

**Authenticity in Indigenous Cinema:  
Colonial Inscriptions and Native Revisions**

by

Jesse Lapin

The University of Florida

Department of English

November 2013

# Table of Contents

	Introduction	1
<b>1</b>	Mythic Images: The American West and the Indian	14
<b>2</b>	Ethnographic Fantasies and Sympathetic Stirrings	29
<b>3</b>	Re-envisioning Indigenous Authenticity	41
	Conclusion	63
	Filmography	67
	Works Cited	69

## INTRODUCTION

Indigenous and non-indigenous filmmakers have long struggled to reinscribe dominant cultures' imagery and narrative representations of indigenous people on film with more humane depictions that reflect the reality of indigenous history and contemporary life. Given that indigenous populations so often suffer from economic marginalization, poverty, lack of access to social services, and discrimination, acquiring the skills and resources necessary for film production has posed a significant challenge for indigenous filmmakers, to say nothing of the creative and ethical challenges inherent in historically and culturally revisionist filmmaking. These difficulties notwithstanding, indigenous filmmakers around the world have produced works that seriously challenge dominant conceptions of indigeneity and the popular imagination's construction of indigenous history and peoples. Non-indigenous filmmakers sympathetic to the project of respectful and humane representation have also attempted to counter the reductive inscription of indigeneity in film. The works of these filmmakers strive to wrest claims of authenticity concerning representations of the indigenous away from the commercial mode of filmmaking. Dominant cultures have traditionally turned to the indigenous as a kind of timeless wellspring of authenticity, so indigenous filmmakers and their allies have a particular stake in reclaiming and reinscribing authenticity to express their own experiences and idioms.

Mainstream cinema in the United States invokes the indigenous in a variety of ways. No single stereotype or image consistently sums up the history of representation. In the Western genre, the indigenous often figure as "savage Indians" who threaten westward expansion and white settlement. This threat is epitomized in the possibility of

miscegenation, a sexual invasion and corruption of whiteness framed as a fate worse than death.<sup>1</sup> The Western genre also features the indigenous as comic relief, or as a more benign threat to westward expansion as passive obstacles to progress, or as the allegedly sympathetic, but often no less simplistic and racialized, hopeless and pitiful victim destined for death.

Though varied in its representations, the Western always narrowly frames the indigenous as a relic of the past pathologically in conflict with modernity symbolized by white expansion and industrial advancement. John O'Connor points out that in the "cycles of Indian pictures...at times a romanticized, even glorified, image could coexist with the vicious one" (28). Conflicting but equally reductive and pathological representations of the indigenous predate the cinema. Throughout the historical record of contact with indigenous peoples, European observers produced a pattern of diverse, often contradictory representation. In the early exploration and settlement of Canada, "views [of the indigenous] were ambivalent to say the least, ranging from the 'noble savage' of lawyer-historian Marc Lescarbot (ca. 1570-1642) to the 'brutish, wild and stupid' people portrayed by the Récollet, Louis Hennepin (1626-1705)" (Dickason 123). By the late nineteenth century, various and contradictory concepts of the indigenous were accepted as common knowledge and codified in historical texts. An 1886 textbook entitled *American History for Schools* expresses the schizophrenic view of the indigenous that pervades cinematic representations:

---

<sup>1</sup> In film culture, race-obsessed D.W. Griffith is most responsible for popularizing miscegenation as a "fate worse than death." The concept appears in his early Indian films, but *The Birth of a Nation* (1915) features its most notorious and influential narrative usage. John Ford echoes Griffith's fear of race-mixing in his films, notably *Stagecoach* (1939) and *The Searchers* (1956).

They [the natives] were mostly grave and taciturn, hospitable, generous, brave, and possessed of wonderful self-control in both bearing pain and repressing all show of joy or sorrow. On the other hand, they were often deceitful and treacherous,—always cunning and suspicious, cruel, improvident, and indisposed to labor except in war and the chase. They never forgot either a kindness or an injury. They were given to few words, but their language was full of eloquence. Their sight and hearing were remarkably acute. Nothing escaped their observation, and they were singularly sagacious in drawing conclusions from signs which Europeans would not notice at all. For the hunting-grounds and graves of their ancestors they cherished a patriotic attachment. (Quackenbos 19)

In cinematic representations of the indigenous and their antecedents, the colonial culture projects on the indigenous whatever attributes and behaviors that serve the racial supremacist fantasy and expansionist agenda, leading to necessarily amorphous and incoherent characterizations of the indigenous.

Beyond the Western, ethnographic films, most prominent among them *Nanook of the North* (1922), similarly enclose the indigenous in a temporal-historical episteme, rendering the indigenous as artifacts of human simplicity and authenticity. In the ethnographic film, documenting the indigenous offers a window into the pre-modern that was inevitably swept away by progress. This construction is essentially romantic and rarely concerned with the veracity of what appears on-screen. The ethnographic film often takes for granted that the indigenous people appearing on film are representative of the typical indigenous lifestyle at the time of filming and that this lifestyle represents a continuation of ancient customs and behaviors.

Many films in the later twentieth century attempted to portray a more positive image of the indigenous, representing Native Americans as deeply spiritual beings with an unbreakable connection to the natural world. Films, such as *Dances with Wolves* (1990), *Pocahontas* (1995), and even *Avatar* (2009), fit into this category as visions of the indigenous symptomatic of what Robert Baird calls the “New Age Indian wannabe syndrome” (167). *Avatar* is not explicitly about Native Americans, but the humanoid alien people in the film bear a remarkable resemblance to the North American indigenous of the cultural imaginary. The invocation of Native American figures is central to the film’s clumsy anti-colonial allegory. These New Age indigenous films abandon the conventional territory of the Western without challenging the fundamental cultural assumptions that characterize the genre. No longer concerned with justifying colonial settlement and expansion against the backdrop of the mythic West, they lament the destruction of indigenous peoples and cultures but fail to supplant or challenge white supremacy or the narrative centrality of the white hero.

In films, such as *The Silent Enemy* (1930) *49<sup>th</sup> Parallel* (1941), and *Atanarjuat: The Fast Runner* (2001), filmmakers of both indigenous and non-indigenous backgrounds have countered popular representations of the indigenous in several ways: 1) the characterization of indigenous people as individuals whose appearance, customs, and actions are not a priori and pathologically determined by their ethnicity; 2) narratives that reclaim authentic history via either pre-contact settings and plotlines devoid of the explicit colonial presence or contemporary settings featuring characters of indigenous descent who challenge the status of the indigenous as anthropological artifacts trapped in the past; 3) unconventional narrative structures and technical choices that challenge the

dominant mode of filmmaking, thereby rejecting the form and context of popular representation. These filmmakers seek to re-envision the history and meaning of indigenous life through cinema. Yet, commercial film culture has not yet accepted or embraced their revisions in full.

This honors thesis originates in an effort to take stock of the different forms of cinematic representation of indigenous peoples in North America. I focus on the most influential examples of the dominant culture's inscription of the indigenous in cinema, before shifting the focus to a group of films ranging from the highly obscure to the widely acclaimed that counter this inscription. Representations of the aboriginal peoples of Australia, the indigenous of South and Central America, and indigenous peoples scattered through hundreds of locales throughout the world merit analysis, but the scope of my inquiry is necessarily limited by space. Moreover, the cinema of North America is especially fertile ground for examining representations of the indigenous.

U.S. and Canadian cinemas invite analysis for several reasons. First, the quantity of production is key. This is truer for the U.S., whose prolific studio system produced an abundance of indigenous representations on film, mostly in the genre of the Western, in the first half-century of cinema. Thomas Schatz describes the Hollywood studio era as, "a period when various social, industrial, technological, economic, and aesthetic forces struck a delicate balance...through four decades to provide a consistent system of production and consumption, a set of formalized creative practices and constraints, and thus a body of work with a uniform style" (8). The productivity and stylistic consistency of this era propelled the "Hollywood Indian" into its status as the archetypal form of indigenous representation, as a kind of inscriptive default. We still understand

representations of the indigenous across the globe as flowing with or against the Hollywood stream of representation. This is especially true when we consider indigenous filmmakers and their sympathetic peers in the dominant culture.

Secondly, the U.S. and Canadian cinemas have a special investment in the indigenous as a source of filmic authenticity. Native American performances were among the first filmed images.<sup>2</sup> The indigenous were literally present at the birth of cinema, and indigenous representations abounded throughout the silent era.<sup>3</sup> The indigenous are also essential to the genesis of the documentary form, as many credit *Nanook of the North* (1922), an ethnographic film about an Inuit family in Canada, as the first true documentary. No cinematic form or genre is more explicitly invested in authenticity than the documentary. The dominant culture's investment in indigeneity as a currency of authenticity uniquely positions indigenous filmmakers and their sympathizers in the United States and Canada to challenge and revise indigenous representations through a discourse of authenticity.

Before proceeding to a discussion and analysis of individual films, the topic requires a review and definition of a number of key terms that will recur frequently. First, any discussion of the indigenous necessitates a working definition of the term. Dispute and controversy surround questions of who is indigenous. Indeed, official membership in

---

<sup>2</sup> Representations of the indigenous first appeared in short "actualities," documentary-like shorts situated in the "cinema of attraction." See Tom Gunning's work on the subject for greater detail on the "cinema of attraction."

<sup>3</sup> Indigenous representations were quickly incorporated into narrative films. These narrative films were virulently racist for the most part, featuring white actors performing in redface. The early American masters of cinema, D.W. Griffith and Cecil B. DeMille, directed dozens of such films.



and acceptance by an indigenous community or tribe depends upon much more than mere self-identification and often involves layers of bureaucracy and arbitration. The United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues offers a broad definition of indigenous peoples: “the descendants...of those who inhabited a country or a geographical region at the time when people of different cultures or ethnic origins arrived. The new arrivals later became dominant through conquest, occupation, settlement or other means” (“Indigenous Peoples, Indigenous Voices” 1). Henceforward, my use of the term “indigenous” should be understood in the context of the UN Forum’s definition.

Attempting to define authenticity engenders even greater confusion and ambiguity, but we can define some basic assumptions. In standard usage, authenticity denotes truth, reality, originality, conformity to factual consensus, and all such related concepts. Authenticity describes the condition of adherence to existential truth, of the symbol’s fidelity to the reality it purports to represent. This understanding naturally necessitates locating the parameters of true existence. Sigmund Freud provides a psychological foundation for defining authenticity. Freud located the truth of existence in his metaphorical contest between Eros and Thanatos, where the drive for life and the preservation of the species conflicts with the drive for destruction and death. The individual identity is the product of constant conflict and mediation between these two forces. In his critique of existentialist jargon, Theodor Adorno locates authenticity in the confrontation of personal mortality: “When, by anticipation, one becomes free for one's own death, one is liberated from one's lostness in those possibilities which may accidentally thrust themselves upon one; and one is liberated in such a way that for the first time one can authentically understand and choose among the factual possibilities

lying ahead of that possibility which is not to be outstripped” (*Jargon* 159). The major world religions’ fixation on death and the afterlife—exemplified by Abrahamic and Dharmic theologies that exhort the faithful to live their lives in preparation for death and for an existence beyond their physical/temporal presence on Earth—provides further evidence supporting the notion that authenticity is best understood as an obsession with mortality. Moreover, societies tend to fetishize the past as a mythic history either glorious or shameful/savage as befitting present purposes and ideologies. The past is authentic because it is the final product of the passage of time, and it is the unavoidable and foregone death of all the past’s participants that lends weight and meaning to the passage of time. Film documents time and is always, by the nature of the medium, a record of the past, even if the film in question is a narrative piece set in the present or future.

Photography and its kinetic descendant, film, have a connection to representational authenticity unrivaled by the other fine arts and modes of representational production. “Photography and cinema...are discoveries that satisfy, once and for all and in its very essence, our obsession with realism,” (161) writes André Bazin, arguing that previous to the invention of the photographic process, practitioners of other art forms, particularly painting, were obsessed with realism. Photography reproduces reality through a chemical process that no artist, despite their skill or devotion, could match in its objectivity.<sup>4</sup> Therefore, photography’s invention and ascendance liberated the non-photographic arts from their obsession with realism, allowing them to represent and

---

<sup>4</sup> Bazin considers objectivity key here, and not verisimilitude or quality. The photochemical process excises the subjective human element of image reproduction inherent in painting or sculpture. Bazin argues photographic technology actually lags behind painting in truthfully representing reality, particularly in consideration of color, but the process is more important than the quality of the result.

interpret the world around them in new and exciting ways. A photograph is a precise documentation of an instant in time and space. Film is a less precise documentation of the motion and alteration of space through time.

Russian director Andrei Tarkovsky describes filmmaking as “sculpting in time,” locating cinema’s essential nature in the rhythm of the appearance of images in the frame, rather than in the content of the images themselves (119). The imprinted temporality of cinema distinguishes it from the still image. Film is less precise than photography due to its increased elemental complexity and the editing process, which alters the spectator’s understanding of what appears on screen. Nevertheless, both photography and film capture a kind of visual reality and preserve it. The aesthetic immortality of the photographic image fulfills the impulse to maintain the self beyond physical death.<sup>5</sup> Bazin suggests, “[i]f the plastic arts were put under psychoanalysis, the practice of embalming the dead might turn out to be a fundamental factor in their creation. The process might reveal that at the origin of painting and sculpture there lies a mummy complex” (159). The arts attempt to preserve the living beyond death through accurate representation. Photography and film achieve objective representation, satisfying the requirements for realism where other media necessarily fall short, earning these new forms an innate authenticity.

