“The Lone Ranger Rides Again”: An Analysis of Representations of the Myth of the West throughout American History

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Abstract

This thesis examines the how representations of the myth of the West have changed throughout American history in relation to cultural context, as well as how the myth is related to American identity. New historical literary criticism and the cultural psychological theories of Stuart Hall and Roland Barthes provide a theoretical framework for a historical survey of representations of the myth of the West as well as an analysis of seven narratives. Four of the narratives ("Letters From the West No. XIV. The Missouri Trapper" *Lord Grizzly*, *Man in the Wilderness* and *The Revenant*) are versions of the frontier narrative of the trapper Hugh Glass, while the other three are versions of the classic Western *The Lone Ranger*. Three themes are explored in order to provide focus for the analysis: The hero's quest for vengeance, the hero's symbolic belongings, and the portrayal of Native Americans. After the analysis, a partial conclusion presents the findings of the thesis in response to the question of how the myth of the West has changed. The discussion then examines enduring aspects of the myth of the West: its influence on American identity, its universality as a creation myth, and its white, male, Christian bias of perspective. The conclusion determines that the myth of the West is a fundamental tool in understanding American culture, while the final chapter suggests topics for further research.

Contents

Chapter 1 Introduction

The phrase "the American West" conjures images from Westerns: cowboys and Indians, outlaws and lawmen, Stetsons, mustangs, and six-shooters. The Western cowboy is an iconic figure, recognized by individuals who have never been to the West, much less roped a steer or shot a pistol. The Western is more than simply a popular culture entertainment genre, it is part of the very identity of America. As such, it has achieved mythic status in its ability to inform Americans about their national identity. Westerns provide an iconic representation of a relatively short period of time in American history. "The legends and heroes of the 20th century that were immortalized in films were based on the mythical era of the Wild West, that brief time in American history between the Civil War and the end of the 19th century when the land of the frontier wilderness was still open and free, providing the perfect birthplace for the idealized American hero" (Indick 1). The Western is a creation myth of individualism, expansion, freedom, and justice. It belongs to a distinctly white, masculine, Christian tradition that prizes "real men" who bring civilization to savage lands while "winning the west." The myth of the West represents the basis of the American identity that has changed according to historical and cultural context: "The cowboy has been recognized world-wide as one of the most potent and enduing symbols of America. Each generation has rewritten and refilmed the great Western myths and myth-figures to fit its own preoccupations and perceptions" (Richards ix). How was this myth created, how has it changed, and how has it endured? In this thesis, I explore these questions by examining examine representations of the myth of the West from the origins of the frontier to the present day.

1.1 Research Question

My thesis is guided by the following research question:

How have representations of the myth of the West changed throughout American history in relation to their respective cultural historical contexts, and what does the changing nature of the myth of the West reveal about American identity?

I focus on three themes that illuminate the myth of the West as well as the cultural historical context of each period. These themes are: The hero's quest for vengeance, the hero's symbolic belongings, and the portrayal of Native Americans[1]. The quest for vengeance is one of the central elements of the myth of the West. It sets the stage for the archetypal struggle between good and evil, and propels the plot by justifying impending violence. The symbolic belongings of the hero provide insight into how the hero's identity and values are represented, while the portrayal of Native Americans is especially indicative of the political/cultural environment of the time in which the narrative was created.

1.2 Choice of texts

I have chosen to focus on two representations of the myth of the West: the narratives of Hugh Glass and the Lone Ranger. The Hugh Glass narrative is representative of the frontier hero and the origins of the myth of the West. It is a relatively unknown story (despite its many versions) set in the untamed wilderness of the early American frontier. *The Lone Ranger* is a classic Western narrative that features an iconic cowboy in pursuit of justice in the Wild West. I chose these two narratives because they provide two representations of the myth of the West: that of the frontier hero, and that of the cowboy hero. In addition, the narratives have been produced in different forms throughout time, and an examination of the same narrative in different time periods allows for an understanding of how the representation of the narrative has changed according to context. I have chosen to use

[1] There are various terms that have been used to describe the indigenous inhabitants of what would become the United States of America. The current preferred, politically correct term is "Native American," and therefore I will use this term as the basis of my research question. However, for much of the time period covered in this thesis, the common term was "Indian." Therefore, to preserve the continuity of my analysis, I will use the term "Indian" when appropriate to the context of the narrative.

four versions of the Hugh Glass narrative (The newspaper article "Letters From the West No. XIV. The Missouri Trapper" from 1825, the novel *Lord Grizzly* from 1954, the film *Man in the Wilderness* from 1971, and the film *The Revenant* from 2015), and three *The Lone Ranger* narratives (the radio show from 1933, episodes from the television series from 1949, and the film from 2013). There are a variety of other versions of the narratives, but these seven provide a good selection of various time periods while still allowing me to remain within the scope of this thesis.

1.3 Structure

My thesis is organized according to the following structure:

Chapter 2: Methodology: This chapter accounts for the methods used in my thesis. It also identifies the difficulties of comparing different types of media, explains my choice of theories, and mentions other potential approaches.

Chapter 3: Theory: This chapter explores my chosen theories. These include the cultural psychological theories of Stuart Hall and Roland Barthes as well as the literary criticism of new historicism. I have also included aspects of Ferdinand de Saussure's semiotics and Michael Foucault's work with discourse as presented by Hall. The chapter demonstrates how the chosen theories can be applied to my research question, and this application is explored further in later chapters.

Chapter 4: Historical Development of the Myth of the West: This chapter broadly traces the development of representation of the myth of the West from the early 1800s to mid-2000. The structure of this chapter is based on William Indick and Richard Slotkin's application of Philip Wheelwright's model of the evolution of myth. The chapter also includes a visual representation of this development in the form of a timeline.

Chapter 5: Analysis. This chapter applies theory from Chapter 3 and the historical development from Chapter 4 to an analysis of my chosen narratives in relation to the three themes presented in my introduction.

Chapter 6: Partial Conclusion: This chapter reveals the findings of the first half of research question based on Chapters 3-5.

Chapter 7: Discussion: This chapter discusses how the findings from my analysis can be used to answer the second half of my research question.

Chapter 8: Conclusion: This chapter concludes my research.

Chapter 9: Further Research: This chapter identifies topics of further interest related to the findings of my thesis.

Chapter 2 Methodology

This chapter explains the methods used in my thesis. I also briefly discuss the difficulties that arise when comparing different types of media, explain my choice of theories, and conclude by identifying other approaches that could have been of interest to my research question.

2.1 Methods

I begin my exploration of the myth of the West with a broad historical overview of representations of the myth of the West from the early 1800s to mid-2000. This is a survey of the general characteristics of categories of representations as well as significant historical events that shaped American culture. I have chosen to include this broad survey to provide a framework and wider understanding of how the myth of the West changed throughout periods of history. It also fits with my choice of new historicism as literary theory. Since the new historical approach focuses on the

relationship between text and culture, it is important to provide an understanding of the cultural context of my chosen representations. Since history and culture do not occur as isolated events, a narrowed focus on specific time periods would not sufficiently answer my research question.

After establishing a broad context, I narrow my focus to a limited close reading of my seven chosen narratives. Due to space limitations, a true close reading of each narrative will not be possible, and I instead focus my analysis on the three themes specified in my research question. In order to complete a detailed close reading and examine all relevant examples and details of my narratives, I would have needed to limit my choice of texts. However, the variety of texts I have chosen provides a greater understanding of the cultural historical periods in question, and therefore provide me with a greater insight into the myth of the West.

I conclude my thesis with a discussion of how the findings from my analysis can be used to explain two core elements of the myth of the West: its universality as a creation myth, and its male, white, Christian bias of perspective. I then explore the possibility of further research related to my research. This section re-broadens my focus and allows me to discuss the inherent intertextual nature of the myth of the West.

2.2 Comparing Different Types of Media

There are some difficulties in comparing different types of media. In my thesis, I use both text and film, as well as a short excerpt of radio. Different types of media rely on different narrative techniques. Therefore, I have incorporated analysis tools relevant to each type of media. Films often rely on their audio and visual aspect to express elements that are often narrated or described in texts. These elements include tone, mood, character descriptions, the inner thoughts/emotions of characters, setting, backstory, etc. Therefore, elements such as lighting, camera angles, shot type, and music should be taking into consideration along with plot, action, and dialogue (relevant terms are defined in footnotes). Radio uses techniques from both film and text, as it is limited by both its

lack of visual aspect as well as its lack of narration. It often compensates for these limitations by the extended use of narration (to provide description, etc.) as well as the use of sounds and music. Film and radio are also often limited by the amount of time available to tell their story, and therefore often condense the plot of a story, whereas texts are able to explore multiple plot elements. Since the scope of my close readings is limited due to space, I have not analyzed all techniques employed by each type of media, but instead chosen to work with the elements that are most revealing in representing the myth of the West.

2.3 Selection of Theories

My thesis uses two branches of theory. The first is cultural psychological theory, in which I have chosen Stuart Hall's theory of representations as well as Roland Barthes' theory of mythology. I have also included elements of Ferdinand de Saussure's semiotics and Michael Foucault's work with discourse as presented by Hall. The works of these theorists provide the foundation for Hall's work, and an understanding of their terminology is essential to understanding the concept of representations. These cultural psychological theories explore aspects of the production of meaning through representational language, and examine how that meaning is specific to a cultural historical context. The theoretical understanding of the relationship between language, meaning, and cultural context provide terminology necessary to answer my research question.

The second branch of theory is literary theory, in which I have chosen the new historicist approach. This approach examines the mutually constructive relationship between texts and culture in a given historical context. In connection to this approach, I have included a number of additional sources in my analysis that reveal how audiences responded to each of my narratives. This allows for an exploration of the social historical context surrounding a given narrative. This approach complements that of Hall and Barthes and allows for an examination of my chosen narratives in connection with historical events without necessitating a discussion of "truth" vs

"myth." The influence of the changing nature of the myth of the West on American identity is not dependent on what is true, but rather what is true for individuals within a specific cultural historical context. The choice of the new historicist approach allows me to explore the various incarnations of "truth" without valuing history or myth above one another.

2.4 Other potential approaches

One of the fundamental aspects of the myth of the West is bias toward masculinity, Christianity, and white superiority. Since this is an inherent part of the myth, I chose to preserve the perspective by analyzing the myth within the framework of the dominant cultural ideology. However, an examination of the myth using feminist or post-colonial criticism in order to focus on the experience of women and Native Americans could have been interesting. The portrayal of Native Americans is included in the central themes of my research question, but since the narratives in question, as well as the dominant cultural ideologies are products of white, male, Christian society, Native Americans are viewed in relation to whites. The role of women in the myth of the West has been excluded due to the limited scope of the thesis.

Chapter 3 Theory

This chapter explores the two branches of theory that are applicable to my thesis. The first is cultural psychological theory, which demonstrates how culture and representations interact. The second is literary theory, in which I discuss my chosen approach of new historicism.

3.1 Cultural psychological theory

I use Stuart Hall's theory of representations as well as Roland Barthes' theory of mythology in order to analyze how my chosen texts represent the myth of West, as well as how those representations are tied to culture. In this section I provide an outline of Hall and Barthes' theory.

Hall's theory draws on those of Saussure and Foucault, so his understanding of pertinent aspects of their theories is included. The theory is connected to my research through relevant examples.

3.1.1 Stuart Hall's *Representations*

The first significant element of Hall's work is his definition of culture. Hall starts by discussing two definitions of culture: the traditional definition and the more modern, anthropological definition. Traditionally, culture is defined by being divided into two areas: high culture and mass/popular culture. High culture is "the sum of the great ideas, as represented in the classic works of literature, painting, music, and philosophy" that embodies "the 'best that has been thought and said' in a society," while mass/popular culture is "the widely distributed forms of popular music, publishing, art, design and literature, or the activities of leisure-time and entertainment, which make up the everyday lives of the majority of 'ordinary people'" (S. Hall 2). Hall notes that this definition implies that high culture is valued, while popular culture is debased" (Ibid). According to this definition, Westerns and other representations of the myth of the West are generally considered to belong to popular culture (Indick 5). However, the distinction between high and popular culture is diminished in the anthropological definition of culture. This definition states that culture is "whatever is distinctive about the 'way of life' of a people, community, nation or social group" (S. Hall 2). This definition removes the stigma attached to popular culture, and thereby demonstrates that forms of entertainment for the "ordinary people" (such as the Western), can be as influential as "the great ideas" of high culture.

Hall draws mostly on the anthropological definition when he defines culture as a set of practices that produces and exchanges meanings amongst the members of a society or group. (S. Hall 2). He states, "Culture depends on its participants interpreting meaningfully what is happening around them, and 'making sense' of the world, in broadly similar ways" (Ibid). Essentially, culture is made up of "shared meanings." This means that culture is created when members of a group give

meaning to things around them (people, objects, and events) in a way that allows them to communicate that meaning to others within the group. Hall states, "We give things meaning by how we *represent* them—the words we use about them, the stories we tell about them, the images of them we produce, the emotions we associate with them, the ways we classify and conceptualize them, the vales we place on them" (3). This means that cultural meaning is not static, but is created by/among individuals. Hall states that meaning is produced and exchanged in personal and social interactions, through media, consumption/production/use of "cultural things," creation of narratives, stories, and fantasies around cultural things (Ibid 3-4). Therefore, according to Hall's definition, representations of the myth of the West are a way for Americans to produce and exchange shared meanings about their culture.

However, sharing meanings only works if individuals have a way with which to express those meanings to one another. According to Hall, this is done through representational systems. There are two systems of representation in Hall's theory: mental representations and language. Mental representations are the system which connects the world (objects, people, events, etc.) with a set of concepts in our minds, and therefore allows us to interpret the world (S. Hall 17). For example, a glass is a mental representation of something we use to drink. When we think of a glass, we conjure a mental image that is not dependent on being able to see a physical glass. Mental representations are a broad system that represents both real and imagined things. (Ibid). We have mental representations of a glass, but also of abstract concepts such as love, and imagined things such as fairies. These systems of mental representation create shared meanings/conceptual maps that are common to individuals within a culture, and this means that individuals within that culture can understand a glass, or love, or fairies. (Ibid 18). The frontier, the cowboy, the Wild West, and other mental representations of the myth of the West are examples of a shared conceptual map common to American culture.

Simply having a system of mental representations is not enough to communicate with others. There is a second system, language, that allows us to translate our conceptual maps into signs (S. Hall 18). Hall adopts the social constructionist approach to understanding language when he claims that the elements of language are a code that gives meaning to objects. This approach states that the elements of a language don't have any clear meaning in *themselves*. Instead, they are the vehicles which *carry meaning*. (Ibid 4). In other words, meaning is produced through representation. This means that culture is a 'constitutive' process which shapes social situations and historical events, not merely a reflection of these events (Ibid 5-6). Therefore, narratives of the myth of the West are a way to represent and carry meaning. As the narratives and representations are created, they also shape society and culture.

3.1.2 Stuart Hall's Presentation of Ferdinand de Saussure and Michael Foucault

Within the constructionist approach, there are two fields of thought: the semiotic and discursive approaches. This section explains these theories as outlined by Hall. The semiotic approach, or the "study of signs" focuses on how language produces meaning (S. Hall 6). The Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure proposed that language is a system of signs that expresses ideas, and thereby produces meaning (Ibid 31). According to Saussure, signs are composed of two parts: the signifier and the signified (Ibid). The signifier refers to the form, or the actual word/image/thing while the signified refers to the corresponding mental concept of the thing that is created in our minds (Ibid). The two elements combine in order to create language.

Saussure claims that there is no natural link between the signifier and signified (Ibid 31). Signs have no intrinsic meaning, but are defined in relation to one another (Ibid). In other words, it is the difference between signs that give them meaning. For example, defining the meaning of "father" is difficult without defining it in relation to "mother," "child," etc. Saussure used binary opposition to define difference (night/day, black/white) (Ibid). Later critics observed

that binaries are a simplistic way to define differences, and one that neglects that many nuances of meaning between to concepts (dawn, dusk, shades of gray, etc.) (Ibid). While this may be the case, binaries remain a useful way of defining difference. This can be seen in my thesis as the narratives I have chosen often present elements of the myth of the West in binaries such as civilized/savage, Christian/pagan, white/Native, good/evil.

While Saussure focused on the production of language, the French philosopher and historian Michael Foucault used the discursive approach when he chose to focus on the production of knowledge through discourse (S. Hall 42-43). Discourse is defined as "ways of referring to or constructing knowledge about a particular topic of practice: a cluster of ideas, images and practices, which provide ways of talking about, forms of knowledge and conduct associated with a particular topic, social activity or institutional site in society" (Ibid 6). This approach is concerned with the effects and consequences of representation, and places emphasis on the "historical specificity" of a particular form or "regime" of representation. (Ibid).

Hall follows Foucault's work on discourse when he states that representation, knowledge and "truth" only mean something within a specific historical context (Ibid 46). Foucault rejects the Marxist idea that power is directly oppressive and that knowledge is the inherent tool of the upper class to repress the lower classes (Ibid 48). Instead, he argues that knowledge is always a form of power, and that when knowledge is linked to power, it has the power to "make itself true" (Ibid 49). Knowledge and power do not exist in vacuum, and when applied in "real life" situation it has real life consequences (Ibid). Indeed, there is no "truth" that is absolute in all contexts/cultures, but instead a "regime of truth" dependent on context (Ibid 49). For example, if everyone believes that Indians are godless savages who massacre innocent white settlers, and the army begins a campaign to eradicate the Indian threat based on this belief, there will be real-life consequences for Native Americans as well as Native/white relations, and the representation of Indians as violent

savages will become "true," regardless of whether the initial belief was accurate or not (based on an example from S. Hall 49).

Foucault claims that "each society has its regime of truth, […] that is, the types of discourse which it accepts and makes function as true" (Foucault in S. Hall 49). This means that representations of the same thing change according to the historical/political/social/cultural context. Hall's definition of representation "carries the important premise that things—objects, people, events, in the world—do not have in themselves any fixed, final or true meaning. It is us—in society, within human cultures—who make things mean, who signify. Meanings, consequently, will always change, from one culture or period to another" (Ibid 61). This idea is known as cultural relativism, and stresses the need for translation from one culture/period to another (Ibid). Representations that might mean one thing in one culture/time period could take on a new set of meanings when viewed by a different culture or in a new historical period. This means that narratives of the myth of the West from earlier time periods will be viewed differently in the 21st century than they might have been when they were produced. I am aware of this fact, and attempt to examine my chosen narratives within their specific time period, but also conclude with a comparative examination across time and cultural context based on my cultural and contextual "regime of truth."

3.1.3 Roland Barthes' *Mythologies*

The French theorist Roland Barthes built on Saussure's work by separating language into two levels of meaning: denotation and connotation. The first level is denotation, in which there is a simple relationship between the signifier and the signified (Barthes, *Elements* 89). In this level, most people would agree on the meaning of the sign that is created by this relationship (agreement on what is meant by a "dress") (Hall 38). The sign "dress" is produced by the physical object made of cloth (the signifier) and the mental representation of a dress (the signified). The second level is

connotation, in which there is a more complex relationship between the signifier and the signified (ibid). Here the denotated sign (a dress) becomes the signifier (Barthes, *Elements* 89). In this level, a dress is no longer simply an item of clothing, but it is liked to broader cultural meanings (S. Hall 38). The dress (signifier) and the mental representation of the *meaning* of a dress (formality, elegance, or femininity) (signified) produce a sign that is dependent on interpretation (Ibid). Connotation requires a broader interpretation that is linked to the historical and cultural context of the time (Ibid). The meaning produced on the level of connotation is "general, global, and diffuse," and closely related to culture and history (Barthes, *Elements* 91). For example, the denotation of a Colt revolver simply the pistol itself. However, the connotation of the gun, placed within the cultural and historical context of the Western, is of a cowboy hero, a "good guy" who will defeat the "bad guy." This connotation is contextually specific: the positive connotation of heroism and justice could be transformed to the negative connotation of murder and violence when placed in an inner-city 21st century context.

