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**White Space**

**Hegemonic Representations of American Indians**

**By**

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| <b>Contents (page)</b>   | <b>1</b>      |
| <b>Abstract</b>  | <b>2</b>      |
| <b>Introduction</b>  | <b>4-14</b>   |
| <u>Chronicling the Space: Hegemonic Narrative, Frontier Mythology<br/>    and the ‘Noble Savage’ in American History</u> |               |
| <b>Chapter One</b>   | <b>16-38</b>  |
| <u>‘Going Native’: Performance and Ritual of the American Hero in<br/>    <i>The Revenant</i> (2015)</u>                 |               |
| <b>Chapter Two</b>   | <b>40-59</b>  |
| <u>Mediating the ‘White Man’s Indian’: American Designs of Masculinity<br/>    and the Washington R*dskins Mascot</u>    |               |
| <b>Chapter Three</b>   | <b>61-77</b>  |
| <u>Fashioning an American Fantasy: Femininity, the ‘Hipster’ Headdress<br/>    and ‘Playing Indian’</u>                  |               |
| <b>Conclusion</b>  | <b>79-84</b>  |
| <u>Outer Space: The Final Frontier and Indian-ness in <i>Avatar</i> (2009)</u>   |               |
| <b>Bibliography, Filmography, Internet &amp; Other Media</b>   | <b>86-103</b> |

## Abstract:

This thesis argues that American Indian stereotypes within American social and cultural space serve to maintain hegemony over America's Indigenous populace. Designations of the 'Noble Savage' and its derivatives, as a result of cultural appropriation, continue to misrepresent and perpetuate ideals of the American Indian 'other'. Furthermore, by subjugating aspects of Indian-ness to white cultural identity, offers a narrative that reinforces cultural hegemony. This thesis extends Antonio Gramsci's concept of cultural hegemony as a theoretical framework to analyse how cultural appropriation seeks to become validated within public discourse. This thesis will present three distinct case studies representative of appropriated American Indian cultural images and artefacts naturalised as aspects of white American culture. Alejandro G. Iñárritu's 2015 film *The Revenant*, outlines the centrality of the American frontier as hegemonic narrative in the American consciousness, and augments American Indian culture to white culture; the Washington Redskins sporting mascot, extends the discussion of appropriation through issues of representation and ownership, framed by hegemonic discourse of strong white masculinity; and the 'Hipster Headdress' offers a gender contrast to previous case studies through a feminine narrative which tests issues of objectification and sexualisation in the maintenance of stereotypical depictions of American Indians. By presenting American Indian representation via cultural appropriation, it is possible to argue the importance of cultural hegemony in describing and sanctioning this process, through ideological depictions of Indian-ness and the space they inhabit.



## Introduction

### Chronicling the Space: Hegemonic Narrative, Frontier Mythology and the 'Noble Savage' in American History.<sup>1</sup>

In "The Railsplitter," an 1860 painting by an unknown artist, Abraham Lincoln is depicted with his sleeves rolled up, wielding a rail-splitting maul, displays features not commonly associated with a lawyer, politician and President of the United States. Rather he is presented as an outdoorsman; an implicit suggestion of one who effectively carved himself a niche, through his own guile, physically contributing to the overall progress of American society. Evoking the rustic everyman, it implies his innate characteristics are part of the spirit of the west, which also denotes a very robust ideal of masculinity. This painting is no mere accident, of course, framing Lincoln through the prism of the frontier, attributing his success to the common accomplishment of American civilisation. Intriguingly, the painting itself was

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<sup>1</sup> This thesis uses terms 'American Indian', 'Native American' and 'Indigenous American' to refer to the Indigenous populace of North America. However, preference will be given to American Indian in the first instance, which follows the lead of American Indian scholars. 'Indian-ness' is generally employed within this text when it is appropriated by white culture or used within that context. The maintenance of the hyphen is deliberate to create a tension within the term as designating white imaginations of the American Indian. E.g. 'Hugh Glass' mimics an American Indian'; 'Glass has culturally appropriated aspect of Indian-ness'; 'Glass' Indian-ness...' etc.

Glass will be referred to as 'white' / 'white hero' signifying his ethnicity, but also his design. *The Revenant*'s director Alejandro G. Iñárritu's narrative is quantified here by comparable 'white heroes' in other texts. As a result, this analysis of Glass will default to his whiteness over Americanness in the first instance. The pause within Chapter One, in describing Glass as 'American' is deliberate to illustrate a significant change to his character over the course of *The Revenant*.