Despite, or perhaps because of, film’s natural authenticity, various filmmakers and film movements throughout history have attempted to craft styles that are supposedly

---

<sup>5</sup> This is aesthetic fulfillment of the desire for immortality, not spiritual or emotional. I do not mean to suggest that film provides spiritual/emotional satisfaction tantamount to the religious experience. Film operates on a more superficial level, though certain exceptions of transcendence may be observed in the highest achievements of the art.

more authentic and realistic compared to the normative style of the cinema that they are challenging. In the 1920s, Dziga Vertov and other Soviet filmmakers introduced a concept of cinema called kino-pravda, literally “film-truth,” wherein the filmmaker documented scenes of everyday life involving non-actors going about their business, sometimes without the knowledge that they were being filmed. In films, such as *Man with a Movie Camera* (1929), Vertov experimented with form, breaking with the continuous editing technique and traditional narrative form of Hollywood and pre-revolutionary Russian cinema in favor of a non-linear montage technique. Kino-pravda influenced many film movements around the world in the decades after its formulation. These movements, including cinéma vérité in France, Direct Cinema in the United States, and Italian Neorealism, invested in a stylistic concept of authenticity expressed through the use of several techniques: black and white cinematography often shot with hand-held cameras, location shooting and scorn for the artifice of the studio, the use of non-professional actors, and a thematic focus on “real” people, often working class subjects or ethnographic subjects.

Other film movements and directors have constructed aesthetics of authenticity unrelated to or in direct contrast to the concepts and techniques of kino-pravda and its descendants. New German Cinema is one of many examples of such movements. Within this movement, Rainer Werner Fassbinder embraced a realism derived from Brecht’s anti-representational estrangement effect, while Werner Herzog explicitly rejected the aesthetic and ethical confines of cinéma vérité in favor of his own version of cinematic realism, which he termed “ecstatic truth.” Herzog’s own ideas about authenticity are

frequently expressed through his use and invocation of indigenous peoples and cultures in his films.

When we understand authenticity as a cult of death—in the context of the Western paradigm anyway—and contextualize the photographic process as the mechanical and chemical preservation of the past, then a dominant culture’s persistent invocation of the indigenous as authentic seems natural and rational. The indigenous typically figure as part of the mythic past, as symbols of an older era wiped out by the inevitable march of progress and civilization. That the indigenous in most of the world were decimated by disease, starvation, war, dispossession, and various means of marginalization contributes to their status as symbols of death and suffering—a kind of permanent state of death and suffering as it is located in the past—and by extension authenticity. The most basic claim or linkage of the indigenous to authenticity resides in the definition of indigeneity, which signifies original inhabitation of a particular geographical region. The indigenous are always understood as “original people,” the ones with a natural historical right to their territory, though that has rarely factored into settlements of legal factual ownership. The indigenous are perceived as the authentic inhabitants of their ancestral territory, regardless of the current legal landowners. Few people among the dominant culture in settler colonial societies will deny the dispossession of the indigenous, even while hesitating to support reparations or any form of remuneration for that dispossession. It is a general truism that cultures tend to derive authenticity from historical originality. Nativist movements are particularly concerned with defining who is part of the “real” citizenry at the exclusion of the Other, the non-real non-citizens.

Who is real is dependent upon claims of historical origin, whether accurate or not. Members of European-American nativist movements cite their earlier date of immigration as justification for their national authenticity in contrast to people who arrived in more recent waves of immigration. Race, class, and religious affiliation complicate notions of citizenship, belonging, and nation, but nativist rhetoric in general is more explicitly concerned with a chronology of migration that ignores, obviates, or otherwise downplays the presence of an indigenous population. Indigenous nativist movements, such as the pan-indigenous Ghost Dance movement, are also fixated on an authenticity derived from a migratory timeline that validates the members as the original and rightful territorial claimants. Such movements often encompass a spiritual and racial component as well. Even the alternative names for various groups of indigenous, such as the First Nations people of Canada, reflect this notion of authenticity through a temporal-geographic originality.

Representations of the indigenous—whether historical, literary, visual, or political—may be traced back through the centuries to the earliest records of contact. In his journal from his 1492 voyage, Columbus writes, “The natives are an inoffensive people...a simple race, and with delicate bodies...I could conquer the whole of them with fifty men, and govern them as I pleased” (“Christopher Columbus: Extracts from Journal” n. pag.). Columbus also remarks: the indigenous “would be good servants and I am of the opinion that they would very readily become Christians, as they appear to have no religion.” Columbus initiated the view of the indigenous in the Americas as primitive, simple-minded, technologically and intellectually inferior heathens ripe for conquest, conversion, and subjugation. They could be useful as slave labor. Otherwise, they should

be cast aside as impediments to progress and enrichment, having no legal claim to the land they are occupying and its vast resources. Secondary accounts, interpretations, and representations of the indigenous that confirmed these stereotypes abounded over time.

Supposedly sympathetic representations of the indigenous have also appeared throughout history, but they are equally problematic in their generalizations and reductions, denying to the indigenous the interiority and individuality requisite for humanization. Some of the most famous and influential among these include: William Shakespeare's construction of the colonized and subjugated savage, Caliban, in *The Tempest* (1610-1611), John Dryden's concept of the "noble savage" articulated in *The Conquest of Granada* (1672), Benjamin West's idealized indigenous warrior in his painting *The Death of General Wolfe* (1770), and Alexander Pope's "poor Indian" in his *Essay on Man* (1734): "Lo, the poor Indian! whose untutor'd mind/ Sees God in clouds, or hears him in the wind." In contrast, in his 1880-82 *Ethnographical Notebooks*, Karl Marx extolled the virtues of the indigenous. In his research on the tribes of the Iroquois Confederacy, Marx describes what he perceives as a pre-modern and thriving proto-socialist society. His findings lead him to the conclusion that "primitive communities had *incomparably greater vitality* than the Semitic, Greek, Roman and *a fortiori* the modern capitalist societies" (qtd. in Sayer 13). Imperialists, artists, poets, intellectuals, and politicians have all appropriated indigenous authenticity for their own various ideological purposes. One could continue to trace the roots of indigenous representation in cinema to other historical antecedents, but given that this essay is concerned narrowly with cinematic representation, the focus must turn now to the nineteenth through twenty-first centuries.

## CHAPTER 1—MYTHIC IMAGES: THE AMERICAN WEST AND THE INDIAN

Indigenous representation was linked to authenticity at the birth of cinema. The first films of indigenous peoples were short pieces (well under a minute) that capture supposedly authentic tribal dances. Produced by Thomas Edison in his Black Maria studio, these 1894 demonstrations of the new medium feature Native American performers from Buffalo Bill's Wild West show. The actors include adults and children dressed in what is assumed to be traditional tribal garb engaged in a performance of indigenous authenticity. From the beginning, indigenous actors were required to perform their indigeneity regardless of the performance's correspondence to their lived experiences and history. The representation of the indigenous in the United States soon shifted away from this early iteration—the indigenous as subject of non-narrative curiosities/spectacles—to the indigenous as discursive fixtures of American genre films.

D.W. Griffith's short films about the indigenous codify the "Indian" as a weak and inferior being fated for destruction at the hands of the white race. In Griffith's work, the indigenous are passive victims who exist at the mercy of the dominant race and are subject to their oppressors' caprice. Griffith's *Ramona: A Story of the White Man's Injustice to the Indian* (1910) is among the earliest narrative films featuring the indigenous as the main characters and the subject, although Griffith himself directed a number of short films featuring the indigenous in 1908 and 1909, including *The Red Man and the Child*, *The Red Man's View*, and *The Red Girl*. A seventeen-minute drama, *Ramona* tells the story of an orphaned girl of mixed race, Scottish and Native American, who endures communal scorn and eventually tragedy, partially because of her indigenous heritage, but mostly as a consequence of her love for an indigenous man.



Mary Pickford plays Ramona and Henry B. Walthall plays her Indian lover, Alessandro. Walthall would go on to star in Griffith's *The Birth of a Nation* five years later as Colonel Ben Cameron, the hero of the film, who founds the Ku Klux Klan. *Ramona* is based on the popular novel of the same name by Helen Hunt Jackson. Jackson was a strong critic of U.S. policy towards the indigenous population, penning *A Century of Dishonor* in 1881, a nonfiction tract that excoriates the U.S. government and white settlers for their ill treatment of the natives. Three years later, Jackson wrote *Ramona* hoping to arouse greater public sentiment and support for the cause of the Indians. Much of the novel's content is abbreviated and simplified in the film. The novel is over three-hundred pages long, so the film presents a hurried synopsis of the narrative. On its surface, Griffith's *Ramona* seems to present a sympathetic portrait of the indigenous, but the work is a confused and highly reductive text that promotes many of the worst stereotypes and racial fears of the dominant culture in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century United States.

Ramona is the adopted daughter of the wealthy Moreno family in Southern California. Resisting the advances of the rich Felipe, Ramona falls in love with Alessandro, a poor Indian who works around the hacienda. Ramona's adoptive mother confronts her and warns her to stay away from Alessandro. She informs Ramona of her indigenous blood. This knowledge seems to drive Ramona closer to Alessandro. Griffith's plotting is vague here, but perhaps in retribution for Alessandro enticing Ramona and potentially committing miscegenation (even though Ramona is partially indigenous), white men destroy his village, and the young lovers are forced to flee. Ramona's racial representation is somewhat amorphous. She is presented to the audience

as white at first, and there is nothing to indicate otherwise in her appearance, class, beliefs, associations, behavior, etc. Her adoptive mother then informs her—and the audience—that she is indigenous. As soon as she gains this knowledge, she seems spurred to “rejoin” her people, as symbolized by Alessandro, even though she has never considered the indigenous her people and has always occupied a higher social and racial caste in relation to them. Film scholar Chon Noriega argues:

The Mexican-cum-Indian must be made ‘almost the same’ through miscegenation and assimilation in order to engage the reader’s identification, then allowed to ‘return’ to her true ‘nature’ in a sort of leap of faith that is all-too-similar to racial masquerade—her newfound Indian-ness is *assumed*, despite the racial, linguistic, cultural, and class differences between Ramona and the other Indians she encounters (209).

The film cuts to some time later, clearly many months in the future as Ramona and Alessandro have had a baby. They are living in a small house. They are soon forced to abandon their home for a pittance by white men. The couple is homeless and wandering. They are unable to provide adequate care to their newborn child, and the baby dies. Distraught after burying his child, Alessandro lunges at a white man who confronts him for loitering on his property. The man pulls his pistol and shoots Alessandro, murdering him. Though too late to save Alessandro, Felipe soon appears on horseback and comforts the grieving Ramona. After her “indigenous misadventure,” it seems Ramona will return to white society.

The subtitle of the film, *A Story of the White Man’s Injustice to the Indian*, suggests that *Ramona* is a progressive revision of the history of westward expansion, but

accepting the subtitle at face value would be a superficial and incorrect reading of the film. *Ramona*'s historical revision constructs a binary of the good Indian versus the evil white man, as opposed to the civilized white man versus the savage Indian, but this puerile role reversal is in line with Griffith's trademark essentialist racialization. The subtitle is direct and simplistic, and unsurprisingly the film's representation of indigenous people, all of whom are played by white actors, suffers from gross oversimplification. The "Indian," Alessandro, is kind and peaceful. He serves white people until he disobeys their wishes, at which point he and his people suffer terribly at their hands. His village is destroyed, he is repeatedly forced off his land, and finally he is murdered. He offers little resistance to his treatment, bearing his burdens with cries of anguish, while taking no action in the direction of retaliation. Alessandro, Ramona, and the other indigenous people (who are mostly off-screen) are passive victims who seem to accept their fate; the white settlers will destroy them, and there is no point in fighting back or even attempting to escape. They are permitted only to mourn for themselves, to lament their weakness and inferiority.

In the closing shot, Ramona kneels and sobs over the body of her husband. She allows Felipe, who appears standing upright at her side, to comfort her. Felipe, though not directly responsible for Alessandro's death, is part of the white power structure that routinely exploits and victimizes the indigenous population so he is invariably complicit in this action. Ramona's acceptance of Felipe's consolation signifies several narrative conclusions. First, Ramona returns to the protection and comfort of white society, as well as the safety of her original identity as a white woman. The narrative brutally punishes Ramona for straying from her racial identity and having a child with an indigenous man.

Ramona commits miscegenation twice over: first by embracing her indigenous ancestry and betraying/abandoning her whiteness, a form of internal or spiritual miscegenation; next through her sexual contact and reproduction with Alessandro, fulfilling the traditional standard of miscegenation. As an indigenous woman, Ramona submits to the temptation of sexual contact with a member of her own race. As a white woman, Ramona submits to the temptation of sexual contact with the fetishized Other. Owing to Griffith's obsession with a racial purity embedded in femininity and tied to female sexual purity, the narrative must punish Ramona for these offenses. She loses her property, her husband, and her child. Once Ramona is completely destitute, the narrative then allows her to re-enter the white communal life she once spurned. Despite the subtitle of the film and the cruelty of the white characters, *Ramona* functions less as a critique of westward expansion and the dispossession of the indigenous and more as a demonstration of indigenous inferiority and as a cautionary tale about the repercussions of race mixing.

In the United States, the popular apotheosis of indigenous representation is the Western. The Western serves as a warehouse of images and clichés for American popular culture's imagination of the United States' western territory. This imagined West is "an idea that shimmers with abstractions such as frontier, opportunity, honor, individualism, and justice, and it is often (but not always, to be sure) recognized by visual cues such as the cowboy hat, the horse, vast stretches of open rangeland rimmed by snowy peaks or desert mesas, and the handgun... a largely rural space populated by ranchers, cowboys" (Witschi 4-5) and of course the native population fated to be swept away by the tide of history: the "Indians." Edwin S. Porter's 1903 film, *The Great Train Robbery*, marks the

inception of the Western genre in cinema<sup>6</sup>, though its roots extend to nineteenth and early twentieth century Western fiction, whose conventions were codified in the works of James Fenimore Cooper, Owen Wister, and Zane Grey. The Western ebbed in popularity with the advent of sound film in the late 1920s, but the genre witnessed a renaissance in popularity and artistry in the late 1930s with the release of the critical and commercial successes *Destry Rides Again* (1939), *Union Pacific* (1939), and especially John Ford's return to the genre after many productive years working outside of it, *Stagecoach* (1939).