One result of meaning produced on a connotative level is the production of myth. Barthes' term my can also be understood as ideology, or "a body of ideas and practices" that actively promotes the values and interests of dominant groups in society, and therefore recreate structures of power (Storey 124). Barthes provides a new set of terminology in order to explain the creation of myth. He calls the signifier *meaning* (when referring to the sign formed on the denotative level) and *form* (when referring to the signifier that produces myth) (Barthes, *Mythologies* 116-117). The signified is referred to as *concept*, and the product of the two (the sign) is called *signification* (Ibid 117). Since myth is connotative, the signifier (meaning) is already a sign with a complete meaning on its own (Ibid). However, when it is transformed into form, this meaning loses importance and exists only as secondary information (Ibid 117-118). In contrast, the signified (concept) is the historical, specific, and intentional motivation that is the impetus which

creates the myth (Ibid 118). The signification is the myth itself, and its function is to distort (Ibid 121). Barthes claims that myth "has an imperative, buttonholing character: stemming from an historical concept, directly springing from contingency […] it is *I* whom it has come to seek (Ibid124). Myth speaks to individuals on a personal level that demands they pay attention to the particular representation created by the myth. In contrast to the denotative level of creation of meaning, myth is never arbitrary (Ibid 126). While there is no natural connection between the signifier and signified that produce the sign "tree," there is always motivation that creates mythical signification (Ibid). This motivation is rooted in history and culture (Ibid 127). Indeed, myth "transforms history into nature" (Ibid 129). It does this by portraying the relationship between the form and concept as natural, innocent, and causal (Ibid 130-131). Myth purifies and provides natural and eternal justification which makes motivated history seem obvious, factual, and depoliticized (Ibid 143). When experiencing a myth, one does not question the meaning created by the signification, since it seems that it "goes without saying" that it is true. Myth preserves reality as an image by representing a specific time period in a certain way (Ibid 146). In this way, while the myth of the West and its connection to the identity and ideals of Americans may seem natural and obvious to most Americans, in fact it is a particular representation of the time period in which it was created, and reflects the dominant ideology of the time. The myth changes as the cultural and historical context, and therefore different representations of the myth of the West provide an insight into the changing ideology of American identity.

3.2 Literary Criticism: New Historicism

In this section I review the origins and practices of the literary theory new historicism. This critical approach reflects Hall's claims that representations and meaning are not based in one static "truth," but are inherently bound and to a specific cultural and historical context.

New historical literary criticism is based on the approaches of new historicism (Tyson 267). New historicism is a way of thinking that rejects the traditional historicist belief that history is made up of objective "truths" (Ibid 269). Instead, new historicists believe that all of history is an interpretation of events and basic facts, and that an objective analysis is impossible (Ibid). While traditional historians examine facts in order to determine what happened during historical events, new historicists examine how historical events have been interpreted, as well as what that interpretation reveals about how the events shaped and were shaped by the culture of the time (Ibid 268). Because new historicists do not distinguish between "objective" and "subjective" accounts of an event, they view both primary and secondary sources of historical events as narratives and interpretations (Ibid 272). This emphasis on subjectivity leads to a conclusion that individual identity and culture are intrinsically linked and mutually constructive (Ibid 270). New historicism allows critics to cross boundaries between history, politics, art, anthropology, economics, and literature (Veeser ix).

New historical literary criticism began in the late 1970s and draws on the concepts of new historicism, while rejecting the theories of both traditional historicism and new criticism (Tyson 276). Traditional historicism focused on studying the author's life in order to discover the intentions behind writing the work, or examined the historical period in order to reveal how the text reflected the "spirit of the age" (Ibid). The focus here is on how the objective facts of history influence or are reflected in a text. New criticism replaced traditional historicism in the 40s, and dismissed the role of history as simply an interesting backdrop to the story. Instead, new critics argued that literature is timeless and autonomous works that transcend historical context (Ibid). The role of history was essential ignored. These two approaches place emphasis on either (objective) history or (timeless) literature.

However, new historical critics created an approach that places importance both on history and literature. They view both literary texts and historical context as mutually constructive entities with equal value (Ibid 277). Therefore, new historical literary critics examine how literary texts are an interpretation of a given time in human history, as well as how the texts in turn shape and reflect the discourse of the time (Ibid 280). Through the use of "thick description," new historical critics interpret historical events or texts as "culture in action," and analyze their subject matter in such a way as to reveal the "behavioral codes, logics, and motive forces" characteristic of the society at the time of the event or textual representation (Veerum xi). In other words, new historical critics examine how culture and society affect one another through the analysis of text (Veerum xii). New historicism takes a wide view of texts and culture, and examines how they interact with one another. When applied to the "myth of the West," new historicism allows for an exploration of how the myth was produced and changed according to the culture of the time. Rather than analyzing the "truth" behind a specific narrative, or examining how a text reflects the societal values of the time, new historicism provides the opportunity to embrace the theory of cultural relativism and examine how texts and culture interact in order to create a fluid "myth of the West."

Chapter 4 Historical Development of Representations of the Myth of the West

In this chapter I trace the development of representation of the myth of the West from the mountain man era of the 1800s to mid-2000. This chapter provides a broad overview of the progression of the myth of the West that encompasses a wide variety of narratives and historical events. This establishes a framework in which to place the narrower, more specific analysis of my chosen narratives in Chapter 5. The structure of this chapter is based on William Indick and Richard Slotkin's application of Philip Wheelwright's model of the evolution of myth. At the end of the

chapter I include a timeline that locates my chosen narratives in relation to an abridged list of significant historical events and categories of representations.

In his essay "The Semantic Approach to Myth," Wheelwright uses Alan W. Watts' definition of myth: "Myth is to be defined as a complex of stories—some no doubt fact, and some fantasy—which, for various reasons, human beings regard as demonstrations of the inner meaning of the universe and human life" (Wheelwright 154). Wheelwright notes that this definition is good because it avoids the concepts of "untrue" and "unhistorical," which works well with my new historical approach (Ibid). It also echoes Hall's theory of representations and Barthes' theory of myth (Chapter 3.1). Wheelwright further develops this definition into a classificatory model which includes primary myth, romantic myth, and consummatory myth (Wheelwright 155). Indick and Slotkin refer to these categories of myth as the mythopoetic stage, the romantic stage, and the consummatory stage. I also identify a fourth stage: what I have chosen to call the post-consummatory stage. The following sections explore the representations of the myth of the West and the historical and cultural context of each of the four stages.

4.1 Mythopoeic Stage

The initial "mythopoeic" stage is the stage in which myth is created by a culture remembering "the actual accounts of its own beginnings" (Indick 6). In this stage, the myth is closely linked to historical figures and events, and the goal of the representations of this age is to "record the authentic people, places, and experiences of the Western frontier" (Ibid).

The birth of the myth of the West took place in the era of trapping and mountain men (1800-1843) (Milton). This was a period of exploration, idealism, and nationalism where America expanded westward (The Independence Hall Association). Westward expansion was fueled by Manifest Destiny, the ideology that Americans were racially superior and had the divine right to bring Christianity and civilization to the heathen savages in the West (Ibid). The frontier gave birth

to fictionalized biographies of the heroes of the frontier such as Daniel Boone and Davey Crocket (Indick 12). These stories featured white men as heroes braving the rugged frontier and triumphing over the savage Indians (Slotkin 15).

These biographies were then reimagined into the archetypal rugged, individualist frontier hero of 19th century literary epics such as James Fennimore Cooper's "Leatherstocking" novels (Indick 12). The self-sufficient frontiersman heroes of this era were in tune with nature and stayed true to their own laws (Ibid). Cooper's novels provided an archetype of the frontier hero (Slotkin 15). In Cooper's novels, the hero is a "man who knows Indians," a white man who understands Indian ways so well that he is able to use that knowledge to triumph over the savages, though he often must turn to savagery himself in order to do so (Ibid 15-16).

The narrative representation of white men triumphing over the savage was made official in 1830 with the passage of the Indian Removal Act. Until the passage of this act, treatment of Indians was based on two attitudes: Manifest Destiny ideology that claimed that whites had the right to Indian lands, and the altruistic belief that Indians needed to be "saved" by civilization and assimilation into white society (Perdue 71). Both attitudes meant that Indians were encouraged to move from their lands, either so that whites could make a better use of the resource or so they might join civilization (Ibid). Some Indians accepted the civilization program, and exchanged lands through the use of treaties (Ibid 72). However, at this point the government refused to remove Indians by force, and the slow pace of removal was a source of frustration for whites (Ibid 76). The Indian Removal Act allowed for the forced removal of Indians from their lands, and led to the suffering and death of many Indians on what they called "The Trail of Tears" (Ibid 67; 76-82).

The relocation of Indians and the solution to the "Indian Problem" of the 1830s and 40s was soon eclipsed by the American Civil War from 1861-1865 (West). However, the greatest

impact on the Western frontier was not the conflict itself, but two pieces of legislation signed in 1862 designed to reunite the country (Ibid). The Homestead Act granted millions of acres "unclaimed" (the claim of Indian tribes on the land was not recognized) land to anyone willing to stake a homestead (Ibid). The Pacific Railway Act appropriated even more land to construct transcontinental rail lines, which made travel across the country easier (Ibid). These acts encouraged the increased settlement of the West, which meant increased conflict with Indians. The government's solution to the growing numbers of dispossessed Indians was to move them to reservations. In 1871, the US Government dispensed with treaties as a way to obtain Indian lands, ad instead implemented government-created reservations that dictated the (often poor) terms under which Indians would live (Berthrong 127). One of the goals of reservations was to suppress tribal customs and beliefs in favor of the Euro-American lifestyle (Ibid).

The plight of the Indian in the late 19th and early 20th century was publicly ignored as anything other than a plot device for Westerns. The end of the Civil War had heralded the birth of the mythic "Wild West" and the popularity of the Western cowboy hero (Indick 1; 12). The primary representation of the myth of the West of this era was dime novels, which were a cheap and accessible form of entertainment available to all levels of society (Indick 12; Slotkin 126). While the initial hero of the dime novel was the frontiersman, the archetype soon transformed into "the outlaw" with the popularity of the half-fictional tales of Jesse James in 1875 (Slotkin 127). This character type was "the good badman" who fights against the wealthy classes and modernization by resisting the march of progress and staying true to the values of the West (Ibid 133; 143-144). The hero suffered injustices at the hands of society, and his violence is accepted as fighting for justice (Ibid 145). The final representation of the dime novel hero became the archetypal cowboy in chaps, a 10-gallon hat, sitting astride a horse with a revolver at his hip (Indick 12).

Another of the most popular characters of the early dime novel was the commercial hunting guide Bill Cody (Slotkin 70). Dime novels featuring Cody were popular because they "featured the real thing" and allowed readers to get a glimpse into the action of the West (Ibid). This Western hero was brought to life from 1883-1916 with the popular and successful Buffalo Bill Cody's Wild West Show (Indick 12; Slotkin 66). The Show is a prime example of the desire for representations of the mythopoeic stage of the myth of the West to be "authentic." The Wild West show purported to offer its patrons a realistic glimpse into various epochs of the West: the arrival of settlers and their initial encounters with woodland Indians, the settlement of the Great Plains with buffalo hunts, Indian attacks, and cattle ranches, and "cowboy fun" with demonstrations of trick riding and marksmanship from characters such as Annie Oakley and Buffalo Bill (Slotkin 67-68). However, despite its claims of authenticity, the Wild West Show was in fact a representation of the West, carefully crafted by Cody to perpetuate his celebrity status (Ibid 69; 72). He created a stage persona to represent himself as the archetype of the American frontier hero: full of self-reliance, good morals, and a "scientific curiosity" that allowed him to engage with nature (Ibid 76). His portrayal of history led to a representation of the West as a place where violence and war were necessary for white civilization to triumph over the savagery of the Indians (Ibid 76-78).

The Wild West show was ultimately doomed by the creation of movies, which provided the same level of excitement for the fraction of the production cost (Slotkin 86). This led to a series of "farewell tours," where the shows reflected a sense of nostalgia, not for the actual frontier, but for the represented version of the West that had been created (Ibid 87). This nostalgia for a vanished way of life was reflected by Frederick Jackson Turner in his famous essay "The Significance of the Frontier in American History" from 1893. Turner declared that "the frontier is gone, and with its going has closed the first period of American history (60). Turner viewed the frontier as the source of American identity, and lamented the closing of the "great historic

movement" that was westward expansion (31). The closing of the frontier meant the end of the "Wild West" period, and narratives were no longer lived, but rather represented an idea of what life had been like in a mythic past (Indick 58).

Representations of the West in literature around this time were also subject to nostalgia. Authors such as Jack London and Frederick Remington wrote "red-blooded fiction" that featured the vanished free wilderness and Indian way of life (Slotkin 163-164). These novelists depicted a way of life that was no longer accessible: a fight against nature and the savage nature of man that no longer had a place in the more civilized world (Ibid 168). They represented the myth of West and the Frontier with nostalgia and an emphasis on nature. In turn, their work inspired the creation of "pulp fiction" Westerns, which were cheap and easily accessible stories about life in the West (Ibid 194). The hero of these formulaic novels is a master cowboy, individualist, defender of the worthy, and a pursuer of vengeance, and his use of violence is legitimized due to the injustices he corrects (Ibid 214, 216).

The representation of the myth of the West transitioned to the silver screen with *The Great Train Robbery* in 1903 (Indick 1). This started the era of the silent Western, which lasted until 1926 (Slotkin 231). The silent Western used the allegorized representations of the West that had been created by the Wild West shows and cheap literature of the time, and transformed them into successful motion pictures (Ibid 234). Western films were able to offer the photographic experience of portraying the West as "the real thing," while simultaneously conforming to the archetypal traditions of the familiar fictionalized representations of the West (Ibid 235). Indeed, filmmakers found that they could not be too realistic, or audiences would claim that the representation wasn't "real," simply because it deviated from their preconceptions of the West (Ibid). Early filmmakers solved this problem by using formulaic, familiar plots as well as authentic characters, dress, and set dressings (Ibid). This led to the creation of an "authentic" Western as a

film containing familiar and archetypal plots, the cowboy and outlaw, and Western landscapes (Ibid 237).

However, the start of the Great Depression in 1929 meant a decrease in the production of feature Western films (Slotkin 255). This was due in part to the fact that the Depression was characterized by disillusionment with the government, and the ideals of "American expansion and the dream of limitless growth" featured in Westerns of the "boom times" were no longer applicable in the face of the failure of this ideology (Ibid 256). Audiences turned to entertainment that provided them with an escape from the difficulties of their daily lives (Seigel). This was found in the form of B Westerns (Slotkin 255). This popular representation entertained audiences from 1931-1938 by providing them with formulaic, familiar story and recurring characters (Ibid 271). In these formulaic plots, the villain was a crooked banker or politician corrupted by greed, while the hero was a young individualist who had impeccable manners and was bent on finding justice (Ibid 271-272). During the Depression, "the perception was that there was a failure of capitalism [and] a failure of government to protect the American people from … one of the worst financial experiences of American history" (Seigel). Therefore, the appeal of B Western theme is that the hero fought for the interests of the common man and defeated the greedy men who had brought disaster to the country.

The B Western became so familiar and so popular that it was able to change to reflect current events. As the prospect of involvement in WWII loomed over the country, B Westerns incorporated Nazis into their plots, by simply substituting Nazis for the traditional villains (Slotkin 275). This erased the time aspect of setting, and allowed for the ideology of the Western (justified violence) to be applied to the sentiment regarding WWII (Ibid 276). This signaled the end of the mythopoeic adherence to "authenticity" as the archetype and ideology became more important than actual events.

4.2 Romantic Stage

Representations of the myth of the West enter the second stage of myth in 1939 (Indick 7). This age is called the "romantic sage," and is characterized by the metaphor (representation) becoming more important than the actual artifact (Ibid). Historical accuracy and authenticity are no longer as important as the archetype and symbol that have been created by the representations of the myth of the West (Ibid 7-8).

In 1939, the Western underwent a "renaissance" and was transformed into a successful Hollywood A-picture genre (Indick 178). This led to the "Golden Age of Westerns" (1949-1962), in which the Western transitioned from straightforward, simplistic Westerns into more complex "psychological Westerns" (Ibid 13; 179).

The resurgence of the Western was partly due to the renewed interest in American frontier history (Slotkin 278). This was then politically encouraged in the form of a sense of patriotism after the Great Depression and the implementation of The New Deal (Ibid 279). Writers were encouraged to seek for patriotism in the "thrilling heroics" of the past, where American values and individualism peaked (Ibid 280). This ideology was reflected in the emergence of the "big historical novel" in literature, as well as the A Western in film (Ibid). The idea of progress was important, and history was represented in such a way that civilization exists only because whites defeated the savagery of the Indian and established progress and modern society (Ibid 282).

American involvement in WWII demonstrated that the myth of the West in the romantic age had become a way for Americans to reconnect with their identity and ideology: "During the war the movie industry, like the larger culture of which it was part, looked to its heritage of myth for moral and historical precedents that would give it a 'handle' on the crisis and indicate the best course of action" (Slotkin 313). The myth of the West provided a way to reflect on the horrors of war: "While the nation was trying to cope with the unparalleled violence of two

world wars, violence in the Western films seemed cleaner, more honorable, and more gallant that the mechanized wholesale slaughter of modern warfare" (Indick 13).

This period also heralded a greater attention on race with New Deal promises of race relation reform the early beginnings of the Civil Rights Movement (Slotkin 350). This also meant a change in policy regarding Indians. The end of the war in 1945 saw the termination of reservation policy and the subsequent desegregation of Indians by relocation to urban areas (Fixico 194). The policy was an attempt to alleviate the poor living conditions found on reservations (Ibid). In addition, the government attempted to make amends for treaty violations and other injustices by offering compensation for valid claims (Ibid). However, while these policies seemed to redress the wrongs of earlier generations, relocation (or rather, dislocation) often resulted in culture shock as Indians were forced to assimilate in cities and suffered the subsequent loss of their traditions and heritage in favor of the dominant American cultural model (Ibid 204-205).

Postwar Westerns also acknowledged the recognition of injustices suffered by Indians, albeit in relation to the progress of whites. Hollywood created three types of Westerns: the "historical epic" which emphasized progress and the romance of the West, "Cult of the Outlaw" films depicting outlaws and resistance to progress, and the "classical" or "neoclassical" Western which played the other two off one another (Slotkin 286). Historical epics often featured progress in the form of the railroad, and the plot centered around the necessity of avoiding war (often between cavalry and Indians) in order for progress to happen (Ibid 292). "Cult of the Outlaw" films addressed the darker side of progress and focused on historical outlaws such as Jesse James (Ibid 293). They focused on the fact that the "last frontier" had been conquered through the unjust subjugation of the Indians, and if this progress is unchecked, the same subjugation will happen to working-class whites (Ibid 293-294). The films of director John Ford are examples of "neoclassical" Westerns (Ibid 286). Ford's films depict the archetypal Western hero: "the good bad

man" who is a product of the frontier life with a strict code of honor and an understanding of the importance of vengeance (Indick 146-147). Ford's films were often filmed in the "cathedral" of Monument Valley, Utah, which provided the archetypal background for the traditional rugged Western frontier where the opening sequence reveals our hero(es) riding alone, and the end of the movie where the hero(es) ride off into the sunset after having dispensed appropriate violence and justice (Ibid 142; 144).

