenous autonomy embodied in such a proposition tends to speak for itself.

Given these current developments, it may be that things may yet be turned around, that, to borrow a phrase from African American critic bell hooks, people like Chris Eyre and Greg Sarris can still transform Indians from "reel to real" in the popular imagination.[231] It's true that the thousands of films already devoted to creating the opposite impression constitute a tremendous barrier to overcome, but maybe, just maybe, like Chief Broom in *Cuckoo's Nest,* the sleeping giant of Native North America can still reawaken, crushing Hollywood's time-honored fantasies of the master race beneath the heel of a different future. But, as they say in tinseltown, that's another story….