Many prominent directors worked in the Western genre, including Raoul Walsh, Elia Kazan, and George Stevens, but the work of American director John Ford represents the peak of the form. Ford enshrined D.W. Griffith's early thematic contributions to the Western canon: the feckless, weak, and pathologically inferior "Indian" and the fear of miscegenation accompanied by fatal consequences. Ford deviates from Griffith in his construction of the indigenous as a dangerous and ruthless threat to white settlement. Ford renders the "Indian" either ineffectual and passive or savage and hyper-threatening according to the needs of the plot at the moment. In 2011, the U.S. National Film Preservation Board added John Ford's 1924 film *The Iron Horse* to the National Film Registry. In commemorating the work and justifying its preservation, the registry describes the film: "A classic silent film, *The Iron Horse* introduced to American and world audiences a reverential, elegiac mythology that has influenced many subsequent Westerns" ("Library of Congress" n. pag.). *The Iron Horse* tells the story of the construction of the transcontinental railroad, detailing the difficulties and triumphs of

---

<sup>6</sup> Curiously, *The Great Train Robbery* is devoid of the indigenous presence despite its status as a foundational Western film text.

westward expansion, ultimately culminating in the joining together of the Union Pacific line with the Central Pacific line in May 1869 at Promontory Summit, Utah. Among the difficulties threatening the path of the railroad is the ever-present fear of ambush by Native Americans.

In some of the most celebrated Westerns in film history, including *Stagecoach* (1939), *Drums Along the Mohawk* (1939), *My Darling Clementine* (1946), *Fort Apache* (1948), *She Wore a Yellow Ribbon* (1949), *Rio Grande* (1950), *The Searchers* (1956), and *Cheyenne Autumn* (1964), “Ford almost single-handedly rewrote American Western history by codifying conventions of the western genre, including those related to the representations of Indians” (Grant 211). Ford codified Native Americans as the omnipresent threat or obstacle to the progress of European-American expansion across the continent in fulfillment of the inevitable Manifest Destiny, confirming and perpetuating through the cinematic medium the centuries-old stereotype of the “Indian” as a stumbling block to the eventual and proper, indeed preordained, colonization and civilization of the “New World” by European settlers. This broad stereotype does not fully describe the Western’s construction of the “Indian” in all its idiosyncrasies but rather serves as an umbrella for a menagerie of images and ideas associated with the indigenous.

*Stagecoach*, along with the aforementioned *Iron Horse*, codifies the image of the Native American as, not simply an annoying spatial presence or obstacle, but as a violent threat to expansion. The image of the Native American as violent threat neither was a new idea, nor was this its first appearance in a film. Its roots extend to representations in historical accounts and literature beginning with Columbus’s record of his interactions

with the indigenous. In the celebrated climax of *Stagecoach*, a band of Apaches attack the titular stagecoach, a harmless civilian transport. The 6<sup>th</sup> U.S. Cavalry Regiment rides to the rescue at the last second and runs off the Apaches. Here, westward expansion is not represented as conquest or dispossession but rather as the innocent movement of non-violent citizens going about their affairs. Ford constructs the indigenous as violent and aggressive, whereas the white characters—though they may have personal failings and immoral tendencies—are in a wholly defensive position and would appear to pose no threat to the indigenous. Even the cavalry is presented in a purely defensive light; the U.S. military functions as a sort of latter-day Knights Templar, providing safe passage to Christian pilgrims through dangerous territory.

*Stagecoach* also hints at a fear of sexual contact with the indigenous. In the moments before the arrival of the cavalry, it seems certain that the Apaches will be victorious. The Southern gentleman Hatfield prepares to use his last bullet to kill the fragile and respectable Mrs. Mallory, believing that death is preferable to capture by the Apaches. This implies at the very least the potential for sexual violation and echoes a common trope in the definition and practice of Southern masculinity: protecting white women from the threat of sexual contact with members of other races. As J.P. Telotte explains, “[t]hroughout the American cinema we can find an oft-recurring scene in which a white woman—or in some cases, a child—is about to be killed by a loved one” (115). Telotte argues that this kind of action is a transgression of “trust and blood ties” that calls into question the very nature of love, but that in the context of the racist nightmare these scenes promote, to deliver death is to provide a merciful and loving escape from the “unspeakably savage violence anticipated from the other” (115). Men of African descent

have historically supplied the American imagination with fears of sexual violence, depravity, and miscegenation. These racial fears are not restricted to any single race or ethnicity, however, and there is a tradition of projecting the same fears onto the indigenous.

The racial and sexual politics of the film also manifest themselves in an earlier scene, though here the intention is comic relief not intense drama or horror. The whiskey salesman Peacock shouts and recoils upon seeing that the Mexican station-keeper Chris's wife is an Apache woman. "Savage!" Peacock cries out, partially in shock and excitement but also in warning to the others. Chris, clearly pleased with himself, responds, "That's my wife, Jacima, my squaw." In disbelief, Peacock continues, "Yes, but she's...she's savage." Chris affirms humorously, "Sí, señor, she's a little bit savage, I think." Peacock's reaction exemplifies the dominant white culture's discomfort with the indigenous presence in general and its fear of race mixing/integration via conjugal and domestic relations. Chris somewhat distinguishes the degree of Jacima's ethnic ancestry and satirizes the false dichotomy of savage versus civilized in describing her as "a little bit savage." For Peacock, no such distinction exists. One is either savage or one is civilized, and the difference is racial.

*My Darling Clementine* offers a typical example of the "drunken Indian." Wyatt Earp, played by Henry Fonda, enters Tombstone with his brothers and finds an intoxicated Native American man shooting wildly at passersby from inside a saloon. Earp handles the situation nonchalantly, disarming the man and tossing him outside the building. He proceeds to chastise the gathered townspeople for allowing an Indian to drink. The scene is unremarkable, except perhaps in that it is the only reference to the



indigenous throughout the film, codifying the indigenous as a nuisance with a dangerous predilection for alcohol at the exclusion of any other possible representations.

In *The Searchers*, Ford offers the image of the “good Indian,” a young man named Martin who is the half-white, half-Cherokee adopted nephew of John Wayne’s Ethan Edwards. Martin is one of the titular searchers. A raiding band of Comanche killed Martin’s adoptive family and kidnapped his sisters, Debbie and Lucy, so he joins Ethan and Lucy’s fiancé in a quest for vengeance and to rescue the young girl Debbie and her older sister. Martin is a “good Indian” because he is so effectively whitewashed. Martin is anglicized both biologically and by family upbringing. He joins white men in a rage-fuelled mission of retaliation against Indians. His function is authorized and mediated through the paternalism of John Wayne’s character, the white uncle who is viciously racist and maintains contempt for Martin’s Cherokee lineage despite their familial connection. The Comanche murder and presumably rape Lucy. They keep Debbie alive to raise her as one of their own.

After years of searching, Martin and Ethan discover Debbie living in a Comanche camp with a chief named Scar. Debbie does not wish to leave. She considers herself Comanche now. Ethan endeavors to murder her, taking the fear of the sexual violation and corruption of white women to its logical extreme. Debbie has already been tainted by sexual contact with the indigenous male, so she is of no further productive use to white society and will only serve as an object of shame. If Ethan kills her, he eliminates the threat of miscegenation and may still be perceived as “putting her out of her misery” and saving her from the “fate worse than death.” Ethan’s intention to kill Debbie being clear, Martin intervenes, shielding Debbie with his body so Ethan will not shoot her. Enraged

but deterred from his initial murderous intent, Ethan proceeds to kidnap Debbie away from the Comanche and return her to white society. Her initial protests ignored by Ethan, Debbie does not speak again in the film. Whether her silence signifies scorn and melancholy at being stolen from her people yet again or calm acquiescence and even relief is uncertain.

*The Searchers* employs the indigenous as both violent threat and comic relief. In the course of the long search, Martin is presented with a fat Indian bride. He has no interest in her and tries to get rid of her, but she is persistent. She wishes to consummate the marriage, but Martin is repulsed. The sequence culminates in Martin kicking her. She rolls down a hill, gratuitously humiliated, and Martin and Ethan return to their quest. Ford's dichotomous, gendered representation of the indigenous as both source of terror and source of humor points to the malleability of racial and cultural stereotypes. The Other fulfills the racial fantasies of the dominant culture in all their variety and contradictions. Ford's cinematic antecedent and a major influence on his work, D.W. Griffith, codified this form of racial representation in *The Birth of a Nation* (1915). White actors in blackface portray African-Americans as a range of caricatures: sexual deviants obsessed with raping white women, obsequiously loyal servants totally deferent to white authority, barefoot buffoons with watermelon in hand masquerading as legislators and making a mockery of governance, etcetera. Representation is not limited to a single image or behavior, but the character and actions of the Other is invariably determined by race, not by circumstances, personal history, or individual initiative.<sup>7</sup> The indigenous in

---

<sup>7</sup> Nor is this representative schizophrenia restricted to one or two races. In the nineteenth and early twentieth century, the opium use and supposed suitability to hard labor of Chinese immigrants in the United States was attributed to their "Chineseness." In the

Westerns operate as gears in the machinery of the plot; that is to say, the plot never serves the will and consciousness of the indigenous, rather the will and consciousness of the indigenous always serve the plot. Whether the indigenous are even represented as possessing free will and consciousness is disputable. Denied interiority and self-determinacy, they do not exist as individuals but rather as foils to the dominant culture. They function equally well as villains or fools, as obstacles or irrelevancies—whatever the plot calls on them to be.

Though problematic, *The Searchers* is far from being a one-dimensional white nationalist fantasy in the mode of *The Birth of a Nation*. At times, Ford's lens frames race relations critically. The character of Ethan Edwards may be perceived not as an endorsement of racial hatred and violence but as a qualified critique. Though John Wayne was typecast as the heroic model of nobility, justice, and morality, Ethan Edwards is not a purely heroic character. He functions as an antihero, an antisocial, rage-fuelled loner with a mysterious and potentially criminal past and a pathological hatred of the indigenous. In one scene, he shoots out the eyes of a dead Comanche warrior, explaining that in the Comanche belief system, this will force the man's soul to wander blindly for eternity in search of paradise. For Ethan, it is insufficient that this Comanche's body is dead. Ethan must destroy his soul. As sympathetic as Ethan Edwards may be in other scenes, few audiences are likely to sympathize with the gratuitous and malicious desecration of a body. Ethan's intention to kill Debbie for her assimilation as a Comanche and probable miscegenation is an even more jarring complication or contradiction of the John Wayne

---

later twentieth century and early twenty-first century, Chinese students' adeptness at math and science and their supposed suitability for careers in such fields are also attributed to their "Chineseness."

image and the Western mythos at large. Moreover, the initial actions of the Comanche raiding party are not presented as the naturally bloodthirsty and savage behavior of Native Americans, but rather they are explained as retribution for earlier violence visited upon the chief Scar's family. Granted, *The Searchers* is not about the murder of Scar's family. The film dramatizes the brutal destruction of Ethan's family, not Scar's. Thus it provides powerful narrative and psychological justification for Ethan's brutality, whereas it offers justification for the Comanche atrocities only through brief dialogue, which hardly possesses the same rhetorical impact. Nevertheless, the film is not as simplistic as Ford's earlier work and the vast majority of films in the genre. Ford somewhat problematizes race and interrogates the binary Western myths of good versus evil, civilized white man versus savage Indian, foreshadowing his later attempts at more explicitly revisionist representation.

In *Cheyenne Autumn* (1964), released eight years after *The Searchers*, Ford attempted to create an epic revisionist apology and tribute to Native Americans. Ford had always denied any racist intent in his films, claiming that his representations were historically accurate. *Cheyenne Autumn* may be a tacit admission of guilt, but it is at the very least a demonstration of Ford's concern for his reputation and legacy.<sup>8</sup> Despite its good intentions, the film is still rife with problematic representations of the indigenous. Not the least of these issues is the casting of white actors to play indigenous characters, a common theme of Western productions. Among the most extreme examples is that of Iron Eyes Cody, an actor who played small and supporting roles as a Native American in

---

<sup>8</sup> D.W. Griffith followed a similar pattern decades earlier, initially defending *The Birth of a Nation* as historical truth, and then proceeding to make *Intolerance* (1916), an epic film about the horrors of prejudice.

over 200 films and television productions, though he is perhaps best known for his role as the “crying Indian” in the 1970 public service announcement “Keep America Beautiful.” Though he claimed to be of authentic Cherokee-Creek descent, married two different women of indigenous descent, and adopted two sons of indigenous descent, Iron Eyes Cody, born Espera Oscar de Corti to Sicilian immigrants in Louisiana, was in fact of Italian descent. Iron Eyes Cody genuinely identified as indigenous, while refusing to acknowledge his Italian heritage. He seems to have been sincerely devoted to Cherokee-Creek culture, so his performances on film and television as an indigenous man were not driven solely by self-interest.

*Cheyenne Autumn* features several indigenous characters in prominent roles, but these roles were all filled by non-native actors, including Mexican-born Gilbert Roland as Dull Knife, Italian-American Sal Mineo as Red Shirt, and Mexican-born Ricardo Montalban as Little Wolf. Furthermore, the indigenous extras playing Cheyenne were mostly of Navajo descent, and they can be heard speaking in the Navajo language throughout. The pervasive use of “redface” in American Westerns lingers into contemporary film productions. *The Lone Ranger* (2013) is the most recent high-profile example of this, featuring Johnny Depp in a leading role as Comanche warrior Tonto. Though the actor has made vague claims of indigenous ancestry (Thompson n. pag.), neither Depp nor anyone associated with him or the film production have provided any corroborating evidence for this claim.