The beginning of the Cold War ushered in the era of psychological Westerns: a new and darker style of the Western which featured themes of revenge and depicted psychologically damaged and alienated heroes (Slotkin 334). One of the most influential directors of the psychological subgenre of Westerns was Anthony Mann (Indick 116). His films feature "villains who are often psychopathic, heroes who are socially marginalized, and intensely neurotic, and scenarios which call into question the genre's typical motifs of violence, masculinity, and honor" (Ibid). Mann's films created a more complex version of the Western hero: a character plagued by inner conflict and the complexities of the social structures of the West (Ibid 139). Psychological Westerns shifted the emphasis from social/historical motivations to internal psychological issues within a character (Slotkin 381). This shift meant that individual psychology or family dynamics, rather than society, were to blame for creating violence and outlaws (Ibid). The revenge theme focuses on revenge on personal and darker level rather than the vengeance/justice missions of earlier representations of the West (Ibid 382).

After 1962, the popularity of the film Western began to decline (Indick 180). However, the decline meant an increase in prime-time TV Westerns (Slotkin 348). From 1955 to 1970, TV Westerns were the highest rated shows on television (Ibid). Television relied on scaled-down versions of the Western that recaptured the formulaic and familiar aspects of the classic film Westerns (Ibid).

4.3 Consummatory Stage

The decline of Westerns in the 60s signals the beginning of the third stage of the evolution of the myth of the West: the "consummatory stage," which is characterized by postmodern self-reflection and deconstruction of the Western (Indick 8). In order to understand the Western and the Western hero, there is a renewed focus on realism and authenticity in an attempt to return to the original artifact in order to understand the society that has produced the fictionalized representation of the romantic stage (Ibid).

The elegiac, or autumnal, Westerns of the 1960s dealt with the closing of the frontier, the rise of modernism, and the demise of the frontier hero (Indick 180). Many of these films are not set on the frontier, instead focusing on rodeos as the last vestige of the frontier spirit of the West in an increasingly modern world and the difficulty of the Western hero to adapt to the new world (Ibid 180-181).

The other type of postmodern Western is the anti-Western, which focuses on the injustice toward Native Americans, condemnation of the Western archetype, and features dark, conflicted protagonists (Indick 188). Heroes in these films were cynical and cold-blooded in their attitude toward spilling blood, and the violence portrayed on film became more and more graphic and realistic (Slotkin 560). These anti-Westerns were epitomized by the work of Sergio Leone and Clint Eastwood in the "Spaghetti Westerns" of the mid-1960s (Indick 189).

Representations of the West during this time were affected by the anti-war protests of the late 60s and early 70s (Slotkin 580). Atrocities of the Vietnam War such as the Mylai Massacre brought renewed focus to the representation of the West, as the massacre reflected the extermination of the Native Americans by the whites (Ibid 589). In addition, the early 1970s finally saw a true acknowledgement of Native Peoples by President Nixon and the public (Hauptman 213). Nixon rejected termination policy as ineffective and demeaning, and stated that "American Indians

have been oppressed and brutalized, deprived of their ancestral land and denied the opportunity to control their own destiny" (Ibid). He sought to remedy the situation with a balanced approach in which he claimed that the government has as much need of Indian leadership as Indians have a need for governmental assistance (Ibid 214). The idea of a balanced relationship promoted equality among white-Indian relations, placing Indians in neither the position of aggressors nor victims.

However, Hollywood did not embrace the idea of an equal and balanced Indian-white relationship. Instead, a subgenre of "Cult of the Indian" films appeared, where whites are portrayed as the savage element massacring a noble people (Slotkin 590). This type of film suggested that the way of life of the Native Americans could be superior to that of the "civilized" whites (Ibid 628-629). These representations of the West were revisionist history, which ultimately portrayed Native Americans as "the other" and as the solution to a diseased society (Ibid 629). This type of revisionist Western because the dominant form of the myth of the West in the consummatory stage.

4.4 Post-consummatory Stage

Some critics claim that the Western died after the anti-Western, but there are still Western films that crop up now and then, indicating that representations of the myth West through the Western is not yet dead (Indick 194-195).

The consummatory stage of the myth of the West was the final stage in Slotkin and Indick's analysis of the myth, but perhaps a new stage is required: a post-consummatory stage. The Western has already been deconstructed and revised in the consummatory stage, but the postmodern, post-consummatory Western demands another revision in the form of political correctness and sensitivity while consciously honoring and reconstructing the myth of the West. Postmodern audiences demand to be entertained, but also require self-reflection about the atrocities of the past, and post-consummatory representations of the myth must fulfill this need.

As seen in the other stages of the myth of the West, historical events are an intrinsic part of the fabric of the myth. In this section I limit my exploration of historic events to recent events of the 21st century, since the narratives I analyze are quite recent. Characterization of the narratives will be conducted on an individual basis in chapter 5, rather than by category as in previous sections, since I am limited by a lack of critical historical research into current films.

One of the most significant events of the early 21st century was the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center in New York City on September 11, 2001. The horror of an attack on home soil and the tragic loss of innocent life prompted a renewed surge of patriotism and unity across America ("Tragedy Prompts Renewed Patriotism"). The attacks also resulted in a declaration of the "War on Terror" at home and in the Middle East (Global Policy Forum). The resulting domestic policies began a campaign that has arguably repressed civil liberties and resulted in increased prejudices (Ibid). The renewal of the Western's justification for violence and vengeance was when Osama Bin Laden was killed in a covert mission by American Special Forces (Archibugi). The killing of Bin Laden without the due process of a trial according to law and order hearkens back to the days of frontier justice, where the need for vengeance superseded justice by law.

The other significant event that is relevant to my research is the Occupy Wall Street Movement of 2011.The Occupy Wall Street movement arose in response to a recession and the perception that corrupt banks, Wall Street Executive, and the wealthiest 1% control the lives and future of the remaining 99% of the population (The Occupy Solidarity Network, Inc). This echoes the sentiment of the Great Depression, and the need for a champion for the common man in the fight against corruption and greed is once again relevant.

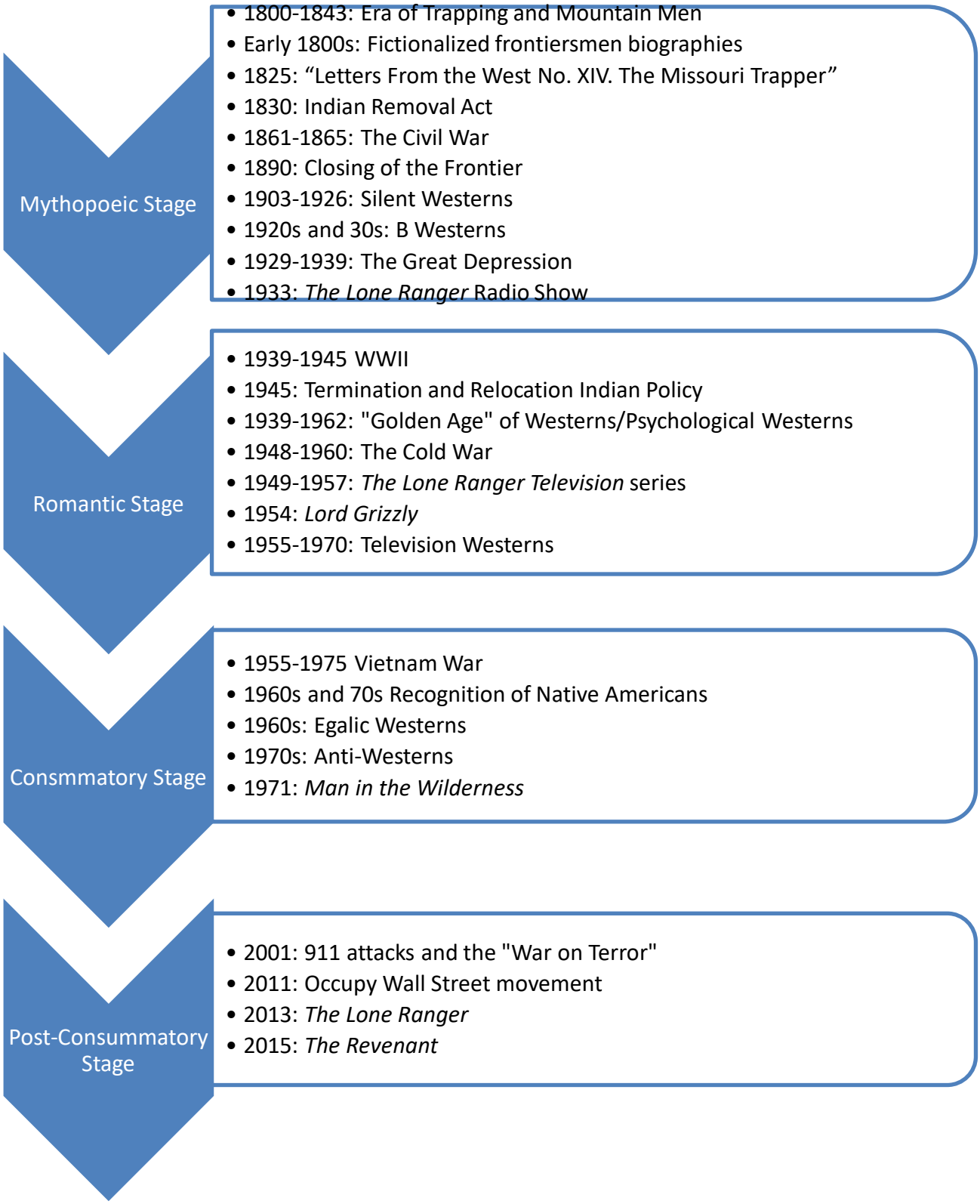
There has also been increased attention on Native American issues as Native Americans advocate for a realistic portrayal of their lives (both historical and contemporary). This

can be seen in the work of Native American actors, directors, writers, cinematographers, producers, and film critics who labor to replace the "Hollywood Indian" with "the truth of Native American life" (Strickland 34).

4.5 Chapter Conclusion

This chapter traced the myth of the West from its birth on the frontier in the mountain man era to the post 9/11 world of the 21st century. The broad historical survey showed how the myth progressed from the mythopoeic stage with a purported emphasis on authenticity, to the romantic stage with focus on nostalgia and archetypical cowboy heroes, to the consummatory and post-consummatory stages with a revisionist focus on realism and authenticity as well as a deconstruction of the Western archetype. Chapter 3 presented Barthes' theory of myth to explain how myth transforms what is political and motivated into a narrative that seems natural and innocent. This process can clearly be seen in the progression from the mythopoeic to the romantic stages of myth. While claiming to be authentic, realistic portrayals of life on the frontier, narratives of the myth of the West built a representation and connotation of the West that was based on the white, Christian, male ideology of the time. With the closing of the frontier and the creation of a mythical era of the "Wild West," the myth had been created, and archetypes had replaced authenticity. However, the consummatory and post-consummatory stages worked to expose the myth for what it was, with limited success. With the deconstruction of one myth, another rose in its place. The myth of the West and its representation of the frontier hero as well as Native Americans has changed in accordance with the "regime of truth" that dominates the culture of the time (Chapter 3.1.2). However, although the details of the representation of the myth have changed, it has remained a way for Americans to produce and revise the shared meanings of their culture throughout history (Chapter 3.1.1). The next chapter explores narrations of the myth in more detail to reveal these shared meanings.

4.6 Timeline


Mythopoeic Stage
• 1800-1843: Era of Trapping and Mountain Men
• Early 1800s: Fictionalized frontiersmen biographies
• 1825: "Letters From the West No. XIV. The Missouri Trapper"
• 1830: Indian Removal Act
• 1861-1865: The Civil War
• 1890: Closing of the Frontier
• 1903-1926: Silent Westerns
• 1920s and 30s: B Westerns
• 1929-1939: The Great Depression
• 1933: The Lone Ranger Radio Show
Romantic Stage
• 1939-1945 WWII
• 1945: Termination and Relocation Indian Policy
• 1939-1962: "Golden Age" of Westerns/Psychological Westerns
• 1948-1960: The Cold War
• 1949-1957: The Lone Ranger Television series
• 1954: Lord Grizzly
• 1955-1970: Television Westerns
Consmmatory Stage
• 1955-1975 Vietnam War
• 1960s and 70s Recognition of Native Americans
• 1960s: Egalic Westerns
• 1970s: Anti-Westerns
• 1971: Man in the Wilderness
Post-Consummatory Stage
• 2001: 911 attacks and the "War on Terror"
• 2011: Occupy Wall Street movement
• 2013: The Lone Ranger
• 2015: The Revenant

Chapter 5 Analysis

This chapter analyzes two narratives of the myth of the West: that of Hugh Glass and that of the Lone Ranger in order to answer my research question. I explore how each narrative represents three themes that are central to the myth of the West: the hero's quest for vengeance, symbolic belongings, and Native Americans. Theory from Chapter 3 as well as the historical outline from Chapter 4 identify how these examples of Western narratives represent the myth of the West.

My analysis begins with a brief plot summary of the backbone of each narrative. Significant deviations/additions from this skeletal plot are described in the analysis of each specific narrative. The analysis proceeds chronologically, beginning with the Hugh Glass narrative "Letters From the West No. XIV. The Missouri Trapper" published in a newspaper called *The Port Folio* from 1825, and then turning to *The Lone Ranger* with an examination of the radio show from 1933 and episodes from the television series from 1949. It then returns to Hugh Glass with the novel *Lord Grizzly* by Fredrik Manfred from 1954 and the film *Man in the Wilderness* from 1971. The analysis finishes with two contemporary films: *The Lone Ranger* from 2013 and *The Revenant* (a Hugh Glass narrative) from 2015. This structure means that I jump between narratives, but it will allow for a clearer picture of the development of the representation of the West than would be possible if each narrative were analyzed separately.

5.1 Hugh Glass narrative framework

The narratives of Hugh Glass are based on the adventures of a mountain man who lived in the 1820s. Since Hugh Glass was a real person, there are a scattering of facts that have been confirmed about his story. Since I am doing a new historicist analysis, I will not determine the "truth" of each of the various narratives, but instead examine how each of them represents the myth of the West.

Glass was part of a trapping expedition up the Missouri River to the Rocky Mountains in 1823 (Milton). The expedition was led by General William Ashley and Colonel Andrew Henry of

the Rocky Mountain Fur Company. The party stopped at an Arikara[2] village to trade for horses, but the party was attacked in the night. After this incident, half of Ashley's men left to assist Colonel Leavenworth in a campaign against the Arikara, while the remaining men continued upriver (Ibid). Glass was part of the latter party, and it was here that he left his hunting party and was attacked by a female grizzly bear (Milton; Coleman). The grizzly tore into his side, from his head to his knee, bit his head and throat, and tore a chunk of flesh from his buttocks (Coleman Introduction). The other hunters killed the bear and expected that Glass would soon perish. Henry left two men to bury the body once Glass inevitably died, and the rest continued (Ibid). However, the burial detail abandoned Glass before he died(Milton). Injured and alone, Glass crawled the two hundred miles back to Fort Kiowa (Coleman Introduction). Once back at the fort, Glass outfitted himself again, and headed out to find the men who had abandoned him. On the way, the party he was travelling with was attacked once again by Arikara, but Glass was saved by Mandan warriors who took him back to their village. Glass then snuck out of the village and hiked 300 miles upriver to Fort Henry, where he confronted and forgave one of the men who had abandoned him. He then set off toward another fort on pursuit of the other man, and narrowly escaped death once more. Glass and his companions were invited to an apparently peaceful evening with a group of Arikara, but the peaceful intent turned out to be a ruse, and Glass's companions were killed. Glass escaped and hid until he could once again head off across country. Glass continued until he confronted and forgave the other man (Ibid). Glass was finally killed and scalped by Arikara in 1833 (Coleman Chapter 6).

5.2 *The Lone Ranger* narrative framework

The story of the Lone Ranger begins as six Texas Rangers are betrayed by their guide and ride into an ambush (Siegel). Five Rangers are killed by a gang of outlaws, and the sixth is wounded. The

[2] This tribe of Native Americans is called by various names. The current name for the tribe is "Arikara," (alternative spelling: "Arickara") The older name for the tribe was "Ree." (alternative spelling: "Rickaree") (Redish). I will use the term that is presented in each narrative, but when referring to the tribe in a context outside a narrative, I will use the term Arikara.

wounded man is nursed back to health by Tonto, an Indian who happens to come upon the scene of the ambush after the outlaws depart, thinking they have killed all the Rangers (Ibid). The wounded Ranger vows to bring the outlaws to justice for the murder of his companions (one of whom was his brother) ("Enter the Lone Ranger"). He chooses to hide his identity, and the fact that he survived, by digging a sixth grave and wearing a mask fashioned from the vest of his slain brother. Tonto dubs him the Lone Ranger, and together they pursue the outlaws and work for justice in the Wild West (Ibid).

5.3 "Letters From the West No XIV. The Missouri Trapper"

My analysis starts with the narrative, "Letters From the West No. XIV. The Missouri Trapper" from 1825. This is the first publication of Hugh Glass's encounter (Milton). Hall skips over the initial conflict with the Arikara and starts the tale with Glass hunting for meat (his rife "being esteemed most unerring") and being attacked by the mother grizzly (Ibid 216). Hall's narrative is short, spanning only a few pages, and reads more like a list of events than a fictionalized novel. The result is the feeling of reading a newspaper report rather than a story.

This narrative belongs to the mythopoeic stage of the myth of the west. The tale is linked closely to the historical event, both in time (written just two years after the mauling), as well as in style. The proximity of the narrative to the event and focus on authenticity is indicative of the mythopoeic stage (Chapter 4.1). One of the authentic artifacts of this time is "the distinctive vernacular and lifestyles of frontiersmen" (Indick 6). In "Letters," Glass's vernacular is "authentically" preserved with terms such as *plunder*, *peart*, and *fixens*. In the narrative, Hall italicizes these terms, which emphasizes them and draws the reader's attention to their authenticity. Hall also includes another example of "authentic" speech when relating how Glass's companions shot the bear: "One of the cubs […] forced the new-comer to retreat to the river, where, standing to the middle in water, he gave his foe a mortal shot, or *to use his own language*—'I burst the varment

[sic].'" (216, my emphasis). There is a distinct difference between Hall's rather formal language "foe" and "mortal shot" and the mountain man's rough vernacular "burst the varment." The use of authentic language and the style of Hall's narrative make it what Indick refers to as one of the "'authentic' accounts of what would become legends" (6).

The transformation from real-life man to legend was accomplished by fictionalizing Glass's biography (or at least a part of it). Hall was attracted to Glass's story due to what he viewed as the "romance of real life" and the potential for an "American hero" (Coleman Introduction). His retelling of Glass's story fits into the fictionalized biographies and epics featuring frontiersmen heroes that was typical of the time (Chapter 4.1). In these stories, the frontiersman finds redemption through suffering the privations of savage Indians and the harsh nature of the frontier (Slotkin 15). Glass's experience, and the "manful" way he endured it, elevated him into the ranks of "American woodsmen" such as Daniel Boone (Coleman Introduction).

Hall creates a frontier hero by portraying Glass as a daring figure who survives despite the harsh wilderness, blood-thirsty Indians, and traitors. This is the first incarnation of the theme of the hero's quest for vengeance. Glass is described as a hero who "fearlessly penetrates" the "immense wilderness" (J. Hall 216). As Glass survives each new attack on his life, he is driven forth by the desire for revenge on the "unprincipled wretches" who abandoned him (Ibid 214). After Glass reaches and leave Fort Kiowa, Hall states that "the primary object of this voyage was declared to be the recovery of his arms and vengeance of the recreant who robbed him" (217). However, Glass's quest for revenge must go unfulfilled since the "traitorous acquaintance" has become a private soldier, and is therefore protected by the army (Ibid 219). While this ending is distinctly lacking in drama, it does reflect the reality of the time. It is probable that the lack of a violent confrontation was simply due to self-preservation. Had Glass killed the men who abandoned

him, he would have been disobeying orders and subject to corporal punishment as defined by strict military discipline (Coleman Chapter 3).