'Native' / 'nativeness' and 'indigenesness' / 'indigeneity' are used, but it will be indicated in which context this occurs. These terms may be employed in a wider sense to notions of nativeness or indigeneity in other cultures, but also to designate white ideals of nativeness or indigeneity that have been confused or mis-matched, and where American Indian (and Indian-ness) are not geographically appropriate. E.g. Tiger Lily's confused 'indigeneity'; Mohawk land historically refers to both American Indian and Native Canadian territory geographically.

In addition, 'Washington Redskins' is reproduced here as Washington R\*dskins to designate the football team from Washington D.C., its brand and affiliations. This follows suit of commentators and critics who find the term distasteful, unless, of course, where quoted or deviations have been used, such as Adrienne Keene's use of 'Redskns'.

dated to pre-Civil War America and suggests more about Lincoln's Presidential criteria as opposed to his later image as war leader, and 'emancipator'. The embedded notion of self-determination would be a driving ideal to anyone who had the courage to grasp the mettle and become more, renew, through interaction with the journey west and frontier hardships, and recast themselves as an American.<sup>2</sup>

The frontier plays an important role throughout this thesis conceptually, but also as a starting point for the chronology as the setting for *The Revenant*. The Myth of the Frontier and treatise of American exceptionalism are part of the American experience, as are overcoming the wilderness and its native inhabitants. As a result, this narrative reconciles America's violent past in its brazen and peculiar adoption of aspects of the indigenous society and culture it so devastated in creating modern America. Exceptionalism is riddled with contradiction, progress with destruction, regardless, the frontier a self-perpetuating myth that continues to form the American consciousness.<sup>3</sup> The frontier has been a constant

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<sup>2</sup> Reproduced in Donald's book, 'The Railsplitter' is accompanied with this note: "This 1860 life-sized oil painting, by an unknown artist [interesting in itself], suggests the mythic qualities that helped elect Lincoln President. Forgotten here are Lincoln's highly successful law practice and his career in politics in order to stress, in a frontier setting, the homely virtues of physical strength and hard manual labour."

<sup>3</sup> The frontier has always evoked strong imagery in the American imagination. It has been a tool of presidents throughout American history: from Lincoln to John F. Kennedy. In a similar disposition to Lincoln's portrait, Kennedy's 'New Frontier' speech, was used to set out his presidential credentials whilst accepting the Democratic Party's July 1960 candidacy. This speech cast JFK as the homespun everyman and established his presidential vision as one to which all Americans can submit; but the president also assumes the authoritative depiction of such a vision: displaying exceptional American, almost heroic, qualities. See: JFK Library (online). The speech later became known as: 'The New Frontier', in which Kennedy proposes a set of "challenges" and not "promises" for the American people (Democratic National Convention, 15 July 1960).

More recently, Barack Obama aligned himself with such aspects of the American character. Characteristics of self-determination and exceptionalism - the spirit of the western frontier - that drove immigrants to seek out the New World, and become 'American' in the 'Melting Pot' society. The 'Melting Pot' narrative is entwined with the notion that within the sanctity of resplendent opportunity - bearing in mind that one had the stomach for it - that America presented, the frontier society would sculpt the individual into something more, in which all could share. For a flavour of Obama's use of the concept during his career: at the Democratic National Convention in 2004, in which he positions himself as a beneficiary of exceptionalism (C-SPAN); and a decade later, as President, stating his belief in 'American Exceptionalism' (Hains).

narrative transferred by popular culture. Promoted in cultural artefacts as diverse as Buffalo Bill's Wild West Shows, Henry David Thoreau's *Walden*, popular 'Dime' novels, and the cinematic Wild West, the frontier has, and continues to stoke the American cultural imagination.

This thesis analyses three social / cultural spaces, or white space: the frontier via the film *The Revenant* and its white hero; the sports field through an examination of the Washington Redskins mascot; and the use of the 'Hipster Headdress' as icon in fashion and celebrity culture. However, there is scope for application to any social institution where aspects of American Indian culture, or Indian-ness, is appropriated and consumed. Furthermore, its utility could easily extend beyond the United States and considered in any post-colonial society. The accompanying case studies are illustrative of the complexities of ongoing contemporary debate regarding cultural appropriation, whilst attempting to reconsider and contribute to an understanding of the ongoing misrepresentation of American Indian culture. As such, there is definite scope for using this model across a variety of social / cultural spaces.<sup>4</sup>

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Frederick Jackson Turner's 1893 'Frontier Thesis', which alluded to the closing of the frontier in 1890, considered the frontier central to the process of 'becoming' an American. It goes almost without saying that these conceptions of the archetypal 'American' are premised on white, settler-colonial masculinity. Frederick Jackson Turner's 1893 paper, *The Significance of the Frontier in American History* was delivered on the 12<sup>th</sup> July at the World Columbian Exposition, in which Turner discussed the fluidity of American life, and the opportunity's that presented as the frontier expanded westward, predicated the peculiarities of the American character (Turner).