*Cheyenne Autumn*'s attempt at reinscribing the Western mythos and its reductive representations of the indigenous are marred also by a plot that struggles to allow the indigenous self-determination. Film scholar Barry Keith Grant argues that the film

endorses Manifest Destiny in that the “wilderness must be ‘tamed’ by the imprisonment of Cheyenne Indians by the U.S. military,” and that Ford ultimately fails to present the indigenous in a positive light: “In the film, defeated Indians fight with one another, captured by the army and held captive until their fate is decided by a U.S. official in Washington, D.C.” (212). The indigenous of *Cheyenne Autumn* are no longer the savage aggressors of *Stagecoach* and *The Searchers*. Ford transforms them into helpless victims, literal prisoners of the U.S. government and figurative prisoners of their fate: Manifest Destiny.

## CHAPTER 2- ETHNOGRAPHIC FANTASIES AND SYMPATHETIC STIRRINGS

Popular and influential representations of the indigenous on film, particularly representations that emphasize and commodify authenticity, are not limited to the Western. Robert Flaherty's 1922 film, *Nanook of the North*, an ethnographic documentary focused on the daily lives of an Itivimuit family in Quebec, has claims of authenticity far exceeding anything produced within the American Western genre. Ushering in the golden age of ethnographic cinema—the period spanning 1922 to 1932 and including Flaherty's *Moana* (1926) and his partial collaboration with F.W. Murnau, *Tabu* (1931)—perhaps no film in the first half-century of cinema is so bound to concepts of authenticity as *Nanook*.

In its subject matter, its visual grammar, and its narrative structure, *Nanook* constructed a model of the authentic, whose influence reverberates throughout contemporary cinema. Few films prior to 1922 even strived for the appearance of authenticity achieved by *Nanook*. Fatimah Tobing Rony describes *Nanook* as a “point of origin: It has been called the first documentary film, the first ethnographic film, as well as the first art film” (300). It is no coincidence that this reputed “first documentary” features indigenous people. It concretizes the traditional function of the indigenous as repositories of authenticity, as symbols of reality and vitality disconnected from and inaccessible to contemporary audiences due to the indigenous' temporal dislocation in an imagined and hermetic past. Flaherty professed an early fascination with what he describes at seventeen as “the magic land of Indians” (qtd. in Griffith xviii). Flaherty's romantic conception of the indigenous seems to have formed already at this young age. It seems contradictory

then, at first, that Flaherty does not frame the story of Nanook and his family as the re-creation of a romanticized past, but rather that he seeks to represent these people, their lifestyle, and the events of the film as existing completely in the present. Nanook remains a relic of the past, however, because his ethnicity, his livelihood, and his geography belong firmly to the past irrespective of contemporaneity. The dominant culture extends its hegemony onto the epistemology of the past, defining history through a discourse of civilization, particularly as it concerns social, political, economic, technological, and cultural “progress.” That Nanook lives in the present only serves to lend greater vitality to that past to which he belongs and greater authenticity to his person as a kind of corporeal ghost, an essentialized historical dybbuk haunting the modern screen. In all the copious and wordy intertitles of the film, Nanook never speaks for himself, not without Flaherty’s paraphrasing. Inuit individuals’ thoughts or statements are absent from the film text, their entire existence contained within Flaherty’s silent narration. It appears that these Inuit live in a world devoid of white settlers, and yet a white man exercises absolute control over their representation.

The subtitle of *Nanook of the North* offers the film’s first claim to authenticity: “A story of life and love in the actual arctic.” The choice of the word “actual” indicates that this film will provide authentic documentation of life and apparently love in a location that—despite whatever previous knowledge and conceptions that the audience may have about it—will be presented naturally and scientifically. The phrase “actual arctic” has at least two meanings though: first, the subtle idea of portraying the arctic accurately in revision of any misconceptions or fantastical notions the viewer might have, and second, the simple implication that Flaherty shot the film on location in the arctic as opposed to a



studio or less rugged location that bore some resemblance to the arctic. Robert Flaherty's preface to the film states: "This film grew out of a long series of explorations in the north which I carried out on behalf of Sir William Mackenzie from 1910 to 1916. Much of the exploration was done in journeys lasting months at a time with only two or three Eskimos as my companions. This experience gave me an insight into their lives and a deep regard for them." Flaherty frames himself as explorer and scientist first, filmmaker second. His preface goes on to detail his complete inexperience in film production, citing several failed attempts to produce presentable pieces before shooting the footage that would become *Nanook of the North*. Before the film proper even begins, the preface constructs the director as a good-faith documentarian whose intentions lie in exploration and provides an authentic account of what and whom he encountered. What Flaherty fails to mention is that the sponsor of his five expeditions, Sir William Mackenzie, was a mining baron, and that Flaherty's mission was to search the area for iron and copper ore deposits that could be profitably exploited (Griffith XX).

Many of the film's scenes depict a way of life that was outmoded to the Inuit at the time of filming. In famous sequences, the men use harpoons to hunt, whereas they had already begun using firearms for these purposes by this time. Nanook's apparent shock at hearing a phonograph for the first time was entirely staged. He was already familiar with the technology and had heard records before. Flaherty is interested in representing authenticity on film, but he is not necessarily concerned with authenticity in the mode of *cinéma vérité*. Nanook's name is not Nanook. It is Allakariallak. Nanook's wife is not his real wife. Most of the scenes in the film were fabricated or modified for cinematic purposes.

Flaherty's prioritization of good cinema over genuine authenticity is reflected in this passage from his journals in which he explains his plan for the walrus hunt to the group of Inuit men: "'Suppose we go,' said I, 'do you know that you and your men may have to give up making a kill, if it interferes with my film? Will you remember that it is the picture of you hunting the ivuik [walrus] that I want, and not their meat?'" (qtd. in Griffith 38). Typical of any commercial film, capturing the desired footage is of primary concern. Everything else is secondary or irrelevant. In the scene of the seal hunt, Nanook struggles with the seal on the end of his line for an indeterminate length of time. Flaherty jump cuts many times during the scene, so the audience has no way of knowing how long the struggle lasted or if anyone assisted Nanook in what appears to be an exhausting task for a single man. We do not see the precise moment when the seal is killed. Why is this climactic moment edited out? Perhaps because someone did assist Nanook off camera, or even used a gun to kill the animal, as was common practice among the Inuit at the time. This is speculation, but the jump cuts and odd deletion of the actual kill invite questions. Flaherty's editorial interference extends beyond the closing credits of the film, reaching even beyond the grave. Allakariallak died in bed from an unspecified illness two years after filming, but Flaherty claimed he had been lost in a storm while hunting for deer and died of starvation, a much more romantic death befitting the image of Nanook the brave hunter (Christopher 387-388).

Flaherty's documentary style bears more resemblance to the documentary philosophy of Werner Herzog than any of the *cinéma vérité* practitioners that he inspired, such as D.A. Pennebaker and the Maysles brothers. Describing the intention of his documentary work in contrast to what he calls "the truth of accountants" Herzog writes,

“There are deeper strata of truth in cinema, and there is such a thing as poetic, ecstatic truth. It is mysterious and elusive, and can be reached only through fabrication and imagination and stylization” (Herzog 301).<sup>9</sup> *Nanook of the North*, released over two decades before Herzog’s birth, seems to encapsulate this filmmaking ethic. It is rife with fabrication, imagination, and stylization, yet Flaherty frames it all as an authentic revelation of a fascinating subject. That the subject is a group of human beings and not some props or plot details seems to be of little consequence.

The first two intertitles of the film directly follow the preface, introducing the location of the film and the subject: “The mysterious Barren Lands—desolate, boulder-strewn, wind-swept—illimitable spaces which top the world,” and: “The sterility of the soil and the rigor of the climate no other race could survive; yet here utterly dependent upon animal life, which is their sole source of food, live the most cheerful people in all the world—the fearless, lovable, happy-go-lucky Eskimo.” Flaherty’s simplistic descriptions of the people he documents seem to reflect his genuine, if mildly condescending, fondness for the Inuit, confirmed by his candid journals in which he writes of the Inuit as “the kindly, the brave, the simple Eskimo” (qtd. in Griffith 43). Sandwiched between the first two intertitles is the opening shot of the film, a thirty-second tracking shot across a dark bay littered with floating ice. Mountains in the background obscure the sun, casting an eerie and foreboding pall across the already lifeless landscape. This shot confirms the intertitles’ verbiage: mysterious, barren, desolate, and sterile. The audience has no way of knowing whether the sun is rising or

---

<sup>9</sup> Many of Herzog’s films, including *Fata Morgana*, *Aguirre, the Wrath of God*, *Fitzcarraldo*, *Where the Green Ants Dream*, and *Happy People: A Year in the Taiga* are about the indigenous or include indigenous elements.

setting, further decontextualizing and disorienting the viewer. This exaggerates the idea of this geography as alien and detached from our own existence. Throughout the long tracking shot, the camera bobs up and down, causing the landscape to gently rise and fall and indicating that this footage was shot from a moving vessel. The motion is not distracting, nor does it make the landscape difficult to discern, but it is noticeable. The involuntary motion of the camera solidifies the impression that this film was shot in the real location, the “actual arctic,” and not on some Hollywood backlot where conditions could be minutely controlled and the camera would most likely not rise and fall with the current of the sea.

Flaherty’s description of the indigenous of this region as “the most cheerful people in all the world—the fearless, lovable, happy-go-lucky Eskimo” may seem amusingly unscientific to modern audiences, undercutting the film’s purported authenticity as a documentary of life in the “actual arctic.” Yet, similarly questionable pronouncements about entire races of people surface in the modern cinematic descendants of *Nanook*, such as Werner Herzog and Dmitry Vasyukov’s ethnographic documentary depicting the daily lives of people in the Siberian taiga, *Happy People: A Year in the Taiga* (2010). The film documents how the indigenous people of a tiny village in the taiga eke out an existence in the face of brutal cold, rugged terrain, and few modern conveniences. The title of the film, *Happy People*, is evidence enough that the filmmakers are partaking in the dubious generalizing that so often reduces indigenous peoples to a list of vague traits. Herzog provides support for the title in his narration that casts the villagers—mostly the men—as soldiers on the front lines of the epic eternal contest between man and nature. For Herzog, these are “real men” living deliberately,

struggling for survival, and supposedly rejecting the comforts of modernity for a “traditional” way of life, perhaps with the exception of their snowmobiles. As this way of life belongs to the past, it is implicitly authentic. For Herzog, the indigenous people of the taiga refuse participation in the evil, gloomy, and alienating present, so they are happy. This brief example suggests that Flaherty’s mode of documenting the indigenous is no relic of a less-enlightened era, but rather a model of representation upon which filmmakers continue to rely. Prominent critics continue to praise *Nanook* for its seeming authenticity, even while acknowledging that much of the production was staged and stylized. In 2005, film critic Roger Ebert described the man Nanook as “one of the most vital and unforgettable human beings ever recorded on film,” (“Nanook of the North” n. pag.). Ebert roots the film’s authenticity in its star and corroborates the notion of the indigenous as more vital and alive than a typical human being, even though that vitality and measure of life is necessarily located in the past.

*The Silent Enemy* (1930) is an uneasy companion to *Nanook of the North*, a complementary piece in some regards that also contradicts *Nanook*’s representation of the indigenous. Directed by H.P. Carver (an elusive figure for whom this is his only directing credit), produced by William C. Chanler and one of the heirs to the Vanderbilt fortune, William Douglas Burden, a hunter and explorer, shot by a majority indigenous crew, and featuring a cast of indigenous actors, *The Silent Enemy* depicts the lives of a group of Ojibwa living below the tree line of Canada’s Hudson Bay region in the period before contact with European settlers. William Douglas Burden is also credited as the story writer. The Ojibwa struggle against their titular enemy, which is not the white man or another tribe but rather the threat of hunger during the brutal winter. The first intertitle

explains this surprising fact—surprising generally given the rarity of the subject’s centrality in any film, but more particularly due to the construction of the indigenous as typically at odds with white people in some way but almost never in conflict with nature. Even in depictions of the indigenous that stress their savagery and violent aggression, these visions still stress the indigenous oneness with nature, the notion that the indigenous are an emanation of their environment or a part of the environment itself. The word “HUNGER” appears in capital letters, introducing the theme and quickly dispelling any speculation as to the identity of the enemy.

*The Silent Enemy* and *Nanook of the North* deviate significantly on this point. In *Nanook*, where the arctic environment obviously threatens human survival, Flaherty sensationalizes the adaptations of the Inuit, stating that no other people could live in those conditions. In Flaherty’s vision, the environment is inhospitable to human habitation, yet the indigenous possess some essential quality that enables them to survive. Even with nature at its most adversarial, Flaherty envisions some superhuman indigenous connection to it. This conception of the Inuit is an ideological artifact of the romantic fantasy of the noble savage peacefully or even blissfully coexisting with an unspoiled wilderness, the forest primeval untainted by civilization. Embedded in Flaherty’s cultural imagination, this fantasy finds expression in the implausible claim that the Inuit live happily and harmoniously in their harsh environment. Whether or not some Inuit people are actually “happy” with their lives—whatever that means—is irrelevant. Flaherty denies them individuality and interiority. Happiness is part of their essence for Flaherty, not the result of pleasant circumstances, self-determination, self-actualization, or anything that might contribute to an individual’s contentment. *The Silent Enemy*

promotes no such illusory generalizations about indigenous life, dispelling the fanciful notion that indigenous people function in perfect harmony with or as an emanation of nature. When the indigenous are not distinguishable from their environment, they are rendered equally disposable and helpless as that environment, equally de-individualized as some trees or birds and equally without consciousness and agency as a river or valley.