Although Glass is denied vengeance, he is mollified once the general provides him with "fixens" (his rifle, knife, flint and steel, shot-pouch, etc.) so that he might return to the business of hunting and trapping (J. Hall 217). This demonstrates the practical origins of the importance of the Western hero's symbolic belongings. A rifle and other accessories essential to trapping, hunting, and survival in the wilderness are more important to Glass than revenge. The importance of "fixens" is revealed in a quotation from Glass when talking about his final escape from the Arickara: "'Although I had lost my rife and all my *plunder*, I felt quite rich when I found my knife, flint, and steel in my shot-pouch. These little fixens […] make a man feel right *peart*, when he is three or four hundred miles *from any body* [sic] or *any place*—all along among the *painters* and wild *varments*'" (Ibid emphasis original). A frontier hero such as Glass needs only the barest necessities not only to survive, but to feel "rich" in the middle of the wilderness. In the early days of the west, the tools of the mountain man were practical elements that ensured survival. When a mountain man was alone and facing the harsh realities of life in the wilderness, the possession of flint and steel, a knife, and a rifle, could mean the difference between life and death. Part of the outrage that Glass feels after he is abandoned is because the men also took his belongings, "leaving him with no means of either making fire or procuring food" (Ibid 217). However, the representation of the importance of these tools elevates them beyond their mere ability to help sustain life. The denotation of the tools lies in their practical use, but they also have a connotation that represents the mountain man identity (Chapter 3.1.3) As Coleman remarks, "The tools defined Glass's humanity. Without them, he was at worst a thing, a corpse; at best a wounded animal" (Chapter 5). In "Letters," Glass is reduced to less than human when he encounters a pack of wolves who had just killed a buffalo calf: "[he] interfered and took possession of '*fatted calf*;' but as he had no means of

striking a fire, we may infer that he did not make a very *prodigal* use of the veal thus obtained" (J. Hall 217, emphasis original). Here Glass is portrayed as less than civilized, and on nearly the same level as the wolves who provided him with the meat.

The representation of Native Americans in "Letters" also reflects the idea of civilization versus savagery, as was typical of the mythopoetic era (Chapter 4.1). Glass has several encounters with Arickara Indians, who are represented as savages. Hall uses adjectives such as hostile, savage, and blood-thirsty, which present the natives in a negative light (216-219). At the end of the narrative, Glass and his companions are tricked into an ambush at Chief Grey Eye's encampment. The chief pretends to be friendly with the party of trappers, and they are fooled because Glass had "once resided with this *tounguey* old politician during a long winter, had joined him in the chase, and smoked his pipe, and cracked many a bottle by the genial fire of his wigwam; and when he landed the savage chief embraced him with the cordiality of an old friend" (J. Hall 218). This turns out to be a ruse, and Glass's companions are killed, while he narrowly escapes (Ibid 219). This is a clear representation of Indians as savage killers who cannot be trusted. However, the quotation above reveals that Glass also spent a winter with the Arickara in friendship, without incident, so therefore they are not always blood-thirsty killers. In addition, Glass is also saved from a different band of Arickara by two Mandan warriors (Ibid 218). Therefore, the representation of Native Americans in Hall's narrative is somewhat ambiguous. Sometimes they were friendly, sometimes hostile, but always savage and uncivilized.

The Hugh Glass narrative in "Letters" is an example of a frontier hero fighting for Westward expansion and fulfilling the patriotic duty of Manifest Destiny (Chapter 4.1). In accordance with early representations of the myth of the West, Hall and "[other] authors of Westerns labored to separate East and West, civilization and savagery" (Coleman Chapter 1). Readers in the civilized East experienced the frontier vicariously through stories such as that of

Hugh Glass, but remained separated from the savagery by the frontier line. This separation reflected the idea of the frontier as a boundary, and as that boundary was pushed ever westward, American heroes were born. "The 'American hero was not someone who lived in the "civilized" East, but instead pushed the limits of human endurance on the Western frontier of the country" (Ibid). The creation of the American hero also meant the creation of the myth of the West and the birth of Americanism. As Frederick Jackson Turner states, "The frontier is the line of the most rapid and effective Americanization" (33). Upon meeting the frontier, the colonist or frontiersman is stripped of his European identity and "garments of civilization" (Ibid). Life on the frontier initially forces a man to adopt the ways of the savage until he can transform the wilderness and himself little by little, and eventually produce a new man: the American (Ibid 33-34). The accomplishment of the frontier hero is not merely survival, but the creation of American identity.

5.4 *The Lone Ranger* Radio Show and Television Series

The creation of the frontier hero and the myth of the West paved the way for iconic characters such as the Lone Ranger. The Lone Ranger originated on a Detroit radio show in 1933 and began the "enormously successful radio show" that aired 2,956 episodes from 1933-1954 (Umland Chapter 4). The radio show transitioned to television in 1949, and the popular program aired until 1957 with 221 episodes (Ibid). Since early versions of the radio show are difficult to find, and the television series resembles the radio show quite closely, the thematic analysis of these two versions of *The Lone Ranger* are combined. I examine short excerpts of the radio show and secondary sources as well as the first three episodes of the television series.

Although the radio show spans the transition from the mythopoeic and romantic stages of the myth of the West, many characteristics of the show fit into the romantic stage, and the television series further exemplifies this stage of the myth (Chapter 4.2). The romantic stage of the myth of the west is characterized by the archetype and representation of the myth becoming more

important than authenticity (Ibid). At this point in history, the West has become a symbolic sign, and *The Lone Ranger* uses this archetypal representation as the basis for the creation of an outlaw fighting for justice outside the law (Chapter 3.1.2). The beginning years of the radio show fell under the era of B Westerns, and then flourished in the Golden Age of Westerns (Chapter 4.2). The television series was also a part of the Golden Age, and was partly responsible for initiating the era of television-Westerns (Ibid).

The origins of the radio show were in the midst of the Great Depression, and the accompanying perception of the failure of government (Chapter 4.1). The Lone Ranger is "a hero made for the audiences of the Great Depression" since "a masked vigilante who operated outside the bounds of government — but in the interests of the law-abiding public — resonated with that public" (Seigel). The audiences of the Depression were able to escape into the romanticized and nostalgic elements of the myth of the West and imagine a simpler time, where the Lone Ranger provided justice for the common man. The appeal of nostalgia can be seen in the introduction of the radio show. The opening to each episode of the radio show was the William Tell overture, along with the narrator giving the following introduction:

> A fiery horse with a speed of light, a cloud of dust and a hearty Hi-yo Silver! The Lone Ranger. With his faithful Indian companion, Tonto, the daring and resourceful masked rider of the plains led the fight for law and order in the early western United States. Nowhere in the pages of history can one find a greater champion of justice. Return with us now to those thrilling days of yesteryear. From out of the past comes the thundering hoofbeats of the great horse, Silver. The Lone Ranger rides again. Hi-yo Silver, away." (Ibid)

The Lone Ranger is portrayed as a real historical figure who fought for justice in a wild, uncivilized West. However, the harsh realities of the West (as seen in "Letters") are absent here, and instead listeners are invited to experience the "thrilling days of yesteryear." The Lone Ranger's fight for justice was thrilling and heroic rather than bloody and savage. The phrase "the Lone Ranger rides again" suggests that there is once again a need for a champion of justice. Here the myth of the West represented as way to help the everyday person escape their troubles for a half hour.

The iconic opening from the radio show is preserved in the television series: each episode opens with the William Tell theme song while the Lone Ranger and Silver gallop along the screen. There is then the sound of gunfire, and a voiceover[3] as Silver rears: "A fiery horse with a speed of light, a cloud of dust and a hearty Hi-yo Silver! The Lone Ranger" ("Enter the Lone Ranger" 00.02). After a close-up shot[4] of the Lone Ranger, over which is superimposed[5] the name of the episode, the narrator continues his introduction:

> This is the story of one of the most mysterious characters to appear in the early days of the West. He was a fabulous individual. A man whose presence brought fear to the lawless, and hope to those who wanted to make this frontier land their home. He was known as the Lone Ranger." (Ibid 00.39)

The narrator then provides background information for the episode or recounts what happened on a previous episode. The romanticism and nostalgia of the radio show is present here. However, the use of the phrases "story of" and "character" rather than "pages of history" imply that this is less of a historical retelling and more of a fictionalized narrative. The introduction also stresses the

[3] "the use of a voice, over images, perhaps as an introduction, a linking narrative device, or to comment on action" (Clark et al 22).
[4] A type of camerawork employed to draw the viewer closer, observe reactions and emotions, and privilege the protagonist over other characters (Ibid).
[5] Placing writing on top of an image so that both can be seen at once, thereby increasing the amount of information available to the viewer. (Ibid)

dichotomy between outlaws and honest Americans seeking to live their lives. Rather than leading the fight for justice, the Lone Ranger's presence strikes fear into the hearts of those who would impede the Americans in their pursuit of happiness. There is more of a patriotic tone here, which reflects the fact that America experienced a renewed surge of patriotism during and after WWII (Indick 13; Chapter 4.2). In addition, *The Lone Ranger* continues to provide an element of escapism for audiences. The television series allowed audiences to escape the realities of war and the ensuing ideological struggles (Chapter 4.2). *The Lone Ranger* and other Westerns of the time used the myth of the West to reestablish the American identity and values that had been shaken in the wake of the wartime climate.

The lack of violence and romantic portrayal of the harsh life on the frontier in *The Lone Ranger* was partly due to the fact that the radio show was intended for younger audiences. The original script submitted by Striker was more violent, and perhaps more authentic (Umland Chapter 4). However, that script was rejected in favor of a set of moral guidelines that defined the Lone Ranger: he must be a virtuous role model for younger audiences, and he should not "smoke, drink, or use profanity, he must espouse the founding principles of America, revere God, use precise speech, and never shoot to kill" (Ibid). These qualities elevate the Lone Ranger to nearly saintly status: his moral principles are unwavering in the pursuit of justice. Once he learns that the other rangers are dead, the Lone Ranger declares that "for every one of those men, I'm going to bring 100 lawbreakers to justice. I'll make that Cavendish gang, and every criminal I can find, for that matter, regret the day those rangers were killed" ("Enter the Lone Ranger" 15.35).

The distinction between justice and vengeance is a narrow one. Psychologist Leon F. Seltzer describes justice as rational, impersonal, impartial, an act of vindication, and a way of restoring balance. On the other hand, vengeance is emotional, personal, vindictive, and an act of retribution (Ibid). While the denotations of the two terms are technically different, in practice the

connotation is often confused (Chapter 3.1.2) Therefore, while the Lone Ranger may intend to pursue justice through law and order, his vow has the flavor of personal vengeance rather than objective justice. He wants to make the Cavendish gang, and then any other criminal, pay for what happened to his friends. While he doesn't seek "frontier justice" by killing the criminals, he seeks revenge as a form of payback, rather than enforcing the law. In addition, once he puts on the mask, he works outside the law: "vengeance is his initial motivation in adopting the mask—he never considers asking the law or the Texas Rangers to do what he himself, for personal reasons, has determined he will do alone" (Umland Chapter 4).

The Lone Ranger's mask is an inherent part of his identity since it signifies that he is, to some degree, an outlaw, even while working on behalf of the law. The original reason for the mask was to hide the Lone Ranger's identity from the Cavendish gang. He comes up with the idea of wearing "a disguise of some sort," and Tonto suggests a mask. Tonto then cuts a mask from the vest of his dead brother, and the Lone Ranger is born ("Enter the Lone Ranger" 16.37). Up to this point, the Lone Ranger's face has either been hidden due to a wider camera shot, or obscured with bandages. In addition, we never hear the Lone Ranger's name. He is simply referred to as "ranger," even by those who know his true identity ("Enter the Lone Ranger;" "The Lone Ranger Fights On). Therefore, he has no real identity until the mask provides him with one. Once the Cavendish gang is brought to justice, the mask is ostensibly no longer necessary. However, it has become a part of the Lone Ranger's identity, and as he chooses to continue his mission to pursue justice, the mask remains: "The mask, which becomes the central iconic signifier, both conceals and reveals his identity, an encoded but palpable sign of his pledge" (Umland Chapter 4).

Once the Lone Ranger dons the mask, Tonto provides him with additional items essential to his identity: his hat and guns. "Here hat. Me wash in stream, dry in sun. Make whiter. … Here gun, to kill badmen [sic]" ("Enter the Lone Ranger" 16.56). The hat and 6-shooter are an

essential part of the archetype of the Western hero (Indick 19; 23). A white hat is representative of the hero and goodness, and since the Lone Ranger is the ultimate moral hero, his hat has been made even whiter (Umland Chapter 4). By washing and bleaching the hat, Tonto has conferred symbolic purity upon the Lone Ranger. This purity and noble intentions is then revealed when the Lone Ranger rejects Tonto's suggestion to use his gun to "kill badmen:" "I'll shoot if I have to, but I'll shoot to wound, not to kill. If a man must die, it's up to the law to decide that, not the person behind the six-shooter" ("Enter the Lone Ranger" 17.10). The narrator notes this departure from the traditional "frontier justice" that was found at the end of a barrel: "Before [the Lone Ranger's] coming, this new land of the West was a wild, unruly territory … beyond the reach of law and order, might was right, the best shot was the best man" (Ibid 01.07). The idea of justice through law rather than violence is further represented by the Lone Ranger's use of silver bullets to "serve as a sort of a symbol … a symbol which means justice by law" ("The Lone Ranger Fights On" 15.11). The silver bullets also had secondary symbolic purposes: they became a "signature" of the Lone Ranger as well as a symbol of the price of life that reminded viewers of the expense of human life and that you should never waste a human life by wasting a silver bullet (Umland Chapter 4).

The Lone Ranger has two additional "belongings" that complete his identity: his horse, Silver, and his "Indian companion," Tonto. The horse is a primary element of the archetype of the Western hero (Indick 18). However, Silver is no mere belonging, but a partner to the Lone Ranger. Both the radio show and the television series devote an episode to the origin of the partnership. In the radio show, an episode entitled "Finding Silver" from 1936 tells "the story of a man and a horse, and how they met:" While trailing Cavendish, the Lone Ranger's horse is shot and killed. The Lone Ranger says that he needs a better horse, and had heard tales of a wild "fiery white stallion" that might suffice. The Lone Ranger and Tonto find the stallion engaged in a battle with a buffalo, and the Lone Ranger intervenes just before the stallion is gored. They nurse him back to

health, and the horse gallops off. Tonto offers to get a rope, but the Lone Ranger refuses, stating, "let him go. I'd like to have that horse more than anything in the world, but he deserves his freedom, he fought for it!" As the horse stops and looks back, the Lone Ranger names him Silver, and calls out to him. Against all odds, Silver returns and accepts the halter as a "mysterious bond of friendship and understanding. The Lone Ranger saddles him, tells him they're "going to be partners," and the horse is quickly and easily tamed ("Finding Silver"). The story is the same in the television episode "The Lone Ranger Fights on," where the narrator notes in a voiceover that there is "a partnership between horse and rider. The Lone Ranger and Silver accept each other as equals" (07.49). The partnership between man and horse represents a connection to nature and the fact that the appeal of the Lone Ranger is so great that even a wild stallion will give up his freedom for him.

While the idea of a horse as both a belonging and companion is understandable, the similar portrayal of Tonto is indicative of how *The Lone Ranger* represents Native Americans. According to Fran Striker's son, Tonto did not appear on the radio show until the 11th episode, where he was created as a sidekick "developed solely with the purpose of giving the Lone Ranger someone to talk to" (Seigel). The reason behind the creation of the Tonto is revealing: he was not created as a character in his own right, but as a "sidekick" and a way to allow the Lone Ranger to dialogue so listeners could hear him speak (a lone character without dialogue makes for a quiet and boring radio show). However, the idea that an Indian could be a white man's greatest friend was a novel idea at the time. As Fran Striker Jr says, "If the Lone Ranger accepts the Indian as his closest companion, it's obvious to the child listener that great men have no racial or religious prejudice" (Ibid). While Fran Striker Jr points out that in all the *Lone Ranger* episodes, there is never a disparaging word about any minority group (Seigel), it is clear that minority groups, and Indians in particular, are still considered second-class citizens. Tonto's use of broken English ("Me Tonto") stands in stark contrast to the Lone Ranger's precise, grammatically correct speech, which results in

a representation of the Lone Ranger as intelligent and educated, while Tonto is uneducated and stupid.

While the Lone Ranger values Tonto as a friend (and *almost* an equal), he is not seen the same way by other characters. For example, in "The Lone Ranger Fights On," the Lone Ranger sends Tonto to town to persuade the sheriff to meet him and Jim Blaine (a former Ranger) in order to reveal Cavendish's plot to take over the town. When Tonto arrives in town, he is met with derision and dismissed as a nuisance:

> Sherriff: Go away Injun, can't you see I'm busy?
>
> Tonto: Sherriff! Me know where Jim Blaine is."
>
> Sherriff: "Look Injun, can you go away please? Can't you see I'm busy with these men—what'd you say?
>
> Tonto: Me know where Jim Blaine is. Him want to see you.
>
> Sherriff: Well if you know where he is, why didn't you say so? (16.23)

Tonto eventually persuades the sheriff to follow him, but the sheriff's initial reaction demonstrates innate racism. He dismisses Tonto as an "injun" immediately, and assumes that he has nothing significant to say. Therefore, the fact that Tonto is friends with the Lone Ranger does not mean that they are equal in the eyes of the other characters. This is reflected in the fact that, "what had sufficed as racial equality in 1933 could easily provoke cynicism by the time the show was on television in the 1950s and 60s" (Seigel). Times had changed and more attention was placed on race relations (Chapter 4.2). The supremacy of the white male was beginning to be questioned, and the "racial equality" of the original *Lone Ranger* was no longer sufficient.

However, an increased focus on race relations did not mean that the television portrayal of Tonto avoided stereotypes. Tonto was developed into an archetype for the "faithful Indian companion." Russell Means, and actor and activist, describes how the Tonto character perpetuates two-dimensional stereotypes of Indians as "red Step'n Fetchits … playing second bandana to white Lone Rangers" (Strickland 39). The "faithful companion" stereotype "represents the Native American as [a] good and noble helper" (Ibid). The Tonto archetype moves away from portraying Indians as simply savages, and allows that there are some who can be "tamed" and help the white man in his crusade against the other savage redskins. As noted in an *NPR* article discussing the stereotype of the Tonto character, "in [*The Lone Ranger*], Western settlers face down what they call "redskins" and "savages." And trusty Tonto is always on hand to interpret the smoke signals" (Del Barco). In this representation of the myth of the West, one stereotype has merely been replaced with another.

5.5 *Lord Grizzly*

My analysis now returns to Hugh Glass with Frederick Manfred's novel *Lord Grizzly*. The novel was published in 1954, and like *The Lone Ranger* radio and television series, belongs to the romantic stage of the myth of the west and the "golden age" of Westerns (Chapter 4.2). However, while *The Lone Ranger* was representative of the classic Western, *Lord Grizzly* is representative of the psychological Western (Ibid). Psychological Westerns are characterized by a protagonist haunted by inner conflict and motivated by a personal mission of revenge (Ibid). Manfred's representation of Hugh Glass as a psychologically complex character was a success. The novel was on the *New York Times* bestseller list for 16 weeks, and received favorable critical reviews (Coleman Chapter 7). "Reviewers latched on to the 'reality' and 'freshness' of his vision. They didn't show Westerns like this on television" (Ibid). This review can be viewed in relation to *The Lone Ranger*. While *The Lone Ranger* was a prime example of a romanticized representation of the

West, *Lord Grizzly* moves away from the archetypal hero/villain plotline and into the psychological foundation of its flawed protagonist.

The novel uses the conventions of the psychological Western by focusing on the inner motivation of a character seeking revenge (Chapter 4.2). Although there is action, a large part of the novel takes place within Glass's head as he crawls through the wilderness. Manfred's version of the story begins with the Ree attack on Ashley's expedition and ends with Glass's confrontation of the men who abandoned him. It also adds deeper relationships and back story to the narrative. In *Lord Grizzly*, Glass chose to live in the wilderness to escape his "henpecking" wife, and in so doing, deserted his two young sons. The leads him to take on the role of a father figure to the younger men in the company. After running away from home, Glass sailed the seas before being captured by the famous pirate Lafitte. To avoid death, Glass chose to join Lafitte's crew. However, after two years, his pirate career ended when he refused to shoot a captive. He and another man, Clint, were sentenced to death for the refusal to follow orders, but they escaped in the night and swam ashore. They survived off the land (and once Clint tricked Glass into cannibalism of their guide), until they were captured by Pawnees. Clint was burned at the stake, but Glass gave them gifts, and so was spared and became a captive. He was treated well due to his bravery and skill at hunting and the Pawnee named him White Grizzly. While in captivity, he met another captive, a Sioux woman named Bending Reed. They were married, and Bending Reed became Glass's "squaw." When he escaped the Pawnees, Glass abandoned Bending Reed, only to find her again in Fort Kiowa after the Ree attack (Manfred). This backstory is revealed through flashbacks and conversations with other characters, and allows adds nuance to Glass's character.

As a psychological Western, *Lord Grizzly* provides insight into Glass's motivation, thoughts, and feelings. It is written in 3rd person limited, from Glass's point of view, and therefore allows the reader to intimately follow Glass as he battles Ree, the bear, his injuries, the wild, and his

need for revenge. In addition, the use of flashbacks, first-person dialogue, and hallucinations allow the reader to enter Glass's mind and understand his motivation and inner struggle. In this representation, Glass is portrayed as an experienced and respected hunter who is wary of authority, loyal to his companions, brave and intelligent, but also vulnerable to hate and haunted by his past. He is described as a man with a temper, who prefers to be alone and doesn't ingratiate well with others. He dislikes authority, but once he had decided to follow an order or pursue adventure, he could not be deterred, and was "a bold, daring man of great ingenuity" (Manfred Part I Chapter 1). Glass's disdain for authority leads to disaster. He leaves the party in a tiff because Major Henry orders him to shave his beard in order to avoid provoking the local Indians, and when Glass refuses, Henry takes him off of hunting detail. Glass declares, "I don't take orders from a tyrant," and slips off to hunt alone (Manfred Part I Chapter 5). He is then tempted by a grove of ripe wild plums, and it is there that he encounters the mother grizzly. In this representation, the grizzly attack is presented because of Glass's inability to take orders, his need to hunt, and the temptation of a sweet fruit. The psychological aspects of the Western are seen here, where the events are caused by deeper psychological issues, rather than external forces (Chapter 4.2).

Another essential element of the psychological Western is the protagonist's thirst for vengeance (Chapter 4.2). As in "Letters" and *The Lone Ranger*, the hero in *Lord Grizzly* is motivated to survive by the thought of exacting vengeance. However, while "Letters" merely told readers that Glass wanted revenge, and *The Lone Ranger* disguises vengeance as the pursuit of justice, *Lord Grizzly* embraces Glass's deeply personal rage and desire for revenge. The rage is motivated by the realization that his companions betrayed the mountain man code. When he first awoke under the pelt of the grizzly which had attacked him, he thinks he had been saved and remarks, "Ae, real mountain men, they were, to come to a comrade's relief. He smiled. Real mountain men. They had a code, they had" (Manfred Part II Chapter 1). As he crawls back to the

fort, Glass first assumes that the "lads" had been captured or killed by Indians, but the more he thinks about it, the more he comes to realize that they betrayed the code and deserted him. He decides that Fitz was behind it, and that Bridger must have been tricked into leaving. With this realization, "A wave of hate swept over him. If there was once thing Old Hugh hated, it was cowardly deserters. Amongst mountain men alone in a far wild country full of enemy varmint there just wasn't room for cowards, deserters, or they would all go under" (Ibid Part II Chapter 5). Here we see the idea of a "code" that binds mountain men together. Those who step outside the code are deemed cowards and deserters, and therefore subject to frontier vengeance: "Well he had a code too. A code which said a man had a right to kill deserters" (Ibid). There are no ideals of justice by law here as there were in *The Lone Ranger*. Glass seeks vengeance, pure and simple, and vengeance meted out by his own hands. After Glass makes it back to the comforts of Fort Kiowa and Bending Reed's teepee, he finds that he is unable to rest until he gets his revenge: "Ae, but what were all these advantages as long as certain white devils, two of them, were still loose in the world and their desertion of him unavenged" (Ibid Part III Chapter 1). Glass must exact vengeance and enforce the mountain man code before he can move on with his life.

However, as we know from the previous versions of the story, Glass does not get his revenge. This seems entirely "Un-Western," and leaves the reader feeling unfulfilled. "Manfred had to explain why Glass forgave his betrayers without turning him into a role model for Christian charity and moral self-restraint" (Coleman Chapter 7). "Letters" explains the lack of revenge with the fact that the "traitor" is protected by the army, and Glass is appeased by the gift of new "fixins." This rather simple explanation is given more depth in *Lord Grizzly*. While Glass discovers that Fitzpatrick is protected by the army, and fumes at the lack of the ability to "render right as [he] saw fit, according to horse sense and the code of the free wild," in the end it is Glass's history that prompts forgiveness (Manfred Part III Chapter 7). He recalls the horrible things he has done

(murder as a pirate, cannibalism, and deserting his sons), and suddenly the line between right and wrong is no longer so clear. "Glass put aside the law of the mountains, the code of the hunters, and embraced the moral ambiguity of his subconscious" (Coleman Chapter 7). When he finally confronts Fitzpatrick, Fitz returns his gun and explains that he was just doing the best he could in the middle of the wild, and Glass finally forgives both Bridger and Fitzpatrick.

The fact that Fitzpatrick returns Glass's rifle is an important element in Glass's rejection of vengeance. Once again, as in "Letters," a mountain man's belongings have symbolic value as well as the practical value of providing survival. When Glass realizes that he had been abandoned, part of his hatred was due to the fact that Bridger and Fitzpatrick betrayed the code, but another part of it was due to the fact that they stole his rifle and belongings:

> It was a crime before God and man both to desert a man in a wilderness full of howling red devils, taking his possibles [sic] away from him, leaving him without food, with nothing but his naked hands left to fight off the varmints. Leaving him without a last bullet to kill himself with in case of unbearable pain. Or in case of capture by red devils" (Manfred Part II Chapter 5).

One of Glass's fears is capture and execution by Indians, having watched the painful death of his companion Clint at the hands of the Pawnee. Here we can see that the loss of "possibles" (gun, horse, shot pouch, etc.) is nearly as big of a crime as the actual desertion itself. This echoes the portrayal of Glass seen in "Letters," where Glass feels "rich" when given "fixins" again. The "possibles" or "fixins" not only allow for survival in the wilderness, but are a part of the mountain man identity. They separate civilized man from savage wilderness. Therefore, when Glass's companions steal these items, they take away part of his identity and humanity.

The loss of his belongings means that Glass has lost his identity as a mountain man, and therefore he is forced to assume a new, animalistic identity during his slow crawl back to Fort Kiowa. This is due in part to the loss of his "possibles," as he is forced to survive as an animal rather than a man. Indeed, Glass becomes more grizzly than man after the attack. He wears the bearskin as a cloak, cuts himself knee and elbow pads from the skin to protect himself as he crawls on all fours. Therefore, "he looked more like a wounded grizzly than a wounded human" (Manfred Part II Chapter 4). This resemblance to a grizzly saves him during a buffalo stampede, as the buffalo mistake him for a grizzly and therefore avoid the chokecherry thicket where he has taken refuge (Ibid). It saves him again when he chases off a pack of wolves and coyotes in order to steal a buffalo calf they killed. This incident also reveals that Glass not only resembles a grizzly in appearance, but also in behavior. As he eats, he eats as an animal, not as a man: "With bared teeth and clawing fingers, Hugh tore at the raw red partly mutilated flesh, pulling fleece away from the underbelly, ripping off strips of soft veal from the hindquarters, sucking up dripping still-warm blood" (Ibid). Therefore, the crawl back to Fort Kiowa is also a crawl back to humanity: "In [*Lord Grizzly*], the she-bear gives birth to a new man when she tears into Glass. […] Barely alive and nominally human, he crawls toward civilization and, as he heals, regains his footing as a man" (Coleman Introduction). As his leg heals, Glass is able to move from crawling to hobbling along on a home-made crutch, and this allows him to feel that "he was a human critter again, not just a four-legged varmint" (Manfred Part II Chapter 8). His humanity is finally completely regained with the return of his rifle, and it is at this point that he is able to find forgiveness for Bridger and Fitzpatrick. His identity has been restored, but rather than the vengeful mountain man, he has found a softer side after battling with the ghosts of his past.

Throughout Glass's journey, he encounters a variety of Indians. These encounters provide ample opportunity to analyze the portrayal of Native Americans in the novel. Due to limited

space, an extensive examination of all the characters will not be possible. Therefore, my analysis is limited to Glass's perception of Native Americans. After the novel was published, "J. Donald Adams praised Manfred in his 'Speaking of Books' column in *The New York Times* for presenting Indians as human beings rather than 'red devil' stereotypes" (Coleman Chapter 7). While the novel has plenty of "red devil stereotypes," it also portrays Native Americans in a positive, human light. This is shown in Glass's opinion of Indians: on the one hand he describes them as savage and unnecessarily cruel, and yet in several places he admires them and even aspires to live as they do. Throughout the novel, the characters refer to Indians as "red devils" or "red niggers." This provides an element of authenticity, as the terminology fits with the rough speak of the mountain men. However, it also paints a derogatory picture of the Indians. Part of Glass's disdain for the Indians lies in fear and horror of his past experiences, especially at the hands of the Pawnee. While having a discussion with Captain Henry, Glass claims that the difference between "pale faces" and "red niggers" is that he has regard for human nature, while "the red nigger don't give a cuss for it. They torture. They skulp [sic] a man while alive. They cut him while alive. … This coon has made Indians go under, some, yes. But he's never skulped 'em alive" (Manfred Part I Chapter 4). Glass argues that they are all violent, but that Indians are cruel and "unhuman."

However, while this may be Glass's stated point of view, his actions and thoughts throughout the novel reveal that he also admires the Indian lifestyle. While crawling back to the fort, Glass comes upon the remains of a Sioux warrior and feels nostalgic for the time he spent with the Pawnee. He remarks that:

> the white man might sometimes bury his dead kin six feet under, as deep as he made his privies, but the red devil placed his dead six feet above the ground for all men to see, out of reach of varmint, as high as he would carry his head in the happy hunting

> grounds of the afterlife. Ae, there swayed the honorable end of a free brave's life on Mother Earth. (Manfred Part II Chapter 5)

Although he refers to Indians as "red devils," he admires their way of thinking and the honorable way they treat their dead. In addition, after his ordeal in the wilderness, Glass chooses the company of Bending Reed over that of his fellow mountain men. He chooses, at least temporarily, the life of an Indian brave rather than a white man.

Part of the nostalgia and admiration for the "noble savage" lifestyle that Glass feels is tied into the loss of the frontier and the subsequent loss of freedom (Chapter 4.1). As the Indian tribes are conquered, the West is civilized, and the free life of the mountain man is as endangered as that of the Indian. As the he army and fur companies move in, they "civilized" the Indians and the wilds of the frontier through sheer numbers and the kind of discipline Hugh despises. While crawling through the wilderness, he states, "while it might be a mite too wild for him at the moment, the condition he was in, the plains country was surely coming to a time when all of it would someday become settled too … Ae, the enslavement of both land and man was coming here too" (Ibid Part II Chapter 7). The novel reflects the "cult of the outlaw" Hollywood films that were popular at the time and the idea that the frontier had been subjugated by progress, and that freedom was threatened (Chapter 4.2). *Lord Grizzly* is one example of how the romantic stage of the myth of the West fused the frontier with ideas of nostalgia, freedom and Americanism.

5.6 *Man in the Wilderness*

The story of Hugh Glass continued to be reincarnated, just like the myth of the West. The next representation of the Glass legend in my analysis is the film *Man in the Wilderness*. The film was released in 1971. It belongs to the consummatory stage of myth of the West and is a part of the anti-Westerns (Chapter 4.3). The consummatory stage is characterized by self-reflection and an increased interest in returning to authenticity (Ibid). In addition, the film was influenced by, and

representative of, the political and cultural climate of the 1960s and 70s (Ibid). The film was not as popular as the other representations of the West that I have analyzed. "The film […] was a dud" and was "greeted with a frown or an indifferent shrug by critics and moviegoers" (Coleman Chapter 7). Part of the reason the film was not successful may have had roots in the fact that Westerns experienced a fall of popularity in the 1960s (Indick 180). The deconstructed Western did not have as great an appeal as the romantic Western. However, although *Man in the Wilderness* might not have been successful, it is an important step in the journey of how the myth of the West transformed.

Man in the Wilderness opens with text scrolling across the screen, giving the viewer background that the "Captain Henry Expedition" has been trapping for 2 years, and are attempting to make it back to the Missouri River by hauling their boat overland (*Man in the Wilderness* 0.01.14). The text then states that that the events to follow are "historically true" (Ibid 0.01.28). The film version of Glass's narrative condenses the story: it starts with the grizzly attack, follows Bass[6] as he crawls/limps through the wilderness in search of the boat and Captain Henry, provides brief flashbacks of Bass's memories of his wife (who died during childbirth) and infant son (whom he abandoned to join the trapping expedition) and ends with a fight with the Rickaree Indians and a confrontation between Bass and Henry on the banks of the Missouri River.

In the beginning of the film, Bass and a young man, Lowrie, are out hunting, and Lowrie misses his shot, wounding the deer. Lowrie apologizes to Bass, who replies solemnly, "Sorrow never helped anyone boy," and heads off into the woods after the gut-shot deer (*Man in the Wilderness* 0.05.17). While tracking the blood trail, Bass is attacked by a grizzly. As in the other versions, Captain Henry orders two men to stay behind to bury Bass. Lowrie volunteers because he feels that the attack was his fault, while Fogarty decides to stay because he wants to scavenge

[6] The film changed the names of the characters

Bass's belongings. He asks what to do if Bass isn't dead by morning, to which Henry replies, "kill him" (Ibid 0.11.45). This is our first introduction to the characters, and it sets the tone for the rest of the film. Lowrie is a green, naïve boy who looks up to Bass, Fogarty is greedy and untrustworthy, and Captain Henry is stern and unfeeling. As in *Lord Grizzly*, Bass is haunted by his past. However, while Manfred's Glass is a rather ornery old man, Zach Bass is a distant, wise, regretful man who shows flashes of compassion as well as anger. Throughout his journey, Bass has fuzzily lit flashbacks of talking with his pregnant wife, of watching his son play in the sea when he visits his wife's grave, and of telling the boy's grandmother that he doesn't want to meet him, but that she should "raise him with the gentleness your daughter had" (Ibid 1.14.45). These flashbacks serve as opportunities to understand Bass's outsider personality, as well as the sorrow that marks him. He is haunted by his past and the fact that he chose the wilderness over his family.

As in the other representations of the myth of the West, the protagonist's quest for vengeance is the motivating aspect of the plot. Bass's survival is motivated by his desire to kill Henry as well as his desire to see his son again. The rage he feels for Henry is revealed in blurry flashbacks of Henry's order to "kill him" as Bass imagines stabbing him with a home-made spear (*Man in the Wilderness* 1.04.19). In addition, the film frequently cross-cuts[7] to scenes of the trapping expedition, and the characterization of Captain Henry inspires contempt. While the men who abandoned Glass in *Lord Grizzly* truly think he was dead, Captain Henry and the others fear/know that Bass is still alive. Lowrie and Fogarty abandon Glass and rejoin the trapping expedition to escape a party of Rickaree, but when they suggest that the expedition return for Bass, whom Lowrie claims is still alive, Henry refuses. He states:

[7] "a cut from one shot in one location to a second shot in a different location and then a cut back to the first." Used to suggest that two events are happing simultaneously. (Clark et al 21).

> Gentleman: you'll learn that man is expendable. We're exploring new frontiers. We must always push on, with our lives if need be. This is more than a trapping mission. We're here to explore the new America, dig into its pagan regions. And we can't afford to fail. A man must be prepared to sacrifice. A father should give his son's life-gladly! Zach was like a son to me, and I know he'd be proud of my decision" (Ibid 0.38.43).

Here Henry uses the idea of sacrificing all for the sake of progress and America. The idea of "exploring new frontiers" is tied to the identity of America, and is placed above the individual needs of the men. In the frontier era dominated by Manifest Destiny, this might have been an admirable viewpoint, but in the cultural atmosphere of the Vietnam War, the idea of sacrificing men for country is not appealing (Chapter 4.1; 4.3). Therefore, Henry's statement is not viewed as a heroic captain rallying his troops, but that of a selfish man deserting Bass to die alone.

The flawed logic that it was right to leave Bass for the sake of the mission is revealed by Captain Henry's descent into paranoia. He becomes obsessed with the idea that Bass is pursuing them, ordering his men to fire the canon at nothing (thinking he sees Bass), and staring into the darkness as if he can see Bass coming (*Man in the Wilderness* 00.48.00; 1.06.02). A man with a clear conscious would not fear a ghost in this way, but Henry is haunted by his decision. Fogarty questions the captain's obsession and asks if he really thinks Bass is alive and coming after them. Henry replies, "yes Fogarty, he's alive. I've known it all along" (Ibid 1.19.53). This revelation further supports the idea that Henry cruelly left Bass to die alone in the wilderness, not immediately due to his wounds, but by being abandoned without his belongings. In addition, although he claimed that it was for the sake of the mission and America, when that mission and the survival of all the men is threatened by the impossible task of dragging the boat through the mountains in winter, Henry refuses to sacrifice the boat. Fogarty suggests that they carry the pelts and head for safety, since they could then easily reach the fort before winter. Henry refuses since the boat is "all

that's left of [his] command" (Ibid 1.18.04). Henry risks the fate of the mission to preserve some semblance of his identity as a Captain. He didn't abandon Bass as a sacrifice for America, but as a sacrifice to his personal ego. The futility and idiocy of this move are revealed when the party finally reach the river, only to find it all but dried up (Ibid 1.25.50). This leads to a sequence of cross-cutting shots where the boat is stuck in the mud while Bass hikes ever closer. Henry's refusal to abandon the boat provides Bass with the opportunity to catch up with the party, and, presumably, to exact his revenge.

As Bass trudges down the mountain and across the flat, a party of Rickaree gather and attack the boat. Most of the trappers are killed, and as Bass approaches he is also attacked. However, the Rickaree chief recognizes Bass and spares him. He then returns Bass's home-made spear, indicating that he should use it to kill Henry. As Bass limps across the muddy plain, the trappers cock their rifles, the Rickaree whoop in victory, and Bass's revenge seems inevitable. Bass reaches Henry, and the two men stare at each other as the music swells with an ominous drumbeat. Bass says, "I believe that's my gun" (*Man in the Wilderness* 1.41.56). Henry returns it, Bass smiles, nods and says, "I've got a son out there. I'm gonna find him. I'm going home" (Ibid 1.41.56). He then walks off across the muddy flats. One by one, the surviving trappers follow, with Henry the last to leave. The Rickaree stand in the background, and the camera zooms out to a wide shot of the men slowly walking home as the credits roll. In this ending, Bass chooses redemption, and finally, family, over frontier justice and the life of a mountain man. Perhaps he is choosing to live with the gentleness that his wife had. The rage that sustained him through the journey has been defeated by the memory of his family. Love and forgiveness triumph over the mountain man code of vengeance and violence. His choice inspires the others to follow his lead.