*The Silent Enemy* combines multiple genres. It functions as a narrative film with a fairly straightforward and linear plot about the struggle of the Ojibwa tribe to survive, but it also functions on an ethnographic level. The prologue explains that the film is an effort to preserve this specific indigenous culture before the historical memory of the Ojibwa disappears along with their descendants. Whereas *Nanook of the North* presumes the authenticity of the indigenous on screen and relies on the accepted authenticity of its presentation of the indigenous—investing its credibility and generic status as an ethnographic documentary in this authenticity—*The Silent Enemy* engages in a deeper meditation on authenticity. A prologue written and spoken by Chief Chauncey Yellow Robe, who also appears in the film as a wise old chief, problematizes the question of authenticity in *The Silent Enemy*. Directly addressing the camera, Chief Yellow Robe asks the audience to consider the performers as authentic indigenous people revisiting their heritage before its destruction by the white man, as opposed to actors inhabiting roles envisioned by the screenwriter and director. This direct address precedes the narrative and exists outside it, but it also contextualizes our viewing and comprehension of the narrative. Chief Yellow Robe acknowledges the performativity of the film, leaving no doubt that it is a work of fiction featuring actors—actors of indigenous descent but actors nevertheless. Yet at the same time, the audience is expected to read the actors as

psycho-emotionally sincere members of a community engaged in a performance that functions ritualistically and hence more authentically than a performance wrought for commercial purposes only and incentivized through monetary remuneration.

The actors perform not for the pleasure of the viewer—or not exclusively for the pleasure of the viewer—but as a means of connecting with their ancestors through existential imitation, reclaiming a historicity beyond the European and colonial context, and preserving for posterity this Ojibwa community's conception of their pre-contact lifestyle and paradigm. This final function lends the film an ethnographic component, but the ethnography is presented as a re-enactment of pre-contact authenticity, rather than a performance of authentic contemporary indigeneity. The prologue introduces a concept of authenticity through performative sincerity, as opposed to actuality, that is absent from popular representations of the indigenous, including *Nanook of the North*. The prologue also grants the indigenous some degree of interiority, though not to the same extent as Kent MacKenzie's *The Exiles* (1961) three decades later. Chief Yellow Robe delivers the prologue himself, a prologue that he wrote, explaining that he and the other indigenous performers appear in the film as conscientious members of their indigenous community, who respect the material as well as the reality and people it seeks to represent. This projects a sentience and self-regard onto the indigenous that precludes their reduction into props or animated backdrop mechanically serving an Anglo-expansionist fantasy.

Despite Chief Yellow Robe's claim that the performers were indigenous people partaking in a kind of ritual resurrection of their cultural heritage, the actors' various ethnicities complicate this proposition. In a piece for the San Francisco Silent Film Festival, Benjamin Schrom clarifies the ethnic backgrounds of the key actors in *The*



*Silent Enemy*. Chief Yellow Robe was Sioux. Molly Spotted Elk, a Penobscot woman from Maine, plays the chief's daughter. Chief Buffalo Child Long Lance plays Baluk the hunter. He was born Sylvester Clark Long in North Carolina and was of mixed Cherokee, Lumbee, African, and European descent. Chief Akawanush plays Dagwan the medicine man. Akawanush, whom Schrom does not comment on and whose heritage remains mysterious due to a dearth of available information, was born Paul Benoit in Ontario ("The Silent Enemy, 1930" n. pag.). The extras and film crew may have been mostly Ojibwa, but the stars of the film were not. Buffalo Child Long Lance's deceptive claims about his background would ultimately destroy his career. Donald B. Smith recounts how Long Lance had passed for many years as a man of purely indigenous descent until an investigation conducted by the film production company revealed his mixed heritage, a revelation that scandalized Long Lance's white friends and patrons (243-244). Despondent over his ruined reputation, Long Lance committed suicide in 1932.

Knowing that the stars of the film are not in fact Ojibwa, we must reconsider the new contextualized meaning of Chief Yellow Robe's prologue. If we still accept the performance as a dialogue with or reenactment of the indigenous past of the performers, that interpretation constructs a vision of indigeneity as an ethnic and cultural monolith wherein the living descendants of any tribe can connect with the ancestral experience of any other tribe because of a shared indigeneity. This is an ahistorical, mythologizing premise. Different historical experiences, customs, beliefs, cultures, etc. both before and after European contact mark different tribes. These various tribes constitute distinct and separate nations. To suggest mutability or fluidity among them reduces rigidly separate identities into an imagined melting pot, creating a monolithic indigeneity akin to the

stereotype of the “Indian” portrayed in popular cinema. A spectator might accept the premise of English actors portraying French characters in a film about the French Revolution for the sake of entertainment and easier comprehension, but a spectator cannot and would not accept this premise in terms of authenticity. The same logic applies to a Sioux playing an Ojibwa. Thus, one is inclined to go beyond the identity of *The Silent Enemy*'s participants in judging its authenticity. On the other hand, *The Silent Enemy* may be engaging in an early filmic invocation of pan-tribalism or pan-indigeneity, suggesting possibilities for interpretation that do not preclude the acceptance of some notion of indigenous singularity.

The narrative excludes the European colonial presence, but hunger may function as an allegory for the existential threat of colonialism. This interpretation most likely reflects a postcolonial intellectual framework, however, and by no means accurately describes the intentionality of the filmmakers. Though the representation of the Ojibwa is still at the mercy of the film's white producers, *The Silent Enemy* manages to articulate an enlightened, humane vision of the indigenous almost a full decade before John Ford's *Stagecoach* charged to commercial and critical glory with the indispensable aid of a menagerie of vicious stereotypes.

### CHAPTER 3—RE-ENVISIONING INDIGENOUS AUTHENTICITY

Several filmmakers from non-indigenous backgrounds have participated in the project of reinscribing representations of the indigenous. The Michael Powell and Emeric Pressburger production *49<sup>th</sup> Parallel* (1941) counters much of the inscription of the indigenous wrought by cinema in the previous decades. The film is an anti-Nazi propaganda picture made at the urging of the British Ministry of Information. A British memorandum to the War Cabinet entitled “Programme for Film Propaganda” outlines the main objects of feature films to be produced by the government: “showing our independence, toughness of fibre, sympathy with the under-dog...Ideals such as freedom, and institutions such as parliamentary government can be made the main subject of a drama or treated historically” (qtd. in Christie, *Powell* 121). Released October 8, 1941, almost two months to the day before the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, *49<sup>th</sup> Parallel* presents an ideal of democratic unity in the face of fascist aggression, portraying Nazi Germany and the fascist ideology as a threat to freedom everywhere in an attempt to draw the United States into the war. Ian Christie recounts, “Powell had read an article about how Canada had come into the war on Britain’s side despite internal French-Canadian hostility, and he understood how the forceful presentation of this issue could help win the most important propaganda battle of all: to bring America into the war quickly” (36). The effort was irrelevant in light of Pearl Harbor, but the film was a critical and commercial success and provides a democratic, multicultural counterpoint to Nazi propaganda.

The film follows the clandestine survivors of a Nazi U-boat that was destroyed by Allied bombers in the Hudson Bay as they make their way through Canada—at first

towards the Western coast to catch a Japanese vessel that will provide them safe passage. When the six sailors have been reduced to one lone survivor either through violence or apprehension by the Canadian authorities and/or patriotic Canadian civilians, the final Nazi heads towards the U.S. border hoping to gain asylum in neutral territory. The Nazi seamen terrorize and brutalize everyone in their path, including a number of Inuit people. The representation of the indigenous in this film differs significantly from Flaherty's work fewer than twenty years earlier. No Inuit or First Nations individual has a particularly large role in *49<sup>th</sup> Parallel*, but Powell and Pressburger still achieve a much more humanizing form of representation by constructing the indigenous as more than an extension or projection of their ethnic origin. A common presence throughout the film, the indigenous are not artifacts from the past dislocated in the present, but individuals—some of whom are named characters—who have adapted to historical shifts and fully participate in modernity.

*49<sup>th</sup> Parallel* includes the indigenous in the Canadian national imaginary as citizens with equal rights and responsibilities and hence an equal stake in the outcome of World War II, similar to Frank Capra's propaganda film *The Negro Soldier* (1944), although *49<sup>th</sup> Parallel* is not directly concerned with recruiting the indigenous to the war effort. In the opening moments of the film, reports stream over the radio of a U-boat sighting. "An Eskimo reports seeing a submarine..." one announcer exclaims, implicating the indigenous presence at the inception of the film and foreshadowing the importance of the indigenous in the plot throughout. In an early scene shortly following the opening, the Nazis take over a trading post near the Hudson Bay. The denizens of the post include its proprietor, known only as The Factor, a French-Canadian fur trapper

named Johnnie, who is played by Laurence Olivier, and an Inuit man, Nick. Nick is the first victim of Nazi aggression in the film. Diving to protect his friend Johnnie from an attacking sailor, Nick enters a brief scuffle with the man, which ends in the Nazi beating him unconscious with the butt of his rifle.

Nick's action and victimization accentuate the argument that World War II is not a limited conflict involving the European continent and its colonial offshoots but rather a global conflict that will determine the future course of all civilization, a great contest between freedom and democracy on one side and authoritarianism and oppression on the other. So great is the scope of the conflict that even the Inuit, seemingly detached from the squabbles of Europe, are compelled to participate. Ever loyal to its themes of strength through freedom and unity from diversity, *49<sup>th</sup> Parallel* never constructs the indigenous as somehow outside the Canadian national identity and project. As Johnnie explicitly states, in reference to Nick, "He [sic] Canadian." Nick is an Eskimo in the language of the period, and he is referred to as such, yet he is also and more importantly a Canadian. In another scene at the trading post, the Nazi leader, Lieutenant Hirth, quotes from *Mein Kampf*, describing a racial hierarchy in which Negroes and Eskimos are at the same lowly level, only barely above the Jews. "What's wrong with the Negroes?" asks The Factor, interrogating Nazi racial propaganda and fortifying the film's attempt at projecting an image of racial harmony among the diverse peoples within the allied democracies.

As the Nazi seamen prepare to leave the post, they attempt to detain a group of civilians, mostly Inuit women and children. When the civilians turn to flee, Lieutenant Hirth gives the order, and they open fire on the crowd, massacring a number of Inuit. A close-up of an Inuit woman and her baby sprawled on the ground provides a potent visual

summation of the crime. At this point in the film, it seems Powell and Pressburger have relegated the indigenous to the role of perpetual victim, but the narrative soon contradicts this one-dimensional characterization. As the Nazis attempt to flee via a stolen seaplane, they must unload some of the transport's heavy cargo in order to take off from the water. One of the men stands on one of the plane's pontoons and helps to toss items overboard. As the plane gathers speed, an Inuit rifleman on the shore fires a shot and successfully snipes the German, who proceeds to fall into the water lifelessly.

As the film progresses, the location shifts to western Canada and features a number of indigenous people belonging to the First Nations, as opposed to the Inuit peoples of Canada's northeastern and arctic territory or the Métis people. The Canadian Constitution Act of 1982 recognizes these three broad groups for classification purposes based on self-identification, historical roots, and identification and acceptance by the communities themselves: "In this Act, 'aboriginal peoples of Canada' includes the Indian, Inuit and Métis peoples of Canada" (Canadian Department of Justice 63). The Nazis, now disguised in civilian clothing, stumble upon a large gathering of people celebrating "Indian Day," a holiday commemorating the history and contributions of the indigenous in Canada that seems to be a precursor to Canada's National Aboriginal Day, first celebrated in 1996. Among the many attendees are a large number of First Nations people, attired in their traditional clothing. A Canadian Mounted Police officer interrupts the proceedings to announce that the German fugitives may be among the crowd. He reads a description of each of the men and instructs the crowd to look around for them. The camera cuts between close-ups of the Germans and close-ups of several indigenous people sifting through the crowd with their intense stares. Close-ups of indigenous people

are disproportionate to their demographic presence in the crowd. The editing, consisting of rapid cuts between the native faces and the increasingly distressed Nazis, suggests that the penetrating stares of the indigenous cause one of the Nazis to lose his nerve and attempt to flee the crowd, at which point he is apprehended by an officer.<sup>10</sup>

“Indian Day” offers enlightening contextualization of indigenous representation. The film includes First Nations people dressed in a traditional style and riding horses, but it provides the proper context for this representation as a performance of indigeneity that is part of the holiday, rather than the typical attire and behavior of the indigenous. Thus, the film makes an important temporal distinction that so many films featuring the indigenous fail to make: the indigenous are not ossified remnants of the past but rather individuals who adapt to changing historical and technological idioms, retaining or discarding traditions as it suits their interests as they strive for a dignified existence. As Leslie Howard’s character later remarks on Indian Day: “That’s just for tourists.” This is the context that is absent from Edison’s 1894 shorts, John Ford’s epics, and Robert Flaherty’s ethnographic mythmaking.