In the other versions of the Hugh Glass story, the belongings of a mountain man have symbolic value. The same is true in *Man in the Wilderness*. Here symbolic value is placed on Bass's

weapons: his rifle and the spear he makes while in pursuit of Henry. The rifle is important because, as in the other narratives, it represents Bass's identity as a mountain man. The grizzly attack is related to this identity, since he was attacked while trying to remedy the mistake of Lowrie's botched shot. He then loses his rifle and his other possessions to Henry and Fogarty. Bereft of these symbols of his identity, Bass must recreate himself. He creates a new weapon in the form of a spear. As he imagines spearing Captain Henry, the spear becomes a symbol of his rage and desire for revenge. The rifle was representative of his identity as a mountain man and civilization, but the spear is representative of savagery and survival at all costs. However, in the end, Bass chooses civilization over savagery. When the Rickaree chief returns his spear, Bass has the opportunity to embrace the savage identity he created in the wilderness. However, he chooses to regain his rifle, and in so doing, chooses to embrace the other part of his identity that he found in the wilderness: the family man rather than the mountain man.

The representation of Native Americans in the film is characteristic of the anti-Western era. Many of the films produced in this era portrayed Native Americans as a noble people who were wronged by the savagery of the white man (Chapter 4.3). In *Man in the Wilderness*, while the Rickaree are violent and attack the mountain men, their violence is justifiable in an attempt to defend their lands and way of life from the whites. In the middle of the film, there is a series of shots of an Indian ceremony. The scene occurs right after a failed attack on the trapping party and Captain Henry's subsequent paranoid order to fire the cannon at "Bass." The sequence begins with a shot of the Captain Henry riding behind the boat. The scene then dissolves[8] and is replaced by a close-up of the Rickaree chief standing in the rain with his eyes closed, his lips moving in prayer (Ibid 00.50.02). The sound of Indian chanting and drums can be heard, and the shot cuts to the inside of a lodge, moves across the faces of several praying Indian elders, and then focuses on an

[8] "the transition from one shot to another with the two images being overlapped" (Clark et al 21).

Indian painting a depiction of the trapper's boat amidst buffalo, the sun, and Indians on horseback (Ibid 00.51.13). The scene evokes a feeling of connection and respect. The elders represent wisdom, and the painting of the boat represents the threat of the white man to their lifestyle. When they do finally attack the boat, it does not seem like an unprovoked attack, but a measured attempt to eliminate a threat. Furthermore, since the trappers and Captain Henry have already been portrayed as the villains, their deaths seem justified. Indeed, once the Rickaree chief recognized Bass, our hero, he spares his life, and even provides him with the opportunity for revenge. Clearly, the Indians are on the "good" side in the film. Once Bass has chosen family over revenge, and the rest of the party follow his example, the Rickaree allow them to leave in peace. Had this been an earlier representation of bloodthirsty Indians, they would have slaughtered them to the last man. However, since their goal was to defend their homes, once the mountain men leave, there is no further reason to kill them.

Man in the Wilderness portrays the authority figure (Captain Henry) as the villain, and the Indians and Bass as the victims. Therefore, Bass's triumph is the triumph of the individual over authority. Films in this era deconstructed the Western genre, and *Man in the Wilderness* was no exception (Chapter 4.3). "Hitting theaters in 1971, *Man in the Wilderness* flowed with the current of popular culture, which meant it countered the conventions of the Western genre" (Coleman Chapter 7). The film did so by representing Glass's antiauthoritarianism as a way of critiquing "American politics and the poor judgement of the wise men who led the nation into misadventure in Southeast Asia." (Ibid). The romantic notion of Cowboys versus Indians was gone, and the outlaw figure had been transformed into an individual resisting the corrupting influence of power. The frontier and America were not to be pursued at all cost, but instead family was valued over duty, and thinking for oneself was placed above the formulaic need for revenge.

5.7 *The Lone Ranger* Film

Although the hey-day of the Western passed as the Golden Age ended, and the anti-Western deconstructed the romanticism of the West, the appeal of the Western genre persists. One significant contemporary narrative of the West is the 2013 film *The Lone Ranger*. This version of the Lone Ranger's narrative retells the origin story, and while many details are the same, Tonto (played by Johnny Depp) is presented as the star of the film, rather than simply the sidekick, and his backstory is a significant element of the plot.

The film opens in 1933 in San Francisco, where a boy wearing a Lone Ranger costume enters a carnival stand of the "Wild West" featuring "The Thrilling Days of Yesteryear." This opening references both the original Lone Ranger as well as Buffalo Bill Cody's Wild West Show. One of the exhibits displays an ancient Indian in traditional dress, standing with his tomahawk raised. The display is entitled "The Noble Savage in his Native Habitat" (*The Lone Ranger* 00.02.17). The Indian is Tonto, and he begins to tell the boy the "true" story of the Lone Ranger. Therefore, the main story of the film is presented as a flashback to 1869, with Tonto as a questionable, if not downright unreliable, narrator. The story begins with Latham Cole, the head of the railroad, announcing that law and order has come to the West, and that to prove it he is bringing the cannibal outlaw Butch Cavendish to Colby to be hanged. Tonto is also a prisoner on the train because he wants the opportunity to kill Cavendish. Cavendish's gang stage a train robbery and rescue, and John Reid, a lawyer who prizes the law above all, races to the prison car to try and prevent Cavendish's escape. He arrives just in time to prevent Tonto from killing Cavendish, only to be shackled alongside Tonto as Cavendish's men arrive. John's brother, Dan, saves the day, and then forms a posse of Rangers to go after Cavendish. Tonto is placed in jail, since he ostensibly is a criminal, and Dan deputizes John as a Texas Ranger. As in the original story, the Rangers are betrayed, ambushed, and all except John are killed. Tonto (having escaped from jail), buries the

other Rangers and tells John that he is a spirit walker, sent back from death in order to help Tonto in his quest hunt Cavendish (whom he believes to be a Wendigo, an evil spirit created by cursed silver). John initially dismissed Tonto as crazy, but agrees to help on the condition that they bring Cavendish to justice by law.

In their pursuit of Cavendish, Tonto and John discover that the Cavendish gang is posing as Comanche Indians and raiding settlements to start a war between the cavalry and the Comanche. After discovering the plot, Tonto and the Lone Ranger are captured by Comanche Indians, and Tonto's backstory is revealed. As a child, he saved two white men (later revealed to be Cavendish and Cole), who then discovered silver in the river. They persuaded the young Tonto to show them the source of the river (and silver) in exchange for a cheap pocket watch, and then killed his entire tribe to keep the location of the silver a secret. The tragedy caused Tonto to go mad, and he became an outcast. In order to cope with the guilt, he believed that the white men were Wendigos, and this is provided as the explanation for much of his strange behavior throughout the film. The Comanche head off to war with the cavalry, despite the fact that they know they cannot win.

John and Tonto finally capture Cavendish at the site of the silver mine, but once again John prevents Tonto from killing the outlaw. He deserts Tonto, and his mask, and brings Cavendish in to town. However, he does not find justice, since Cole is revealed as the mastermind behind the fake raids and orders John executed in the place of Cavendish. Tonto reappears just in time to save John, and the two of them escape as the Comanche attack. However, the cavalry has machine guns, and all the Indians are slaughtered. In the aftermath of the slaughter, John accepts that he must become the Lone Ranger if he wants to see any kind of justice. He and Tonto interrupt the Cole's celebration/takeover of the railroad, and there is a long, *Pirates of the Caribbean* style battle on runaway trains, as the William Tell Overture plays in the background. In the end, Cavendish and

Cole are both killed as they are crushed by the train cars. John chooses to continue being the Lone Ranger, and he and Tonto ride off into the distance. The film cuts back 1933 as the lights switch off in the Wild West exhibit. Old Tonto emerges from his teepee in a suit. He gives the boy a silver bullet and leaves. The film then cuts back to a rearing Silver and John shouting "Hi yo Silver, Away!" The credits begin rolling as Tonto and the Lone Ranger gallop across the desert, and then the shot returns to Old Tonto limping into the desert as the credits continue.

There is also an unrequited love sub-plot throughout the film between on Dan Reid's wife, Rebecca, and John. John and Rebecca have unresolved feeling for one another, and the motivation for John's pursuit justice of Cavendish is spurred on when Cavendish kidnaps Rebecca and her son, Danny. Although John saves them, he doesn't get the girl in the end, as he chooses the Lone Ranger's fight for justice over family life.

The Lone Ranger is a film plagued by the extensive, and at times, conflicting requirements of a Western produced in the post consummatory stage (Chapter 4.4). A *New York Times* review of *The Lone Ranger* describes the how the choice to tell the story as a flashback provides an element of self-awareness and self-reflection to the film: "Turning an aging, weary Tonto into a somewhat unreliable narrator signals that we are in a world of tall tales and strange myths, a universe of stories that fed the imaginations of many American children in the early and middle decades of the last century and that may strike their descendants as archaic and a little embarrassing" (Scott). There is a self-awareness of the fact that the narrative is reflecting on, and yet at the same time, contributing to the myth of the West. The film references old Westerns, not merely the original *Lone Ranger*, but also the early archetypal elements of Westerns, such as the nod to Cody's Wild West show as well as the heroes riding off into Ford's classic "cathedral" of Monument Valley (despite the fact that the film is set in Texas). This results in a film where "sturdy western archetypes sit uncomfortably close to ugly ethnic stereotypes, and "The Lone Ranger" tries

to imagine a wholesome, inclusive version of the western while reviving the time-tested touchstones of the genre" (Ibid). The film uses humor and ironic self-reference as the vehicle to accomplish the revision of an archetypal narrative.

This use of humor can be seen in the way the film treats the iconic symbolic belongings of the Lone Ranger: the white hat, the mask, the silver bullets, and Silver. The premise of the joke lies in the fact that John Reid is not the typical Western hero (unlike his brother Dan). When we first encounter John on the train, he is dressed in a suit with a cravat rather than a cowboy hat, and carries John Locke's *Treatises of Government* in place of a six-shooter (*The Lone Ranger* 00.20.12). When John appears to prevent Cavendish from escaping, Cavendish sarcastically comments "nice suit" (Ibid 00.16.25). When John joins Dan and the Rangers in their posse, he adds an oversized, very clean and white cowboy hat to his outfit, and is once again laughed at. Dan deputizes John with their father's Ranger star, and then breaks the emotional tension by laughing, "but I can't help you with them clothes" (Ibid 00.30.45). It is clear that John is an outsider: an Easterner whose naïve civilized ways will only get him into trouble in the rough-and-tumble West.

As in the original series, Tonto provides John with the pieces of his identity as the Lone Ranger. As Tonto is burying the dead Rangers, a white stallion walks up to John's grave with the oversized white hat. Tonto interprets this as a sign that the "spirit horse" has brought John's spirit back from the other side. He tries to convince the stallion to choose Dan instead, and throughout the following scenes there are several references to the fact that Dan would have made a more obvious choice as the Lone Ranger. Tonto even claims that the moniker "kemosabe" means "wrong brother" (Ibid 1.07.06). However, Silver has chosen John, and Tonto must make do. He gives John the mask, made out of his brother's vest, with "eyes cut by the bullets that killed him" (Ibid 00.50.22). John is unsure about the mask, and in another example of ironic reflection on an archetypal symbol, various characters ask, "What's with the mask" (Ibid 00.05.22, 1.16.50).

However, after the needless slaughter of the Comanche, and John's realization that the law will not always provide justice, he accepts the mask, and in so doing, legitimizes it. The mask is no longer a slightly ridiculous prop suggested by a crazy Indian, but a necessary part of the search for justice in a world that requires someone to be outside the law.

The fact that Silver chooses John (rather than Dan) to be the Lone Ranger reveals a deep connection between the two, just as there was in the original series. In the film this partnership is based on Silver's identity as a "spirit horse" who brought John back from the grave. The horse's decision is questioned by Tonto, but in the end his choice pays off as John accepts the role of the Lone Ranger. However, Silver is also used as a tool to relieve tension through humor. This is done by placing Silver in situations where he does un-horselike things. At one point, as Tonto and John are escaping from a mob, they call for Silver, only to find him guzzling bottles of beer (*The Lone Ranger* 0.57.25). A starker example is when, after the horrendous genocide of the Comanche, John and Tonto stare into the river running red with blood and floating bodies, only for the scene to cut to Silver standing in a tree wearing John's hat, and Tonto remarks "Something very wrong with that horse" (Ibid 1.51.28). In his role as "spirit horse," Silver is more than a horse, but his spirituality and wisdom are downgraded by the moments where he acts silly and almost human. This shows self-awareness of the fact that the somewhat supernatural partnership between the original Lone Ranger and Silver was simply unrealistic. *The Lone Ranger* film takes the idea one step farther by exaggerating both the spiritual and human nature of the horse to the point of ridiculousness.

The Lone Ranger also modifies the symbolism of the silver bullets. Initially it appears that the silver bullets are not a symbol of the price of life as they were in the original series, but the only way to kill a Wendigo. However, as Tonto's backstory is revealed, and we discover that Cavendish is not a Wendigo, but a man, silver becomes a symbol of the greed of the white man that leads to the eradication of the Native Americans. This a reversal of the representation of silver: in

the original series it represented justice and the value of life, whereas in the film it represents death and greed. However, the film provides an opportunity to reflect on the cost of the silver (a watch for the lives of Tonto's tribe, a few cartloads of silver for the lives of the Comanche), and therefore contemplate the value of human life. The symbolism isn't as explicit as in the original show, but the post-consummatory film assumes a familiarity with symbolism and reflection that was perhaps not as obvious in the days of the original *Lone Ranger*.

The tension between revenge and justice that I explored in the section on the original *Lone Ranger* series is personified in Tonto and John in the film. Tonto is clear about the fact that he is searching for vengeance for his slaughtered family and tribe. He wants Cavendish dead. John is adamant that he will only accept justice by law. As a result, John prevents Tonto from killing Cavendish twice. However, while the mission of the two men might seem to be opposed, the lines that separate them begin to blur as the film progresses. The first evidence of this is the fact that Tonto believes that Cavendish is a Wendigo. If the audience accepts this premise (and they are led to do so in the beginning of the film), then Cavendish is not a man, and killing him is necessary to rid the world of an evil spirit. Killing evil spirits does not require the same moral deliberation as killing evil men. Therefore, Tonto's first attempt to kill Cavendish was utterly justified. However, as he attempts the second time, John confronts him with the fact that Wendigos aren't real (*The Lone Ranger* 1.30.39). Although Tonto persists in his desire to kill (only to be knocked out by John), the audience is forced to question the idea of killing a man, rather than a spirit. Justice by law seems to be the right choice. However, it is here that John brings Cavendish in to town, only to discover that Cavendish and Cole have been working together and to witness the subsequent slaughter of the Comanche. He admits to Tonto, "You were right, there is no justice. Cole controls everything: the railroad, the cavalry, everything. If men like him represent the law, I'd rather be an outlaw" (Ibid 1.50.49). John's, and the audience's, faith in justice by law has been deeply shaken.

This leads to a moment on the train where John has Cavendish at gunpoint, and he decides to kill him, only to have the gun misfire as he pulls the trigger (Ibid 2.03.41). Fate was the only reason that John did not violate the ultimate law of the Lone Ranger: not to shoot to kill. While the events leading up to this moment have discouraged John and challenged his belief in the law, they have also challenged Tonto's belief in Wendigos and revenge. After John disarms Cole, Tonto stands with him at gunpoint and has the opportunity for revenge. However, he chooses not to take the killing shot and the Cavendish and the train of silver steam onwards. Thus it would seem that the premise of the original series is preserved in the film. Justice has prevailed. However, it would not truly be a Western if the bad guys were allowed to get away with it. The action is interrupted and we flash forward to 1933, where the young boy objects, saying "you let him get away?" (Ibid 2.08.13). Old Tonto replies succinctly, "no," and the story resumes, showing us that Tonto and John had blown up the bridge, which caused the train to plummet into the river and killed Cole. Cavendish was also crushed by a train after his confrontation with John. Therefore, justice did not entirely prevail. The Western need for vengeance was fulfilled, but without the heroes really having blood on their hands. Again, *The Lone Ranger* demonstrates its self-awareness and challenges the conventions of the Western genre as well as the original series. Is it justice when the hero allows the villains to be killed? This question reflects the uncertainty following the killing of Osama Bin Laden and the ensuing question of vengeance versus justice (Chapter 4.4). It certainly leaves the audience feeling satisfied that the bad guys "got it in the end," albeit in a slightly more innocent way than a classic "shoot-em up" Western. There is also an element of poetic justice as Cole is killed by the same silver that caused him to destroy so many lives.

The need for a hero guarding the interests of the common man against the powerful, greedy, and corrupt was relevant in the Great Depression, and is once again relevant in the economic recession of the early 2000s (Chapter 4.4). One reviewer states, ""The Lone Ranger

belongs to the ancient pop culture of the Great Depression and the early baby boom … an object of fuzzy nostalgia and mocking incredulity, a symbol of simple pleasures and retrograde attitudes." (Scott). However, as can be seen by the Occupy Wall Street movement, the appeal of a champion for the common man is not such an outdated idea after all (Chapter 4.4). The greed and corruption of the 1% is similar to that of Latham Cole. Therefore, when the Lone Ranger defeats Cole, he is a champion for the 99%.

In an interview about *The Lone Ranger*, Johnny Depp states that "Tonto never deserved to be called a sidekick," and that he wanted to portray Tonto as the Lone Ranger's equal. He states that "in my own small way, it was my attempt to right the wrongs of what had been done with regards to the representation of Native Americans in cinema" (Del Barco). Kevin Gover, director of the National Museum of the American Indian states:

> That is a lot to promise. Hollywood, after all, has been a leader in stereotyping and demeaning Indians. The Indians we have seen in the movies have largely been dim, hostile and violent. … Hollywood's portrayals of Indians have created in the minds of much of the American public a thorough misunderstanding of how Indians were in the 18th and 19th centuries and how they are now."

As noted by Gover, and demonstrated in my analysis, Native Americans have been represented with a variety of stereotypes that portray them in both negative and positive lights (Chapter 4). As a post-connsummatory narrative, *The Lone Ranger* faced a difficult task of remaining true to the genre characteristics of a Western while trying to revise the representation of Native Americans. Johnny Depp was aware of this problem, and his solution was to use the stereotype to expose the stereotype. He states, "It's a very strange notion, but it occurred to me, in a weird way, certain clichés must be embraced for a millisecond, to have the audience understand. Just for that

millisecond" (Del Barco). The film does so with mixed results. Throughout the film, Tonto and the Comanche are referred to as the Noble Savage, Indian, injun, redskin, savage, and heathen. However, the film attempts to solve the problem of using "authentic" terminology rather than politically correct terminology by having the "bad guys" use the derogatory terms. Therefore, the audience is meant to negatively identify these terms since they are associated with the villains. Another place where the stereotype is ostensibly embraced is the opening of the movie where the young boy sees Tonto on display as "the Noble Savage in his Native Habitat." The display is depicted in a stereotypical way: A half-dressed savage ready to attack with a tomahawk, standing in front of a teepee with Monument Valley as a background. The display label indicates that this is exactly what it appears to be: a savage Indian depicted in what would have been his home before the civilization of the West. However, the illusion of the savage on display is shattered as Tonto "comes to life" and suddenly becomes a real person. The stereotypical two-dimensional museum display becomes a three-dimensional person.