The final sequence of *49<sup>th</sup> Parallel* involving the indigenous features Leslie Howard as Philip Armstrong Scott, an eccentric English writer and anthropologist studying the Blackfoot tribe on their ancestral hunting grounds. He is staying in a teepee and living among several indigenous people, including one man named George to whom

---

<sup>10</sup> The premise of Nazis travelling undetected through Canadian society reverses the Nazi obsession with not recognizing Jews expressed in *The Eternal Jew* (1940) and *Jew Süss* (1940). Emeric Pressburger, who wrote *49<sup>th</sup> Parallel*, was a Hungarian Jew who had lived and worked in Germany in the 1930s. Having fled the Nazis to Paris and later London, Pressburger understood the politics and ideology of Nazi Germany, and he flips the searching and accusatory gaze usually reserved for suspected Jews onto the Nazis.

he is closest. Having slipped away from the Indian Day festivities, the remaining two Nazis stumble upon Scott, who is fly-fishing on a lake adjacent to his camp. Scott, assuming these men are lost tourists, invites them for dinner, and they accept. Later in the evening, Scott shares his views on the Blackfoot tribe with his guests, drawing a curious parallel between that tribe and the “modern tribe” of Nazism. Scott suggests that the Blackfoot tribe and the Nazis use similar military tactics, such as employing acts of terror to destroy an enemy’s resolve and aggressively attacking their neighbors, who pose no threat and live in constant fear of attack. Scott also compares Hitler’s rhetorical tactic of repetition to the rhetoric of Blackfoot leaders, who also used constant repetition to emphasize a point, relying on emotion and the drilled message as opposed to rationality and wisdom.

Scott frames the Blackfoot tribe as savage barbarians, but he is explicit in placing them in the past. Blackfoot descendants are no longer the savages of Scott’s research. Even so, comparing the Blackfoot people to the Nazis based on somewhat vague claims of similarity is problematic, indicating that *49<sup>th</sup> Parallel* has its shortcomings. That an aristocratic Englishman serves as the gatekeeper of indigenous history testifies to the film’s imperfections. Driven by the motivation to present an inclusive, multicultural society living in and deriving its strength from harmony, *49<sup>th</sup> Parallel* attributes conflicts among indigenous Canadians to savages of the past with no connection to the model citizens of the present. Despite the unfortunate comparison, Scott describes the Blackfoot tribe as only one among many, deriving their reputation for savagery in contrast to their peaceful neighbors. This is a differentiation among the indigenous that few non-indigenous filmmakers have managed or even attempted to represent. After the Nazis



reveal themselves to Scott, they tie him up in his teepee and attempt to run away through the woods. George and his companions discover Scott, untie him, and proceed to track one of the Nazis to a cave, where George apprehends the man. Here is another instance where the indigenous play a central role in neutralizing the Nazi threat, casting them in an inclusive and heroic light.

*49<sup>th</sup> Parallel* is explicit propaganda so it ignores the history of marginalization and dispossession endured by the indigenous of Canada for the sake of an image of unity and strength—a unity and strength derived from embracing ideological and racial diversity in opposition to the Nazi model of unity and strength derived from authoritarian control of policy and a vision of ethnic homogeneity. The role of the indigenous in the film as almost mechanically supportive of the anti-Nazi effort may seem to deny them individuality and interiority, but Powell and Pressburger construct all of the Canadian characters as noble and reliable exemplars of democratic values regardless of personal history or individual character traits: “Canadian society is shown in all its dramatic diversity, from the Eskimo and French-Canadian trappers around Hudson Bay to the German-speaking Hutterite communities, the Indians on their reserve and the Anglo-Canadians in their cities and wildernesses” (Christie, *Arrows* 37). Furthermore, Laurence Olivier’s bumbling caricature of a French Canadian is far more reductive and artlessly stereotyped than the representation of the Inuit. Curiously, the only characters who seem to possess free will and an interior monologue are a number of the Germans who are uncertain about the moral rectitude of their actions and ideology. One of the Nazi seamen, Vogel, goes so far as to desert his fellow seamen in an attempt to join a Hutterite community outside Winnipeg where they have sought shelter. Vogel’s commanding

officer, Lieutenant Hirth, summarily tries and executes the man for his crime.

The representation of the indigenous in *49<sup>th</sup> Parallel* is unique because there is nothing particularly unique about it. The natives are not a threat, an obstacle, an amusement, helpless victims, or a cheap source of authenticity, and though their role is limited in the narrative in the sense that no individual of indigenous descent plays a major character, they are not so submerged as to become merely part of the backdrop. In contrast to the use of the indigenous in the Western, the indigenous of *49<sup>th</sup> Parallel* are not bound to serve as gears in the machinations of the plot. They are pressed into the service of the film's propaganda themes, but that is true of every character and ethnic or national group in the film. In contrast to *Nanook of the North*'s formulation of the indigenous as temporally dislocated symbols of vitality, happily pursuing their pre-modern lifestyle, *49<sup>th</sup> Parallel* formulates the indigenous as very much a part of the immediate present, participating in the fight against fascism and having as much at stake as any other member of the society. An Inuit man is among the first to fall victim to fascist aggression, the massacre of the Inuit civilians constitutes the single most heinous crime by the band of Nazi sailors, and other Inuit individuals as well as First Nations people are later instrumental in either killing or apprehending the Nazis as they attempt to flee Canada. The film differentiates among the tribes and blocs of indigenous peoples. No single character functions as a reductive symbol for his or her entire ethnicity, nor is any single ethnicity presented as especially superior or inferior to any other ethnicity.

Shifts in federal and state policy and the rise of indigenous activism changed the landscape of indigenous life in the United States after World War II. Part of the explosion of social movements in the 1960s, the American Indian Movement was a pan-indigenous

movement that promoted an agenda of renewed spirituality, greater recognition of tribal sovereignty, and socio-economic empowerment. Many indigenous films in the later decades of the twentieth century reflect this new context. *Powwow Highway* (1989) is among a class of American films from the post-1960s period that combine a respect for indigenous culture, humanity, and individuality with traditional cinematic grammar, formulas, and genre conventions. Films in this category include: *Little Big Man* (1970), *The Outlaw Josey Wales* (1976), *Smoke Signals* (1998), *Skins* (2002), and *Frozen River* (2008). Such films probably do not constitute an “indigenous cinema” in the United States, but rather remain isolated, though progressive, examples of mainstream films concerning/involving the indigenous.

*Powwow Highway*, directed by Jonathan Wacks and adapted from a novel by Huron writer and activist David Seals (Seals adapted the work himself), uses the frequently paired genres of the road movie and the buddy movie to examine the lives of the indigenous in the late twentieth century. Much darker and more politically abrasive than *Smoke Signals* (1998), *Powwow Highway* follows two friends from the Northern Cheyenne Reservation in Lame Deer, Montana as they make a circuitous journey to Santa Fe, New Mexico. Philbert Bono, a huge and imposing man with a gentle spirit and playfully philosophical disposition, and Buddy Red Bow, an embittered and quick-tempered veteran of the Vietnam War and the American Indian Movement, grew up together on the reservation and drive to Santa Fe together to bust Buddy’s long-estranged sister out of prison. They stop several times along the way at landmarks and places of significance to indigenous Americans, including Bear Butte in South Dakota—an area sacred to many American tribes and known to the Cheyenne as Noahà-vose—and Fort

Robinson in Nebraska, where Crazy Horse surrendered to the U.S. Army and where the army imprisoned Dull Knife and his tribe of Northern Cheyenne for their refusal to return to Indian Territory after their outbreak from the Red Cloud Agency.

Philbert and Buddy also stop at the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota, a location heavy with historical significance as the site of the last of the ghost dances, the Wounded Knee Massacre in 1890, and the Wounded Knee incident in 1973, where Oglala and AIM activists occupied the town of Wounded Knee for 71 days. Pine Ridge is also notable as one of the poorest places in the Western Hemisphere by several metrics. The Bureau of Indian Affairs reported a tribal unemployment rate of 89% as of 2005 (“Pine Ridge” 5). The life expectancy on the reservation is in the high 40s, and only 10% of children graduate from high school, according to the *New York Times* (Kristof n. pag.).

*Powwow Highway* disabuses the spectator of any romantic or fantastical conceptions of the indigenous with its focus on the contemporary struggles of indigenous individuals in a landscape of poverty, alcoholism, criminality/criminalization, and inadequate political representation. The film opens with a slow-motion tracking shot of a Cheyenne warrior brandishing a spear and riding bareback on a beautiful palomino through the foothills at sunset. A drum beats on the soundtrack as the warrior leads his galloping horse from right to left across the midground, then towards the camera, then turns to move from left to right across the foreground, his figure occupying one third of the screen before disappearing from the frame. Shot from a low angle and obliquely backlit by the setting sun, the warrior on horseback cuts an impressive figure, entering the frame in partial silhouette and exiting the frame as if exiting the stage of history. The film immediately provides context and counterpoint to this heroic and mythic image of

indigeneity. The screen freezes on the unfocused landscape in the background, the title “Powwow Highway” appears in capital bold blue letters underlined with a vaguely indigenous design, then it fades to a tracking shot of a somewhat similar landscape marred by the outward signs of depressed human habitation. We see trailers and abandoned structures in the distance, debris in the foreground, a broken down bus and many vehicles in various stages of disrepair litter the frame. A subtitle explains the location: “Northern Cheyenne Reservation/ Lame Deer, Montana.”

This visual juxtaposition—the heroic warrior in motion bathed in golden light versus the more lifeless muted colors and immobile, discarded objects of the stagnant reservation—problematizes the past as the imagined state of the indigenous in perpetuity, while at the same time glorifying this past as a nostalgic image of self-reliance, self-determination, and strength. *Powwow Highway* embraces this contradiction as a hallmark of indigenous life in the United States. Philbert, played by Gary Farmer, a member of the Cayuga nation from Canada, represents the nostalgia for and connection to the past. He believes he is on a sacred journey. He buys a rusted and barely functioning car at the beginning of the film and calls it his war pony. He collects scraps of detritus and junk off the ground and considers them tokens from the ancestors, stating that once he collects four tokens, he will have the medicine to become a great warrior and earn a new name. He frequently sings to himself in Cheyenne, and proclaims at one point that the trickster god/creator of the universe will not allow the white man to further exploit and marginalize the Cheyenne. To what extent Philbert truly believes in his own stylization as a Cheyenne warrior and has faith in traditional Cheyenne spirituality is ambiguous, but Philbert’s ultimate triumph in breaking Buddy’s sister out of jail seems to be an

endorsement of his personal ontology.

Buddy, played by A Martinez, who is of mixed indigenous, Mexican, and European descent, represents the modern indigenous man. Uneasy with Philbert's obsession with the past and old traditions, Buddy is more actively engaged in the day-to-day challenges of the reservation. He works within the bureaucracy of the tribal government as the agricultural procurement agent, and regards with suspicion and anger anyone and anything that does not serve the immediate interests of his people. He sees little use in ancestral tokens, drum circles, powwows, and the old spiritual constructs or mythos. He participated in the occupation of Wounded Knee and remains staunchly committed to the ideals of the American Indian Movement, though the extent of his political activism at the time of the film narrative seems limited. A pointed exchange between Philbert and Buddy illustrates their conflicting personalities. Philbert states, "We are Cheyenne. All the shit of the world cannot change that." Buddy replies, "Do me a favor, when the heat comes down, don't start in with the old legends and all that mystical horseshit, ok? It'll only make things worse." Buddy is disillusioned by his years of activism within the AIM, as well as his military service to the United States in Vietnam. Philbert maintains an optimism detached, though not ignorant, of reality.

Philbert and Buddy's fragile alliance strengthens into a fraternal bond in the course of the narrative, signifying a unification of mythic past with modern reality. This unification is visually affirmed when Buddy throws a car window (broken off of Philbert's car) at an approaching police cruiser, transforming for a moment into the Cheyenne warrior swinging a tomahawk, leaping into the air, and throwing it. Buddy/the warrior hit their target, the car flips and crashes, and the small band of outlaws is able to

escape. *Powwow Highway* dispels the myths of the American Indian with its focus on the legal, political, cultural, and socioeconomic challenges of contemporary existence as Northern Cheyenne. The characters are not stereotypes, but rather individuals struggling to define a way of being in an often hostile environment and grasping at the various coping mechanisms available to them, including alcohol, marijuana, political activism, spirituality, criminality, and violence. The film re-appropriates the image of the noble and perhaps savage warrior as a point of cultural pride. It recasts this simplistic image, not as reflective of an indigenous reality of the past or present, but as an icon of indigenous independence and strength regardless of its verisimilitude.

*Powwow Highway* remains dependent on the traditional narrative conventions of dominant film culture and the cinematic grammar of the Hollywood production style. The content of *Powwow Highway* challenges dominant representation, but the form indicates acquiescence on the part of the filmmakers to the mode of oppressive representation. This compromise could be traced to any number of factors, but commercial dictates would likely be overriding in any event. The film follows the formula of the road/buddy movie genre, advances a linear plot driven by a typical David versus Goliath (or outsiders versus the system) binary clash, and features a soundtrack of mostly non-indigenous performers. The only indigenous music is either diegetic or serves to accent the very brief fantasy interludes of the indigenous warrior. In terms of editing, narrative construction, characterization, mise-en-scene, cinematography, sound, and acting technique, *Powwow Highway* conforms to the dominant mode of filmmaking of the period. The film is not unique in this sense. Most of the films discussed here do not attempt to challenge the normative commercial style. So long as public financing for independent indigenous

filmmakers remains severely constrained on the federal, state, and local levels in the U.S., and so long as these filmmakers must struggle for distribution, a vibrant indigenous cinema that challenges form as well as content is unlikely to arise.

Returning to Canada, as a new century of indigenous life dawned in the country that produced *Nanook of the North*, *The Silent Enemy*, and *49<sup>th</sup> Parallel*, indigenous filmmakers sought to reclaim representations of themselves from the dominant culture, focusing on indigenous stories and people from the pre-contact past through to the present day. *Atanarjuat: The Fast Runner* (2001) is an Inuit/Canadian film produced and set in Igloolik, which is located in the northern Canadian region of Nunavut in the Arctic Circle. Set in the prehistoric, pre-contact past, it is the first film whose dialogue is exclusively spoken in Inuktitut, one of the principal Inuit languages of Canada. Isuma Igloolik Productions, a majority Inuit company founded by *Atanarjuat's* director Zacharias Kunuk and the film's cinematographer Norman Cohn, produced the film, and it has produced many other narrative and documentary works featuring the Inuit. Since its inception in 1990, Isuma Igloolik Productions has focused on fostering a community of indigenous film production and representing the Inuit authentically on film. Isuma's mission statement explains: "Isuma's mission is to produce independent community-based media—films, TV and now Internet—to preserve and enhance Inuit culture and language; to create jobs and economic development in Igloolik and Nunavut; and to tell authentic Inuit stories to Inuit and non-Inuit audiences worldwide" ("Isuma Productions: About Us" n. pag.). Though *Atanarjuat* was a major commercial success, Isuma Igloolik Productions filed for receivership in 2011 (Dixon n. pag.), and film production has stalled.



A temptation exists to locate the authenticity of a work of art mostly, if not completely, in the identity of the artist. This is a natural temptation given the history of misunderstanding and misrepresentation endemic to the phenomenon of individuals from one culture/ethnicity producing work about a different culture/ethnicity. The logical tendency is to assume that people can and will represent their own culture/ethnicity effectively, but this is not by necessity an accurate assumption. Several factors complicate this notion, including: the extent to which an individual from a minority group has internalized the representations of the dominant group; the extent to which an individual will adhere strictly to a principle of authentic representation in consideration of commercial interests; the extent to which any one individual's output may be considered reflective of any cultural consensus regarding self-representation; and the multi-layered, collaborative nature of film production involving dozens of participants and competing interests. Many other factors probably complicate the question, but these brief examples should demonstrate the pitfalls of assuming authenticity based solely upon the artist's identity. The corollary to this assumption suggests that individuals outside the group—in the case of indigenous people, individuals from the dominant majority culture—are incapable of authentic representation, which is also a questionable notion.

Many critics and scholars emphasize Zacharias Kunuk's Inuit heritage and the Inuit majority makeup of Isuma as at least partial proof of *Atanarjuat's* authenticity. Yet—without even addressing the aforementioned complications of identity—most fail to acknowledge the contribution of Norman Cohn, who is not of Inuit descent. Cohn co-founded Isuma, co-produced *Atanarjuat*, co-edited the film, and served as cinematographer. Isuma offers this short biography: “Norman Cohn (b. 1946, New York)

is secretary-treasurer and co-founder of Igloolik Isuma's collective. Living since 1985 both in Igloolik and Montreal, Cohn developed with Kunuk, elder Pauloosie Qulitalik and the late Paul Apak, Isuma's signature style of 're-lived' cultural drama, combining the authenticity of modern video with the ancient art of Inuit storytelling" ("Norman Cohn" n. pag.). Norman Cohn may be an intimate member of the Igloolik Inuit community fundamentally committed to authentic representation of the indigenous past and present, but he was still born a white man in New York City. No honest account of *Atanarjuat's* construction of indigenous authenticity can overlook Cohn's contributions. My point is not to diminish the Inuit achievement here or in any way to credit *Atanarjuat's* success to the participation of a white man, but Cohn's presence does undermine the claim that the film's authenticity is derived from the Inuit ethnicity of its makers. As is the case with assessing the construction of authenticity in *The Silent Enemy*, we must move beyond identity in order to understand *Atanarjuat's* effectiveness.

*Atanarjuat* challenges its audiences in several ways, and whatever supposed or actual achievement in accessing and representing the authentic is bound intimately to these challenges. *Atanarjuat* runs 161 minutes. The film features several exciting sequences, but it is not heavy with action. In fact, there are long stretches of the film substantially devoid of action. It contains repetitive sequences reflective of the cyclical nature of the Inuit lifestyle, including many scenes of characters eating the raw flesh of seals or walruses and many shots of dog sledding across the ice. Often, these actions do not advance the plot. In addition to the actors speaking in Inuktitut, the film also challenges the spectator to grapple with the element of Inuit shamanism, which plays a central role in the narrative. The film provides little context, introduction, or explanation

of this belief system. In its exclusive use of the Inuktitut language, deliberately slow pace, long running time relative to the substance of the plot, and unfamiliar cultural signage, *Atanarjuat* challenges the spectator to overcome his or her expectations concerning narrative, pacing, and comprehensibility. Despite these difficulties, *Atanarjuat* achieved notable commercial success, grossing \$5,188,289 against a budget of under \$2,000,000 (“Atanarjuat” n. pag.).

Critics and scholars have praised *Atanarjuat* for its universality. Kunuk agrees, attributing the film’s success to its universal appeal: “First of all, *Atanarjuat* was a really good film—exciting, entertaining, with good action, love, sex, good camera work, good music... Our legend is a universal story: about love, jealousy, murder, revenge, forgiveness—the same for everybody everywhere. Not like Hollywood films. It was shot, acted, edited in our own style. Everything is authentic. The audiences really get the story” (Krupat 146). Kunuk claims that the film’s universality contrasts with Hollywood films’ implied insularity, a curious argument given Hollywood’s market-driven model that virtually mandates universal appeal as a prerequisite for investment, production, and distribution. Furthermore, the thematic contents of the film—love, jealousy, murder, revenge, forgiveness—are indeed universal and therefore feature prominently in Hollywood cinema. Also questionable is the degree to which the acting, editing, and cinematography reflect a distinct and innovative style of filmmaking. As mentioned above, the story and cultural content of the film do challenge the foreign spectator’s comprehension. However, a slow pace, several confusing plot points, and a distinct cultural vernacular do not equate to a unique style of filmmaking. Does *Atanarjuat* challenge the cultural hegemony of traditional film technique and forge its own unique,

indigenous style? Or is it manipulating an established film grammar to construct an authentic vision of the Inuit in a language of cinema that is still comprehensible to a mass audience? I argue that the latter appraisal is closer to the truth. Despite *Atanarjuat's* foreignness, it adheres to the normative cinematic style of the colonial culture.

A number of indigenous-produced films, such as Tracey Moffat's *Night Cries* (1989) in Australia and Shelley Niro's *It Starts With a Whisper* (1993), produced in the Six Nations/Brantford area in Ontario, modify or break entirely with normative technique, substituting radically different film language in reflection of the films' anti-colonial ethos and in augmentation of story and thematic elements that would be undeserved by the staid style of the Hollywood idiom. Such films stake out indigenous sovereignty through form, as well as content, rejecting the temporal, physical, kinetic, and narrative conventions of the dominant film culture in favor of a film language more expressive of the indigenous culture. The content of *Atanarjuat* seems authentically derivative of Inuit culture. The story comes from the oral tradition, and Kunuk et al. conducted interviews with numerous older members of the community, constructing a complete, consistent narrative from their varying accounts of the story of Atanarjuat the fast runner. The authenticity of the film is vested in this traditional story, not in the mode of its telling, despite the director's claim, "[i]t was shot, acted, edited in our own style."

Kunuk's suggestion is not accurate on any count. The film was shot digitally several years before the advent of near-celluloid quality digital photography, so this imparts a televisual quality to the film, giving it a more immediate and documentary-like feel. The choice to shoot digitally was practical, not artistic however, as the arctic conditions—both in terms of lighting and temperature—render the use of celluloid

inordinately expensive and difficult. Aside from this dubious stylistic departure, the cinematography of the film is derivative of cinéma vérité and documentary naturalism with its hand-held camera work, frequent long takes, and low-level and often completely natural lighting. The acting of the film reflects the dual strains of naturalism and psychological realism that comprise modern film acting. As authentic as the acting may seem in *Atanarjuat*, its style is as derivative of Constantin Stanislavski's contributions to the art (by way of Stella Adler, Lee Strasberg, Robert Lewis, and Elia Kazan) as the acting style in any contemporary film produced by the Hollywood system. The same logic applies to the film's editing. The film's editors—Kunuk, Cohn, and Marie-Christine Sarda—employ continuity editing, the same technique one will find in any Hollywood production. No other influences are apparent, and there is nothing in the editing that might constitute an innovation in technique. The editing adheres to the 180-degree rule, uses the match on action technique, continuous diegetic sound, and generally constructs the smooth transition of time and space.

In *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer articulate the position of the film spectator as passive recipient of content delivered in a form he or she has been conditioned to comprehend:

They [films] are so designed that quickness, powers of observation, and experience are undeniably needed to apprehend them at all; yet sustained thought is out of the question if the spectator is not to miss the relentless rush of facts.

Even though the effort required for this response is semiautomatic, no scope is left for the imagination. Those who are so absorbed by the world of the movie—by its images, gestures, and words—that they are unable to supply what really makes it

a world, do not have to dwell on particular points of its mechanics during the screening. All the other films and products of the entertainment industry which they have seen have taught them what to expect; they react automatically (126-127).

*Atanarjuat* appears to challenge Adorno and Horkheimer's view on the difficulty of "sustained thought" in the experience of film spectatorship, but it employs the same "mechanics" of the entertainment industry, delivering its challenging content in an unchallenging form. A non-indigenous spectator confronted with the cultural exoticism of *Atanarjuat* is forced to ponder meaning and search for parallels in his or her own culture in order to divine an understanding of what is represented on screen. Yet, almost in acknowledgment of Adorno and Horkheimer's warning, the film provides the time and space necessary for the spectator to attempt sustained thought. Also, by following narrative and technical cinematic conventions, the film encourages the "semiautomatic" response of the spectator to the material, empowering a process of rapid, subconscious comprehension to be followed and enlarged by a process of conscious discernment.

The opening moments of the film demonstrate how Kunuk contains the challenging cultural content within the simplifying and accommodating normative style. The film begins with a long establishing shot of the frozen arctic expanse that will serve as the backdrop for much of the narrative. The shot lasts 50 seconds. A man or woman paces in the midground, his or her features indistinguishable due to the figure's distance from the camera and his or her full body attire. Dogs wander about the frame. Some exit the frame then re-enter with other dogs near the end of the shot. One dog remains sitting by its master throughout. The dogs bark and howl to accompany the howling of the wind.

A celestial body hangs low in the sky just left of the central vertical axis of the frame. Given the quality of natural lighting at this latitude, it could be either the sun or the moon. The landscape is a uniform bluish white with a flat horizon that constitutes a vague demarcation between land and sky lying directly on the central horizontal axis of the frame. This shot introduces the theme of a threatening and barren landscape, but the constant presence of both human and canine life dispels the notion that this is some uninhabitable wasteland. The length of the shot and the uncluttered mise-en-scene allow the spectator to acclimate to the foreign environment, to be transported to a distant time and place without immediately confronting the jarring cultural foreignness that is imminently approaching.

The first dialogue of the film begins off screen, the sound of the voices overlaying the establishing shot of the film for ten seconds before the shot cuts to a close-up of the main speaker. This aural stitch in the fabric of the two scenes smoothes over an otherwise difficult transition from the reassuringly static world of the established landscape to the foreign world of an Igloolik home lit only by firelight and filled with voices speaking in a strange language through the shadows. “I can only sing this song to someone who understands it,” says Tungajuak, the evil shaman from “the north,” in the first line of the film—again, spoken over the image of the landscape. In this line, Tungajuak assumes the role of the chorus in the epic poetry and theatre of Western antiquity, providing a prologue for the work that warns the spectator (at least the spectator who is outside of this community) of how challenging the material will be to their understanding. For the disoriented Western spectator, this allusion to a form of narration ingrained in Western culture provides a comforting segue into the space of cultural and linguistic foreignness.

The Canadian state's social, economic, and cultural support for indigenous communities was and remains an indispensable component of the flowering of Inuit media typified by *Atanarjuat*. The production benefited from funding by the National Film Board of Canada, which goes some way to explain the filmmakers' ability to undertake such a substantial project fraught with so many risks and to do so in a manner that at least partially spurns commercial appeal. Saladin d'Anglure explains the Inuit relationship to the Canadian government: "Inuit probably stand alone in having peacefully achieved so many political, economic, and social gains through negotiations with the government they live under" (qtd. in Krupat 157). This model of fruitful interaction with the state organs of the dominant society varies in its applicability across different societies, depending on the widely divergent political conditions of these societies. Also, while procurement of state funding is productive in the immediate sense, it carries with it the risk that one's artistic vision may be compromised and one's politics neutralized in an effort to maintain equanimous relations with the source of funding.



## CONCLUSION

Representations of indigeneity and its association with authenticity remain popular and pervasive staples of commercial cinema. The apparatus of profit-driven film production is unlikely to abandon the indigenous as a topic, as they are an easy source of both authenticity and lurid characterizations. The success of *Avatar*, whose \$2,782,275,172 box office take makes it the highest grossing film of all time (“Avatar” n. pag.), confirms the profitability of the indigenous on film. James Cameron deterritorializes the indigenous by creating an alien species to act as a stand-in for the indigenous peoples of Earth. Cameron’s indigenous aliens play the role of the colonized, oppressed people violently resisting military-industrial exploitation in a derivative New Age fantasy. Cameron cleverly circumvented the challenge of authentic and respectful representation by inventing a computer generated indigenous people that could not be linked to any single group. By generalizing and decontextualizing the specific struggles of indigenous peoples, Cameron was able to depoliticize the content of his story while preserving the appeal of a narrative that is familiar to a global audience. Whether or not indigenous filmmakers and their creative allies of non-indigenous descent will be able to penetrate further into the marketplace and reach a broader audience remains a complicated and uncertain question.