Depp claimed that he wanted his portrayal of Tonto to move the character beyond the "good injun" sidekick of the original Lone Ranger (Del Barco). The backstory and emphasis on Tonto's mission for revenge, as well as the fact that the story is told as Tonto's flashback mean that Depp's Tonto is a much more well-rounded character. He is more than a sidekick to the Lone Ranger, especially since he is basically responsible for the creation of the Lone Ranger's identity (a fact that was also true, but not really recognized in the original series). John and Tonto also have their disagreements, and Tonto does not happily obey the Lone Ranger. Instead he thinks for himself, and in many cases, persuades John to think and act in accordance to his methods. However, the title of the film remains *The Lone Ranger*, not *Tonto* or *Tonto and the Lone Ranger*. In addition, Tonto still speaks somewhat broken English. However, the character demonstrates his wisdom and intelligence in other ways, so perhaps this is Depp's attempt to remain true to the original character;

to embrace the stereotype and then ask audiences to question why it is assumed that Tonto is stupid. While tracking Cavendish through the dessert, Tonto asks about John's feelings for Rebecca and his reluctance to do anything about them since she is his brother's widow. John claims that Tonto wouldn't understand, to which Tonto replies, "Because I am a savage?" (*The Lone Ranger* 1.12.23). This self-aware question forces John to stop, and also asks the audience to adjust their stereotyped images of Indians.

When John and Tonto are captured by the Comanche, the audience is once again confronted with stereotypes: Indians dancing around a fire in animal skins, chanting to the beat of drums in a war dance. John then enters the tent of the chief, and attempts to explain that he knows the Comanche didn't raid the settlements and that there doesn't have to be a war. He then decides that "of course" the Indians can't understand him, and so attempts to communicate using gestures and broken English to explain about spirit walkers and Wendigos. The Comanche remark that he might be drunk or suffering from sunstroke, and then switch to perfect English to tell Tonto's story (*The Lone Ranger* 1.17.07). This shocks John, and forces the audience to question the initial assumption that Native Americans speak in broken English and can't understand "white man" concepts. However, while the "dumb Indian" stereotype is questioned, the film does not move past the "Cult of the Indian" portrayal (Chapter 4.3). In "Cult of the Indian" films, the stereotype is reversed: the whites are portrayed as savages, while the Indians are portrayed as a noble people who were exterminated. The opening of the film sets the stage for this portrayal of Native Americans. While addressing the town about the promise of the new railroad, Cole states: "To the Comanche, you have nothing to fear. As long as there is peace between us, all land treaties will be honored" (*The Lone Ranger* 00.07.26) The postmodern audience immediately knows that something will go wrong here. The history of violated treaties with Native Americans is extensive, and one of the blights of American's past (Chapter 4.2). As expected, the treaty is violated. When John is talking

with the Comanche chief, the chief identifies him as Dan's brother and states, "Your brother swore, if we kept the peace, he would protect our land. Now the cavalry cut down our children. Like all white men, your brother lied "(*The Lone Ranger* 1.20.50). The Comanche are portrayed as the victims here: they were framed and deceived by the devious white man, and now they have no choice but to go to war. The Comanche chief states, "Our time is passed. They call it, progress" (Ibid 1.20.42). When John protests that there doesn't need to be a war, and that he can explain things to the cavalry, the chief states, "It makes no difference, we are already ghosts" (Ibid 1.21.37). They then lift their spears and ride off to a battle they cannot possibly win.

While the Comanche ride off to war, the sound of cavalry horns is heard, and John remarks, "Oh thank god, civilization! […] The United States Army, finally someone who will listen to reason", only to have the cavalry ride right past them in pursuit of the Comanche (*The Lone Ranger* 1.22.03). Once again humor is shown with reverse expectations. The cavalry is, in fact, not the source of civilization or reason. Indeed, later in the film the cavalry captain proudly boasts that "what [the Comanche] have done to the settlements, we have given back tenfold, tenfold" (Ibid 1.32.33). It is this extreme violence that later leads the officer to side with Cole rather than John. He is unwilling to admit that he was mistaken, and refuses to take responsibility for the deaths that occurred because of his actions. Instead, he is willing to go to war and exterminate the Comanche. Violence is met with increased violence, and when the army has the opportunity to make amends, they choose instead to ignore the mistake and simply continue killing. The portrayal of the Indians as noble and the whites as barbarians is exemplified in a quote by Tonto after the Cavendish gang attack Rebecca and Danny's farm. Tonto explains to John that the attackers couldn't have been Indians because, "Indian is like coyote. He kill and leave nothing to waste. Tell me kemosabe, what does the white man kill for?" (*The Lone Ranger* 1.01.50). In the film, the white man kills for greed and to protect his reputation, whereas the Indian kills to protect his lands and family.

While the portrayal of Native Americans is more nuanced than that of previous films, they are still presented as "the other." (Chapter 4.3) The audience feels regret (and perhaps shame) for the genocide of the brave, victimized Comanche people, and sympathizes with the traumatized and crazy Tonto. But they remain portrayals of otherness that do not provide a complete picture of the Native American people. The Indian as a doomed people is yet another version of a stereotype. As Strickland states, "If one's knowledge of Indians were indeed limited to film viewing, there would appear to be few living twentieth-century Native peoples. The Indian would be dead. […] The premise, the image, the idea behind all of these films is that the Indian is doomed (29-30). While terrible acts of genocide occurred, and it is important to reflect upon these tragedies, there is a risk that the modern day Native American is forgotten. Native American activists and writers such as Sherman Alexie attempt to bring focus to the plight of the living Native American, not that of the dead Indian. Alexie uses the legacy of Tonto and the Lone Ranger as the provocative title of a collection of short stories *The Lone Ranger and Tonto Fistfight in Heaven* (and a short story with the same title). The book is a collection of narratives about the difficulties of growing up on a reservation and of trying to find an identity while straddling the white world and the Native American world. While the short story itself does not explicitly mention Tonto or the Lone Ranger, it immediately evokes a familiar and stereotypical representation of Indians, and then challenges that representation with the narrator's story of the life of a modern-day Native American.

Johnny Depp's desire to revise the portrayal of Tonto was greeted with enthusiasm by the Native American community, but the fact that Depp chose to play Tonto himself, rather than give the part to a Native actor created controversy. There were some that felt that this was an example of "redface," and part of a history of Native Americans being played by white actors (although Depp claims some Native American ancestry) (Rothman). As Hanay Geiogamah, former head of UCLA's American Indian Studies program points out, "He could have, had he wanted to,

cast himself as the Lone Ranger, and put a qualified, capable American Indian actor ... of whom there are quite a few now, in the role of Tonto" (Del Barco). However, there were others who felt that the film and Depp's Tonto should not be taken too seriously, and that the solution is not to be found in Hollywood, but rather in independent Native American films. Gover states:

> If, as I believe, non-Indian Hollywood is incapable of reforming itself, Indians still have the right to demand that Hollywood do no harm. In this, "The Lone Ranger" succeeds. It does not revolutionize the presentation of Indians in the movies. It is not history. It is not drama. "The Lone Ranger" does not deliver on the promise to dignify Tonto and make him a source of pride for Indian kids, except in this sense: the talented Johnny Depp has created another memorable, offbeat character, and that character is an Indian. Perhaps one day an Indian film maker will make a Tonto who resembles a real Indian. Until then, if people think of Tonto as Mr. Depp's wacky Comanche, I can live with that."

Although *The Lone Ranger* may not have delivered on its promise to revolutionize stereotypes, and the choice to use a white actor to play a Native American character is questionable, the film did create discussion about of the portrayal of Native Americans and, as a result, a reexamination of the myth of the West.

5.8 *The Revenant*

The final narrative of my analysis is a rendition of the Hugh Glass story in the form of the 2015 film *The Revenant*. The film was critically acclaimed, and won two Academy Awards: Leonardo DiCaprio won best actor for his depiction of Hugh Glass, and Alejandro G. Iñárritu won best director (*The Revenant* DVD cover). *The Revenant* was released shortly after *The Lone Ranger*, but while *The Lone Ranger* attempted to navigate the post-consummatory stage of the myth of the West with humor and references to old Westerns, *The Revenant* uses solemnity, quiet, and visceral scenes

of contrasting graphic violence and stunning nature in order to portray the authentic nature of life on the frontier.

The plot of the film begins with the Arikara attack on the trapping party, continues with the grizzly attack and subsequent abandonment. It then follow's Glass's crawl back to the fort where he is helped along by a friendly Pawnee brave and once again attacked by Arikara, and ends with Glass's confrontation of the men who left him to die. The film provides Glass with a family and backstory in the form of a Pawnee wife, and their mixed-race son, Hawk. Glass's wife was killed when army officers burned their village, and Hawk was badly burned. This backstory is presented through flashbacks/hallucinations.

The film also creates tension between Fitzgerald and Glass from the beginning. In the Arikara fight, Glass shouts to the men to "leave the furs! leave the furs! To the boat" (*The Revenant* 00.08.04). This directive is immediately countered by Fitzgerald, who shouts, "grab some pelts! come on, grab the pelts!" (Ibid 0.09.11). This is the moment that sets the stage for a conflict the plagues Glass and Fitzgerald throughout the film: Glass is concerned with the lives of his son and the other trappers, while Fitzgerald is concerned about the money that is represented by the beaver pelts. This tension reaches a peak after the grizzly attack when Captain Henry bribes two men to stay behind and care for Glass. Hawk and Bridger volunteer, but Henry requests a third man to stay behind, since the two volunteers are just boys. Fitzgerald offers to stay once Hawk and Bridger say that they'll give up their share of the reward money. Henry is skeptical of Fitzgerald's choice, given his disdain for Glass and Hawk, but reluctantly agrees after making Fitzgerald swear to care for Glass and give him a proper burial.

As could be expected, Fitzgerald does not honor his word. Soon after, while Hawk and Jim are trapping, Fitzgerald is alone with Glass. He tells Glass that the Ree are close, and that

he is putting all of their lives at risk by hanging on. He says, "I can muzzle you if you like. Take away this suffering quick and easy. No one ever has to know that you give [sic] up. All you have to do is blink if you want me to do that. Save your boy and blink" (*The Revenant* 0.43.34). The camera slowly zooms in on Glass's eyes as he struggles to keep them open, but finally blinks. As a true mountain man born from the myth of the West, Glass would not want the "easy" way out, and would refuse to give up (Chapter 4.1). Fitzgerald wastes no time and begins smothering him. At this moment, Hawk returns and stops Fitzgerald. The boy yells for Jim and threatens to tell Captain Henry, and Fitzgerald stabs him to shut him up. He drags the boy away as Glass moans and struggles against the ropes securing him to the stretcher in vain. When Jim returns from the river, Fitzgerald invents a story about the Ree coming, feigns ignorance about Hawk's location, and orders Jim to leave with him. Jim has no choice but to follow when Fitzgerald then takes off. Jim later discovers that Fitzgerald lied to him about Hawk, but is dependent on the other man for survival, and so reluctantly agrees to lie to Henry once they return to the fort.

After this scene, the film cross-cuts between Bridger and Fitzgerald's journey to the fort and Glass's agonizing crawl through the desolate wilderness in pursuit of vengeance. On Glass's journey, he encounters a lone Pawnee warrior scavenging meat from a wolf-killed buffalo. He begs for food, and the two men bond over the loss of their families. When Glass's wounds become infected, the Pawnee warrior builds a sweat lodge to heal him. When Glass emerges from the lodge, he finds his savior has been hanged by the French. He then continues to the French camp to steal back the Pawnee's horse. At this point he witnesses one of the French trappers raping a young Arikara girl. He sneaks up on the man, holds him at gunpoint, and lets the girl take her revenge. Glass seems to have come out of the encounter unscathed, but is then pursued by a party of Arikara warriors who have attacked the French. In his efforts to escape, he rides the Pawnee horse

off a cliff. The horse is killed, but, in another miraculous escape, his fall is broken by a pine tree, and he survives the night by crawling into the horse's gutted carcass.

Once Glass makes it back to the fort, Fitzgerald has stolen the army payroll and escaped into the wilderness. Glass forgives Jim and pursues Fitzgerald. The two meet for the final showdown on the banks of the river, Glass rejects his opportunity to kill his son's murderer. He chooses to leave Fitzgerald's fate to God, and throws him in the river. Fitzgerald floats downriver, only to be fished out and killed by the Arikara chief. The film ends with Glass once again crawling through the snow back toward the fort. He falls to his knees, and then looks up and sees his wife standing amongst the trees. They smile at each other, and she turns and disappears.

There is a secondary plot that follows the Arikara. In the bloody aftermath of the attack on the trappers, the Arikara chief reveals that the attack was at attempt to find his daughter, whom he believes has been kidnapped by the American trappers. He decides to take the abandoned beaver pelts and trade them to French trappers for horses so that he can pursue his daughter and the Americans. However, the French were the ones who kidnapped his daughter, and she is the girl that Glass saves. She is also the reason that the Arikara allow Glass to live after killing Fitzgerald.

Like the other versions of the Hugh Glass narrative, the plot of the film is driven by Glass's crawl towards vengeance. However, while in the other narratives Glass's thirst for vengeance was motivated by his abandonment, in *The Revenant* he wants revenge for the murder of his son. Iñárritu takes advantage of the sparse moments of dialogue throughout Hugh's journey as well as other cinematic techniques to reveal Glass's thoughts. When Glass is saved by the Pawnee warrior, he tells him his story and states, "My men, left me for dead. Killed my son" (*The Revenant* 1.24.08). This is the only reference to Glass's feelings about being abandoned. The rest of the film focuses on vengeance for Hawk's murder. Just as in *Man in the Wilderness,* flashbacks are used as a

way to provide backstory and reveal the depths of Glass's feelings for his family. One such flashback reveals that Glass killed an army officer in order to save his son. When Henry asks him about the truth of this later, Glass replies, "I just killed the man who was trying to kill my son" (Ibid 2.02.37). Killing an officer is a treasonous offense, and as such subject to corporal punishment (Coleman Chapter 3), but Glass did not hesitate, or even see the man as anything other than a threat to his son that needed to be eliminated. After his escape from the Ree, Glass carves the words: "Fitzgerald killed my son" into a snowbank (Ibid 1.51.39). This is another way of revealing his all-consuming thought of obtaining vengeance for the murder. Adding another dimension to the motive for vengeance makes the thought of killing for revenge more palatable to a postmodern audience. America might still be characterized as a vengeful nation, since it is one of only four nations in the industrialized world, and the only nation in the Western world, to still use the death penalty (Smith). However, there has been a steady decrease in the number of executions, as well as public support for the death penalty, since 1999, which shows that the idea of killing for vengeance is on its way to being relegated to history ("Capital Punishment: The Slow Death of the Death Penalty"). Therefore, the idea that a man would kill another in revenge for being abandoned is not quite a strong enough motive to evoke sympathy in the audience. Yes, abandoning him was bad, but it does not necessarily justify killing. However, murdering Glass's son in front of him while he is helpless to do anything but watch resonates with the need for justice, and justice through vengeance.

The fact that Glass's quest for vengeance is driven by Hawk's murder means that he forgives Bridger. When Bridger tells Henry that he was tricked by Fitzgerald and had no choice, Hugh says, "Bridger's telling the truth. […] Fitzgerald lied to him. He was just following orders. He wasn't there when Fitzgerald stabbed my boy to death" (*The Revenant* 1.58.46). Glass is able to forgive the abandonment, especially since the film makes it clear that Bridger is a naïve boy who relied on the older members of the party, and therefore had no choice but to follow Fitzgerald back

to the fort. However, forgiving Fitzgerald is another matter. The final fight and showdown promises to be bloody and vengeful. The blood and violence is certainly evident as the two fight with a hatchet and knife, but the vengeance is questionable:

> Fitzgerald: "We had a deal Glass. I tried to tell your boy, I tried to tell him…"
>
> Glass: "There was no deal. You killed my boy."
>
> [The two fight and Glass stands above Fitzgerald ready to make the killing blow (although the wounds Fitzgerald have already sustained are likely to be fatal)]
>
> Fitzgerald: "You came all this way just for your revenge, huh? Well you enjoy it Glass. Gause there ain't nothing gonna bring your boy back."
>
> Glass: "No, it won't." [whispers in Pawnee] "Revenge lies with the Great Spirit, not me" (Ibid 2.16.13).

Glass then throws him in the river, where he is shortly thereafter killed by Arikara. It would seem that Glass has a moment of revelation and realizes that killing will not solve anything, and that it is up to the Great Spirit, not man, to decide who lives and who dies (a phrase he heard from his Pawnee friend in the wilderness). The act isn't forgiveness, as it is in *Lord Grizzly* and *Man in the Wilderness*, but it also isn't vengeance. Much as in *The Lone Ranger*, the villain is killed, although not at the hands of the hero. Thus, the audience's desire for vengeance is fulfilled, but the hero remains unsullied by murder. In this case, Glass must know that Fitzgerald will be killed by the Arikara, so he doesn't really spare his life, he merely avoids getting blood on his hands.

While part of Glass's desire for revenge is mollified by the return of his rifle and other belongings in "Letters," *Lord Grizzly*, and *Man in the Wilderness*, the Glass of *The Revenant* shows little regard for his rifle. He is given a new rifle at the fort before, but he loses it as he slides down a

snowy hillside in pursuit of Fitzgerald. The gun that Fitzgerald stole is similarly lost, but Glass does not retrieve it when he begins the climb up the hill again (*The Revenant* 2.19.02). The lack of importance of belongings suggests that Glass's identity is not tied to the "fixens" of a mountain man. Instead, Glass's identity lies in his connection to Native American spirituality and his family. Part of this identity is tied to nature, and is shown through the wide, naturally lit shots of the unspoiled, harsh-but-beautiful landscape as well as mid-range shots of the river and trees blowing in the wind. The significance of the trees and the wind is revealed as Hawk tends to his father after the bear attack. There is a flashback of Glass's wife, being killed, and she says in Pawnee: "When there is a storm, and you stand in front of a tree, if you look at its branches you swear it would fall. But if you watch the trunk, you will see its stability. (Ibid 0.39.37). Her voiceover is heard again throughout the film as Glass gazes up at trees, and the low angle of the shot causes them to seem to stretch into the heavens. The tree is a symbol of Glass's strength and identity. He is in the middle of a storm as he crawls through the wilderness, and he seems doomed to fall, but the stability of his character, love for his family, and desire for vengeance support him. Glass does not need the trappings of a mountain man, since they are not at the core of his identity. Instead he is bound to nature and the memory of his family.

The fact that family is at the essence of Glass's identity, and the fact that his family is of mixed-race, means that Glass bridges the gap between whites and Native Americans. A review of the film states:

> Mr. Iñárritu … complicates the myth of the American Eden — and with it the myth of exceptionalism — by giving Glass an Indian wife and mixed-race son. It's a strategic move …that turns a loner into a sympathetic family man. It also softens the story. Instead of another hunter for hire doing his bit to advance the economy one pelt at a

> time, Glass becomes a sentimentalized figure and finally as much victim as victimizer" (Dargis).

The softening of the story mentioned here is reflected in the dual motives for vengeance seen above, but it also means that there is an element of family life and love that contrasts with the graphic violence and savagery displayed throughout the film. Set in a time where the Manifest Destiny meant that Americans were superior to all other races, and had the obligation to expand Westward (Chapter 4.1), it is expected that the mountain men be portrayed as righteous explorers, while the Natives are godless savages. Or, in the wake of the "cult of the Indian" films, that the mountain men be portrayed as ruthless savages destroying a noble people (Chapter 4.3). However, *The Revenant* embraces the complications of a post-consummatory world, and attempts to find a representation between the two extremes.

The fact that Glass has a Native American wife and son means that he portrayed as a character sympathetic to the Native Americans. This is made clear by the fact that he was willing to kill a white officer in order to save his son. In addition, he makes friends with the Pawnee brave, saves the Arikara girl from being raped, and adopts the spirituality and traditions of his dead wife. However, while he is aware of the racist attitudes of his fellow trappers, he does nothing to correct them. At one point Fitzgerald attempts to provoke Glass by insulting his wife as savage. Glass refuses to react, and sharply rebukes Hawk when he leaps up to defend his father. Glass tells his son, "I told you to be invisible, son. … If you want to survive, keep your mouth shut! … They don't hear your voice! They just see the color of your face. You understand? (*The Revenant* 00.17.43). Glass acknowledges that Hawk is in danger because of his skin color, and insists that he avoid drawing attention to himself. He clearly loves the boy and is concerned about his safety, but by ignoring racism effectively participates in relegating Hawk and other Indians to second-class citizens.