Certainly, commercial and/or critical successes such as *Atanarjuat* in Canada, *Powwow Highway* (1989) *Smoke Signals* (1998), and *Skins* (2002) in the U.S., *Once Were Warriors* (1994) and *Whale Rider* (2002) in New Zealand, and *Night Cries: A Rural Tragedy* (1989) and *Ten Canoes* (2004) in Australia seem promising examples of a new indigenous cinema, but these films are already dated, and none managed to usher in

a wave of robust indigenous production in any of their respective nations. While some made money, none were so profitable as to attract significant investment in indigenous-controlled film productions or productions by non-indigenous filmmakers who seek to counter reductive, dehumanizing, and seemingly more commercially viable representations of the indigenous. Progress has not been linear in the history of indigenous representation. *49<sup>th</sup> Parallel* (1941), *The Silent Enemy* (1930), and *The Exiles* (1961), while not necessarily reaching the apotheosis of authentic representation, remain much more radical revisions of traditional images and concepts of indigeneity than films like *The Lone Ranger* (2013), *Avatar* (2009), *The New World* (2005), and *Pathfinder* (2007) that were produced in the last decade. This also indicates Hollywood studios' reluctance to embrace indigenous revisions of history and representation. These companies have a vested interest in maintaining mythic and stereotypical conceptions of the indigenous, as these representations promise to be the most profitable.

So long as private investment remains weak and state support is lacking or nonexistent depending on the region, filmmakers who challenge traditional representation will be limited in their opportunities to produce films and reach an audience beyond the independent circuit and/or the Internet. This is especially true for individuals who seek to challenge cinematic form and forge a distinct style outside of the normative conventions that are so burdened by a history of racism and exploitation. I have mentioned a few examples of such works without going into detail. The construction of indigenous authenticity through unconventional representation and technique is a separate topic that warrants a thorough and comprehensive analysis. I have focused on filmmakers who mostly adhere to normative technique, while using that traditionally reductive style to

articulate revisionist themes and characterizations. These filmmakers' aesthetic fealty to the dominant, colonial culture qualifies and likely mitigates whatever success they might achieve in terms of content. Commenting on the success of Fernando Meirelles and Kátia Lund's *City of God* (2002), a film that exploits a mastery of normative technique to explore subaltern life in a Rio de Janeiro favela, João Marcelo Melo writes:

Fernando Meirelles seems to be naturally a talented commercial director; and there is no shame in this, if it is taken to mean that he wants his work to reach a large, popular audience rather than a clique of acolytes. The usual argument against all such accusations is at once pragmatic yet simplistic: thanks to that mode of representation, the film has encouraged the discussion of the problem on a large scale (even if superficially) and a few young people from that slum have had a chance to start a professional career (481).

Like Melo, I concede the usual argument for the popular mode of representation. While the artistic and political integrity of the work may suffer, such films can potentially reach a broad audience, open up a general discourse on relevant indigenous issues, and promote greater opportunity for indigenous filmmakers, actors, and technicians in the industry.

This essay has focused mostly on the aesthetic history of indigenous representation and the difficulties of reclaiming and reinscribing authenticity, but the practical difficulties faced by indigenous filmmakers are myriad and substantial. In addition to the challenge of securing funding for film projects, people of indigenous descent must contend with a history of repression, marginalization, and destruction—a history that is hardly relegated to the past and remains a potent present reality for many indigenous communities. The total abandonment of reductive representation in film

culture is unlikely to precede the ascendancy of indigenous populations to equal socio-economic status in the societies in which they live.

**FILMOGRAPHY**

- 49<sup>th</sup> Parallel* (Michael Powell and Emeric Pressburger, 1941)
- Aguirre, the Wrath of God* (Werner Herzog, 1972)
- Avatar* (James Cameron, 2009)
- Birth of a Nation, The* (D.W. Griffith, 1915)
- Cheyenne Autumn* (John Ford, 1964)
- City of God* (Fernando Meirelles and Kátia Lund, 2002)
- Dances with Wolves* (Kevin Costner, 1990)
- Destry Rides Again* (George Marshall, 1939)
- Exiles, The* (Kent Mackenzie, 1961)
- Fast Runner, The (Atanarjuat)* (Zacharia Kunuk, 2001)
- Fata Morgana* (Werner Herzog, 1971)
- Fitzcarraldo* (Werner Herzog, 1982)
- Fort Apache* (John Ford, 1948)
- Frozen River* (Courtney Hunt, 2008)
- Great Train Robbery, The* (Edwin S. Porter, 1903)
- Happy People: A Year in the Taiga* (Werner Herzog and Dmitry Vasyukov, 2010)
- Iron Horse, The* (John Ford, 1924)
- It Starts With a Whisper* (Shelley Niro, 1993)
- “Keep America Beautiful” (PSA, 1970)
- Little Big Man* (Arthur Penn, 1970)
- Lone Ranger, The* (Gore Verbinski, 2013)
- Man with a Movie Camera, The* (Dizga Vertov, 1929)
- Moana* (Robert Flaherty, 1926)
- My Darling Clementine* (John Ford, 1946)
- Nanook of the North* (Robert Flaherty, 1922)
- Negro Soldier, The* (Frank Capra, 1944)

*New World, The* (Terence Malick, 2005)  
*Night Cries: A Rural Tragedy* (Tracey Moffat, 1989)  
*Once Were Warriors* (Lee Tamahori, 1994)  
*Outlaw Josey Wales, The* (Clint Eastwood, 1976)  
*Pathfinder* (Marcus Nispel, 2007)  
*Pocahontas* (Mike Gabriel and Eric Goldberg, 1995)  
*Powwow Highway* (Jonathan Wacks, 1989)  
*Ramona: A Story of the White Man's Injustice to the Indian* (D.W. Griffith, 1910)  
*Red Girl, The* (D.W. Griffith, 1908)  
*Red Man and the Child, The* (D.W. Griffith, 1908)  
*Red Man's View, The* (D.W. Griffith, 1909)  
*Rio Grande* (John Ford, 1950)  
*Searchers, The* (John Ford, 1956)  
*She Wore a Yellow Ribbon* (John Ford, 1949)  
*Silent Enemy, The* (H.P. Carver, 1930)  
*Skins* (Chris Eyre, 2002)  
*Smoke Signals* (Chris Eyre, 1998)  
*Tabu* (F.W. Murnau and Robert Flaherty, 1931)  
*Ten Canoes* (Rolf de Heer and Peter Djigirr, 2004)  
*Union Pacific* (Cecil B. Demille, 1939) *Stagecoach* (John Ford, 1939) *Drums Along the Mohawk* (John Ford, 1939)  
*Whale Rider* (Niki Caro, 2002)  
*Where the Green Ants Dream* (Werner Herzog, 1984)

### Works Cited

- “2011 National Film Registry More Than a Box of Chocolates.” *Library of Congress*. Government of U.S. Web. 6 November 2013.
- Adorno, Theodor W. *The Jargon of Authenticity*. Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1973. Print.
- Adorno, Theodor W. and Max Horkheimer. *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. New York: Continuum Publishing Company, 1993. Print.
- “Avatar.” *Box Office Mojo*. Internet Movie Database. 21 October 2013. Web. 21 October 2013.
- Baird, Robert. “‘Going Indian’: *Dances with Wolves*.” *Hollywood’s Indian: The Portrayal of the Native American in Film*. Ed. Peter C. Rollins and John E. O’Connor. Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 2003. Print.
- Bazin, André. “What is Cinema: The Ontology of the Photographic Image.” *Film Theory and Criticism: Introductory Readings*. Ed. Leo Braudy and Marshall Cohen. New York: Oxford University Press, 2009. Print.
- Canadian Department of Justice. “A Consolidation of The Constitution Acts 1867 to 1982.” *Justice Laws Website*. Her Majesty the Queen in Right of Canada, represented by the Minister of Public Works and Government Services, 1 January 2013. Web. 21 October 2013.
- Carr, Jay. “The Silent Enemy.” *Turner Classic Movies*. Turner Entertainment Networks, Inc., 2013. Web. 5 October 2013.
- Christie, Ian. *Arrows of Desire: The Films of Michael Powell and Emeric Pressburger*. London: Faber and Faber Limited, 1994. Print.
- Christie, Ian, ed. *Powell, Pressburger, and Others*. London: British Film Institute, 1978. Print.
- Christopher, Robert J. *Robert and Frances Flaherty: A Documentary Life, 1883-1922*. Montréal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2005. Print.
- Collective, Cache. “Cache: Provisions and Productions in Contemporary Igloolik Video.” *Global Indigenous Media: cultures, poetics, and politics*. Ed. Pamela Wilson, Michelle Stewart. Durham: Duke University Press, 2008. Print.
- Columbus, Christopher. “The Letter of Columbus to Luis de Sant Angel Announcing His Discovery (1493).” *American Historical Documents 1000-1904*. Ed. Charles W. Eliot. Danbury: Grolier Enterprises Corp., 1980. Print.
- Columbus, Christopher and Paul Halsall Mar, compiler. “Extracts from Journal.” *Internet Medieval Sourcebook*. Fordham University, 1996. Web. 5 October 2013.

- Dickason, Olivia Patricia. "The Many Faces of Canada's History as It Relates to Aboriginal People." *Walking a Tightrope: Aboriginal People and Their Representations*. Ed. Ute Lischke and David T. McNab. Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2005. Print.
- Dixon, Guy. "Out in the cold: the struggle of Inuit film." *The Globe and Mail*. The Globe and Mail Inc., 30 December 2011. Web. 7 November 2013.
- Ebert, Roger. "Nanook of the North." *RogerEbert.com*. Ebert Digital LLC, 25 Sept. 2005. 29 Oct. 2013. Web.
- Freud, Sigmund. "Beyond the Pleasure Principle." *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*. Ed. Todd Dufresne. Toronto: Broadview Press, 2011. Print.
- Griffith, Richard. *The World of Robert Flaherty*. New York: Duell, Sloan and Pierce, Inc., 1953. Print.
- Herzog, Werner, and Paul Cronin. *Herzog On Herzog*. New York, NY: Faber & Faber, 2002. Print.
- "Indigenous Peoples, Indigenous Voices: Factsheet." *United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues*. United Nations. Web. 5 October 2013.
- Isuma Productions. "About Us" *Isuma Productions*. Isuma Distribution International Inc., 2006. Web. 7 November 2013.
- Kilpatrick, Jacquelyn. *Celluloid Indians: Native Americans and Film*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1999. Print.
- Kristof, Nicholas D. "Poverty's Poster Child." *The New York Times* 10 May 2012: A29. Print.
- Melo, João Marcelo. "Aesthetics and Ethics in *City of God*: Content Fails, Form Talks." *Third Text* 18.5 (2004). Print.
- Moor, Andrew. *Powell and Pressburger: A Cinema of Magic Spaces*. London: I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd, 2005. Print.
- Noriega, Chon A. "Birth of the Southwest: Social Protest, Tourism, and D.W. Griffith's *Ramona*." *The Birth of Whiteness: Race and the Emergence of U.S. Cinema*. Ed. Daniel Bernardi. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1996. Print.
- "Norman Cohn." *Isuma Productions*. Isuma Distribution International Inc., 2006. 29 Oct. 2013. Web.
- O'Connor, John E. "The White Man's Indian: An Institutional Approach." *Hollywood's Indian: The Portrayal of the Native American in Film*. Ed. Peter C. Rollins and John E. O'Connor. Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 2003. Print.



- Penn Hilden, Patricia and Shari Huhndorf. "Atanarjuat, the Fast Runner and Its Audiences." *All That Remains: Varieties of Indigenous Expression*. Ed. Arnold Krupat. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2009. Print.
- "Pine Ridge Indian Reservation." *South Dakota Tribal Department of Tribal Relations*. US Department of the Interior (Bureau of Indian Affairs), 2010. Web. 5 October 2013.
- Quackenbos, G.P. *American History For Schools*. New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1886. Print.
- Sayer, Derek. *Capitalism & Modernity: An excursus on Marx and Weber*. London: Routledge, 1991. Print.
- Schatz, Thomas. *The Genius of the System: Hollywood Filmmaking in the Studio Era*. New York: Metropolitan Books, 1988. Print
- Schrom, Benjamin. "The Silent Enemy, 1930." *San Francisco Silent Film Festival*. SF Silent Film Festival, 2013. Web. 5 October 2013.
- Singer, Beverly R. "Native Americans and Cinema." *Schirmer Encyclopedia of Film*. Ed. Barry Keith Grant. Vol. 3. New York: Schirmer Reference, 2007. *Gale Virtual Reference Library*. Web. 5 Oct. 2013.
- Smith, Donald B. *Chief Buffalo Child Long Lance: The Glorious Impersonator*. Markham: Red Deer Press, 1999. Print.
- Tarkovsky, Andrei. *Sculpting in Time: The Great Russian Filmmaker Discusses His Art*. University of Texas Press, 1989. Print.
- Telotte, J.P. "'A Little Bit Savage': Stagecoach and Racial Representation." *John Ford's Stagecoach*. Ed. Barry Keith Grant. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003. Print.
- "The Fast Runner (Atanarjuat)." *Box Office Mojo*. Internet Movie Database. 21 October 2013. Web. 21 October 2013.
- Thompson, Bob. "Johnny Depp says he drew on his native heritage to play The Lone Ranger's Tonto." *National Post*. Postmedia Network Inc., 26 June 2013. Web. 7 November 2013.
- Tobing Rony, Fatimah. "Robert Flaherty's *Nanook of the North*: The Politics of Taxidermy and Romantic Ethnography." *The Birth of Whiteness: Race and the Emergence of U.S. Cinema*. Ed. Daniel Bernardi. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1996. Print.
- Varga, Darrell. "Atanarjuat: The Fast Runner." *The Cinema of Canada*. Ed. Jerry White. London: Wallflower Press, 2006. Print.

Witschi, Nicolas S. "Imagining the West." *A Companion to the Literature and Culture of the American West*. Ed. Nicolas S. Witschi. Chichester, West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011. Print