The film brings attention to the fact that Native Americans were viewed as savages and considered lesser that the whites invading their lands. A Native American blog with the purpose of bringing attention to the challenges faced by Native Americans on reservations reviews praises *The Revenant* for its honest depiction of how westward expansion led to "genocide and the depletion of resources Native Americans needed for survival (Dietrich). The depletion of resources is referenced by the Arikara chief when the French refuse to trade him horses for stolen pelts and says he must honor the agreement. The French have assumed that the savage Indian is also uneducated, and make fun of him in French, only to be surprised when he begins speaking fluent French. The chief says, "You stand there and talk to me about honor?" You all have stolen everything from us. Everything! The land. The animals. … We leave you these pelts because honor demands it. I take your horses to find my daughter" (*The Revenant* 0.32.10). This representation of the Arikara shows a noble people bound by the honor of a deal, despite the treachery of the white men and the incursion on their land and way of life.

In addition, the Native Americans, in particular Glass's wife and Pawnee friend, are the sources of the spiritual element of the film. It is this spirituality that sustains Glass throughout his journey, and overcomes his desire for vengeance. However, the portrayal of Native Americans as the source of spirituality can be problematic, since, "with the best of intentions and with his eye on historic wrongs, Iñárritu lifts Native Americans into a realm apart, as people unlike others, whose very otherness is an unfortunate caricature." (Brody). According to this review, Iñárritu makes the same mistake of the Westerns of the 1960s and 70s. In his desire to correct the portrayal of Native Americans, he moves too far, and is left with another archetypal, "Cult of the Indian" representation of Native Americans as the spiritual "other" who are superior to whites (Chapter 4.3). The film teeters on the edge of portraying Native Americans as mystical beings who have sadly been victimized by the white encroachment on their sacred lands.

If the Native Americans are not the savages in the film, then the whites must be. This seems to be the case as Fitzgerald and the French are portrayed as ruthless and savage. The French initially seem friendly to the plight of the Arikara, but it is then revealed that they have had the chief's daughter all along. In addition, they hang Glass's Pawnee friend for no reason other than the fact he is an Indian. Fitzgerald has a deep-seated fear and hatred of the Ree, which is revealed when he says that Glass put them all at risk when he shot the grizzly to defend himself. Fitzgerald refers to the Native Americans as "feathernecks," "savages," and "tree niggers." As in *The Lone Ranger*, the derogatory terms for the Arikara are used by the villain in order to emphasize the negativity of the terms. In addition, Fitzgerald accuses Glass of choosing Indians over his own people. He then turns on Hawk and declares that "a savage is a savage" (*The Revenant* 00.15.32). It would seem that Fitzgerald is simply a brutal Indian-hater, one of the breed of men who exploited the Indians and their resources for profit. However, later in the film the reason for his fear and hatred is revealed to be because he was captured by Ree and scalped alive. The description of the experience is horrific, and causes the audience to feel a moment of sympathy for him:

> They took their sweet time with it too. At start I didn't feel nothin, I just heard the sound of the knife scraping against my skull and them all laughing and whooping and hollering and whatnot. Then the blood came. It was cold. It started streaming down my face, in my eyes. Breathing it in, choking on it. That's when I felt it. Felt all of it. (Ibid 0.41.10)

This description reveals the sadistic nature of the Arikara in this instance, where they took pleasure in scalping a man alive. There is therefore a duality in the portrayal of the Arikara. On the one hand, their use of violence is as justifiable as Glass's. The initial violent attack on the trapping party is justified by the fact that they are looking for the chief's daughter, not merely killing white men for no reason. This portrayal using violence as a means to an end, however, is somewhat diminished by

the fact that the Arikara kill Fitzgerald in the end: a man who hasn't actually done them any harm (except for self-defense during the initial battle) during the film. They seem to kill him simply because he is a white man, and in some roundabout way, as payment for Glass's rescue of the chief's daughter. This duality of violence helps to avoid the "Cult of the Indian" pitfall, and the Native Americans are not solely presented as noble victims, but instead, and more accurately, the film depicts the fact that both sides committed violence and atrocities upon one another. As the sign hanging next to the hanged Pawnee declares, in the frontier wilderness "we are all savages." (*The Revenant* 1.37.05). Therefore, there is an element of equality found after all, in that the harsh conditions of the Western frontier drive all men to savagery and murder.

While the portrayal of Native Americans in the film might still boarder on stereotypical and is dependent on "otherness," at the very least the film brought attention to Native Americans, both their history and the current issues they faced. In a way similar to Johnny Depp, Leonardo DiCaprio used his position in order to bring focus to the issues faced by Native Americans. During his acceptance speech for Best Actor at the Golden Globes, DiCaprio said that he wanted "to share this award with all of the First Nations people represented in this film and all the indigenous communities around the world. It is time that we recognize your history and that we protect your indigenous lands… It is time that we heard your voice and protected this planet for future generations"' (Dietrich). DiCaprio's recognition of Native Americans in such a public speech meant that the film and its treatment of Native Americans received even more publicity. The Native Partnership blog praises the fact that *The Revenant* "brings Native Americans and Native lands to the forefront of the conversation in America. The filmmakers cast Native American and Canadian aboriginal actors, allowing Native Americans to finally have a chance to represent themselves onscreen, without the often offensive and stereotypical portrayals so often seen in mainstream films. (Dietrich)." As was seen in the discussion of *The Lone Ranger* and Depp's decision to play Tonto,

Native Americans have long struggled with Hollywood casting non-Native actors to play Native characters. Therefore, although the representation might not be perfect, in this element at least, *The Revenant* succeeds where other films have failed.

The Revenant is the culmination of the Hugh Glass narrative, a narrative that has survived since the early frontier days of the West. This representation of the narrative combines the romanticism and symbolism of the romantic stage, and the realism and return to authenticity of the consummatory stage in order to create a post-consummatory myth of the west. The romanticism and symbolism can be seen in the expansive shots of the landscape, which while harsh, is undeniably beautiful. When there is a human in these landscapes shots, the wide shot is from a high angle[9], and this results in a visual perception where man is dwarfed by the awesome power of nature. The depiction of Glass as a frontier hero who is morally superior to the other white men in the film is also an element of romanticism that hearkens back to the legendary figures of the frontier (Chapter 4.1). However, the romantic dream of the frontier hero is shattered by the film's vivid depiction of the harsh realities of life on the frontier. The graphic, visceral, up-close violence shot with low camera angles[10] is also a way to return to realism and authenticity, while also forcing the audience to confront the romanticized violence typical of many Western films.

5.9 Chapter Conclusion

This chapter has analyzed seven narratives that are representative of the changing nature of the myth of the West and its connection to American identity. It has examined three relevant themes: the hero's quest for vengeance, the hero's symbolic belongings, and the portrayal of Native Americans, while drawing on theory from Chapter 3 and the historical context from Chapter 4. The analysis has provided insight into how representations of the myth of the West have changed in

[9] Shot from above the suspects. Often used to make the subject appear "vulnerable, isolated, or powerless" (Clark et al 19).
[10] A view that looks up at the subject(s). (Clark et al 19)

accordance to historical cultural context, and how the myth is tied to the creation of the American ideology. The findings of the analysis are presented in Chapter 6 and 7 as a partial conclusion and discussion.

Chapter 6: Partial Conclusion

My research in this thesis has been guided by the research question *How have representations of the myth of the West changed throughout American history in relation to their respective cultural historical contexts, and what does the changing nature of the myth of the West reveal about American identity?* This chapter will present the findings of my analysis by answering the first half of this question. The second half will be answered in my discussion in Chapter 7.The changes in the representations of the myth of the West were explored extensively in Chapter 5, and an overview of the findings are presented here. While my analysis was organized chronologically, this chapter is organized by narrative in order to show how the representations of the myth the West changed throughout the narratives.

The production of the myth of the West can be understood using cultural psychological theory from Chapter 3. In order to produce and exchange meanings about their world, society in the frontier era create representations through narratives (Chapter 3.1.1). These representations become part of a discourse of the mythopoeic myth of the West, and this discourse becomes the "regime of truth" where rugged frontier heroes bring civilization to savage Indians (Chapter 3.1.2). Regardless of the accuracy of the belief that created this discourse (Manifest Destiny), it becomesa true once whites begin to move westward and Indians are relocated (Chapter 3.1.2, Chapter 4.1). The discourse and "regime of truth" is then transformed into myth through signification and the connotation of the frontier as the birthplace of Americanism (Chapter 3.1.3,

Chapter 4.1) This process is cyclical and constitutive: as the cultural political context changes, so do the shared meanings of a society (Chapter 3.1.1). These representations reflect a new set of meanings that create a discourse of the romantic stage of the West, the discourse creates a new "regime of truth," and the pattern continues to change the nature of the myth of the West.

The Hugh Glass narrative is representative of the initial frontier aspect of the myth of the West. "Letters From the West No. XIV. The Missouri Trapper" established the basis of this myth. It was characterized by a focus on authenticity and the discourse of westward expansion and Manifest Destiny. The meeting of the civilized East and the savage West created the frontier hero that exemplified the American values of self-reliance, independence, freedom, and whose use of violence and desire for vengeance was justified by the surviving the rugged environment and savage Indians. *Lord Grizzly* added an element of psychological self-reflection in accordance with the postwar need for society to examine its identity and ideology. The characteristics of the frontier hero remained the same as in "Letters," but Glass also had a darker side, and the struggle between the civilized and savage selves replaced the mythopoeic dichotomy of East and West. In addition, the optimism of westward expansion was replaced by the threat of progress and the lamentation of the loss of the "free West." Native Americans were still portrayed as savages, but their way of life was also idealized. *Man in the Wilderness* continued this idealization in the anti-authoritarian atmosphere of the 1960s and 70s. In this version, the frontier hero fights for freedom and individualism in the face of savage authority. The myth of this era is characterized by sympathy for victimized Native Americans, and values duty to family over duty to country. *The Revenant* is the culmination of the frontier myth. It combines and revises many of the aspects of earlier representations and produces a myth that is characterized by an inherent savagery of human nature, the conflict between the vengeful and forgiving aspects of humanity, nostalgia for the loss of unspoiled wilderness, and the perseverance of the frontier hero against all odds.

The Lone Ranger narrative represents the cowboy aspect of the myth of the West. The format of this myth was created by *The Lone Ranger* radio series. The myth was characterized by a romantic archetype of the cowboy hero and a sense of nostalgia for the vanished ways of the Wild West. The Lone Ranger was a hero that espoused values of honor, justice, purity and individualism. The original Lone Ranger myth served the need for a champion of the everyday man as well as a sense of escapism in a society struggling with the Great Depression. The myth represented by *The Lone Ranger* was largely unchanged in the television series, and in the wake of ideological struggles brought on by WWII and the Cold War, the myth provided a way for that society to reestablish the American values represented by the Lone Ranger. The myth also created Tonto a representation of the "helpful" Indian. This was a pervasive representation that endured after the myth of The Lone Ranger was nearly relegated to the nostalgic past. However, the production of *The Lone Ranger* film reinvigorated and revised the myth of the Lone Ranger and Tonto. This revised version of the myth is full of humor and self-awareness of its role in reflection on and creation of the myth of the West. It challenges past archetypes of the myth of the West, and in so doing creates its own version. The post-consummatory Lone Ranger myth adopts many of the elements of the original myth in its ideals of friendship, understanding of other cultures, freedom and individualism, honor, and the triumph of humanity and justice over greed and corruption. These values reflect a society in a similar position to that of the original narrative: a society plagued by doubts brought on by a recession and war and using *The Lone Ranger* as escapism and nostalgia for a simpler time. A major change in the postmodern version of the myth is the treatment of Native Americans and the attempt to overcome the simplistic Tonto archetype in favor of a realistic portrayal.

Chapter 7 Discussion

This chapter will answer the second half of my research question and discuss the universal and intertextual aspects of the myth of the West.

7.1 What does the changing nature of the myth of the West reveal about American identity?

While the myth of the West has changed throughout American history, one of the common and enduring elements is its representation of American identity. "Americans have tended to see the frontier, its life, and its people as the purest examples of their basic values" of individualism, self-reliance, equality of opportunity and freedom (Kearny 103-104). As a nation, Americans return to the myth of the West in times of uncertainty in order to reestablish their identity and discover how to handle conflicts (Chapter 4). In a postmodern world, the myth highlights the best parts of American identity (honor, justice, freedom) but also warns against the less desirable aspects (such as violence and vengeance or the treatment and portrayal of Native Americans).

7.2 The Myth of the West as a Creation Myth

Part of the importance of the myth of the West and its ability to inform American identity lies in its status as a creation myth. A creation myth is defined as "the symbolic narrative of the beginning of the world as understood by a particular community" (Long). Creation myths are universal, and the definition of the myth of the West as a creation myth allows it to be understood intertextually.

It is the nature of a creation myth to express the basic values of a community as well as situate that community in relation to other humans, nature, and the nonhuman world (Long). Many creation myths also feature conflict regarding the creation of the world, which leads to the creation of opposed forces (broadly understood as good versus evil) (Ibid). Creation myths also involved the creation of heroes (Indick 1). Heroes are created to fight the forces of evil and protect the rest of humanity (for example, the knight errant in Arthurian legend) (Umland Chapter 1). The creation myth of the West defines "the world" as the frontier and creates American values through

the creation of the frontier hero. The myth also creates the cowboy hero in order to defend the common man against the changing nature of evil (savage Indians, traitorous companions, greedy railroad barons, the march of progress, etc.)

Another typical aspect of creation myth is the role of nature. The phrase "Mother Nature" is a common way to refer to the natural world, and references the idea that in many creations myths, nature gives birth to human life (Long). This idea is especially reflected in the frontier myth, where the harshness of nature gives birth to the American hero. In the myth of the West, while nature is something to be respected, and the loss of the free wilds is lamentable, one of the main themes is the dominion of human over nature. This can be seen in the Hugh Glass narrations where the livelihood of the trappers and progress of America is supported by trapping animals and selling their pelts. In addition, it is seen in *The Lone Ranger* where Silver gives up his freedom to the Lone Ranger. In both narratives, nature serves the interests of man. Native American mythology treats nature differently, and a comparison of the nature in Native American and myth of the West would be interesting, but is beyond the scope of this thesis.

While creation myths are universal, the details reflect the dominant ideology of the culture that created them. Thus, the myth of the West reflects the American idea of nature rather than that of Native Americans. Christianity is the dominant creation myth of America, and the myth of the West reflects Christian characteristics. Indick refers to the Western as the American book of Genesis, where the landscape of the Western (exemplified by Monument Valley) serves as an "American Eden, a wilderness paradise" (13-14). The representation of the myth of the West is also connected to the New Testament of the Bible. Glass and The Lone Ranger were both betrayed by those they trusted (a reference to Judas's betrayal of Jesus), and they then returned from the (assumed) dead (a reference to Jesus's resurrection).

The elements of Christian myth are not the only examples Christianity scattered throughout the narratives. The heroes struggle to balance Old Testament vengeance (an eye for an eye) and New Testament forgiveness. There are also explicit references to Christianity in the narratives. The use of the Biblical terms "fatted calf" and "prodigal" in "Letters," evokes proverbs regarding the return of one who was lost in connection to Glass's return to civilization. One of the defining characteristics of the Lone Ranger is that he must revere God. In *Lord Grizzly*, after Glass survives the second Arickara attack, he decides that he has been saved and chosen by God to pursue "the Lord's revenge" (Manfred Part III Chapter 3). In these narratives, a fundamental understanding of Christianity is expected of the reader. This expectation is valid because the myth of the West is based on the ideology of white, Christian males. America was founded by Christian puritans, and this religious influence continues to be fundamental to the myth of the West and the identity of Americans, despite the espoused separation of Church and State.

The origins of the Christian element of the myth of the West are tied to the origins of westward expansion in the form of Manifest Destiny. There was a strong religious element to this belief, where many believed that God had blessed the expansion of America and charged its people with the conversion of the heathen Indians (The Independence Hall Association). The distinction between Christian whites and heathen Indians led to the prevalence of what Saussure characterized as binary oppositions (Chapter 3.2.1). These binary oppositions include Christian/pagan, civilization/savage, good/evil, and White/Indian. The organization of these concepts and the belief in the superiority of whites meant that whites were associated with Christianity, civilization, and good, whereas Indians were associated with pagan, savage, and evil. The connection between Christianity and civilization is seen in *Man in the Wilderness* and *The Lone Ranger* film where the white characters believe that they are civilizing the pagan regions of the West. This is shown in Captain Henry's speech regarding sacrifice, as well as in *The Lone Ranger*, when the cavalry are

attacking the Comanche and cry, "let us bring the pure scepter of almighty God to the heathens "(1.21.54). However, the portrayal of Native American spirituality in these narratives (as well as *The Revenant*) challenge this binary opposition by questioning whether Native Americans or whites are the true savages.

Chapter 8 Conclusion

My thesis has shown that representations of the myth of the West have changed in accordance with the changing historical political context of the time in which they were written. These changes include variations on the ideals represented by the heroes, the characterization of the good guys and the bad guys, and the portrayal of Native Americans. However, while these aspects of the representation of the myth of the West have changed, others have remained the same. These include the representation of American identity, the myth as a creation myth, and the prevalence of Christian bias. The use of cultural psychological theory and new historicism have shown that the narratives are simultaneously a product of the discourse of their cultural context and an influence on how meaning is produced and shared among individuals within a culture. Because the myth of the West represents a discourse of power, the ideology of the myth becomes "truth," and that truth has real-life consequences that extend beyond the page, radio, or screen. As William Indick states "We are still living with the repercussions of the Western ethos and the romanticized myth that grew around it: the glorification of gun violence, the idealization of autonomous unilateral action, and the justification of imperialist doctrines" (5). The myth of the West is a fundamental element of Americanism, and understanding the history of this myth allows for an understanding of American history that can provide insights into the culture of America today.

Chapter 9: Further Research

Throughout my thesis there have been opportunities to pursue topics that relate to elements of the representation of the myth of the West, but that have not been immediately relevant to answering my research question, or have been deselected due to space constraints. This chapter identifies these topics as wider perspective and possibilities for further research.

Topics that have been mentioned but passed over due to space constraints include the role of women in the myth of the West, a closer exploration of the Christian elements in the narratives, and a comparison of the creation myth of the West and the creation myths of Native Americans. These topics could provide another angle from which to approach my research question and my chosen narratives.

Further research could also be conducted into the intertextual references between *The Lone Ranger* and masked superhero narratives. There are several elements that connect these two genres. *The Lone Ranger* and the superheroes of DC Comics were created around the same time, and the masked vigilantes served similar purposes throughout American history (DC Entertainment). Like *The Lone Ranger*, superhero narratives have also seen many reincarnations from the original comic books to the recent production of new films. An interesting difference between *The Lone Ranger* and the masked superheroes narratives is that fact that superheroes remove their masks and assume their other identity, whereas the Lone Ranger never takes off the mask, and only has the one identity. This raises the question of dual identity versus single identity and the mask as a way to both create and hide identity.

The final topic that lends itself to further research is the Sci-Fi Western. After the 1960s, the representation of the myth of the West found new life in the genre of science fiction and the "last frontier" of space with the success of *Star Wars* in 1977 (Slotkin 634). Other films that

could be explored in connection to this blended genre include *Star Trek, Serenity/Firefly* (perhaps the most explicit example, as the film is described as a "Western in Space,") and "*Cowboys and Aliens*," which presents a mashup of the two genres. Research into this topic would explore if and how the myth of the West retains the characteristics revealed in my thesis when engaging with a new genre.

As this chapter demonstrates, the myth of the West is far from dead, and there are a wealth of topics to be explored for those interested in continuing to work with this foundational aspect of American life. "The Lone Ranger rides again" towards the future, if we are willing to follow him.

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