<sup>4</sup> 'White space' suggests a social / cultural space which appropriates, consumes and naturalises aspects of American Indian culture as white culture. White space also functions as a term of criticism of hegemony within public space, and to shorthand the description and analysis of aspects of American Indian culture that are reproduced in the maintenance of cultural hegemony within American social / cultural institutions. Furthermore, hegemonic spaces, such as American Indian owned casinos or museums, may present a very different interpretation and therefore contribute a counter-narrative to white hegemonic cultural ideology, and offer further application of the model.



White space refers to the physical location in which the convention of Indian-ness is taking place, such as the cinema or at a sporting event. However, within these spaces may occur a figurative dissemination through the artefacts in a museum or the film that is being viewed. Within these spaces there is a process inside American social / cultural institutions which denote an imbalanced contract. Indian-ness has a use or value to white society which removes representation from American Indian ownership to white ownership. It is quite possible this process is not simply an ongoing physical transaction of colonisation; rather a more implicit negotiation of power through assumed cultural practice of norms and values. Such practices are implicit of cultural hegemony. This can be understood through continued stereotypical depictions of American Indians in each space under consideration which make up this thesis. Resultantly, American Indian culture is left in the past, on the periphery, acceded to formulaic images or the continuation of historical typecasts. Such stereotypical images of the American Indian signify the perpetuation of cultural hegemony. Antonio Gramsci's conception of hegemony is a key feature of white space. In addition, the scholars proceeding the description of cultural hegemony in this Introduction, are synthesised to formulate the model of white space.

Cultural hegemony is implemented by the prevailing social group. Gramsci suggested culture as a 'material force'; reflective of the dominant social structures which form ideology as justification for authority through instruments of the state and civil society (Forgacs 357).

In his *Prison Writings (1929-1935)*, Gramsci wrote:

These two levels correspond on the one hand to the function of 'hegemony' which the dominant group exercises throughout society and on the other hand to that of 'direct domination' or command exercised through the state and 'juridical' government (Forgacs 306).

For Gramsci, the dominant group in society maintained hegemony in two ways: by economic power but also through intellectual and moral leadership. Gramsci sought to resolve the determinism in the thought of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels by viewing Base and Superstructure in dialectical interaction. Base describes the economic and political of civil society whilst Superstructure describes the cultural spaces such as education, religion and the mass media. It is in these social and cultural spaces that ideology exercises governance through cultural hegemony (Jakubowski 10-25).<sup>5</sup>

Furthermore, to succeed and maintain cultural dominance, counter narratives must form to legitimise the existence of the hegemonic narrative. This process of domination and resistance is key to understanding a prevailing ideology. Gramsci argues that dominant ideology legitimises itself within a superstructure of contradictory and discordant ideas and that a totalitarian ideology that crushes opposition is doomed to failure. This makes capitalist societies resourceful and resilient. To Gramsci, hegemony is the realisation of the goals of the structure and that culture is contested terrain. In this sense, cultural institutions reflect the ongoing effects of the dominant societies structure and this is put into practice via ideology, in turn, manifests as cultural narratives through civil institutions which ultimately reflect the mores and values of the dominant group (Forgacs 189 - 193).

Robert F. Berkhofer, in his seminal work *The White Man's Indian*, discusses how American Indians have been demarcated by white preconceptions. American Indians were characterised by their apparent lack of civilisation, as well as perceived difference - or

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<sup>5</sup> Notably, the work of George Lipsitz proposes the “possessiveness of whiteness” in owning and controlling the other culture. These assumptions are set by white privilege in society but are also protected by and reinforced by notions of white superiority. Lipsitz uses the example of the appropriation of African American blues and Jazz music as the object of “white desire”. See (Lipsitz), with particular reference to chapter 6: ‘White Desire: Remembering Robert Johnson’ (118-139).

otherness - not within their own cultural framework. Therefore, white civilisation and American Indian society was professed and rendered as incompatible to one another (25-28). Furthermore, depictions of American Indians were invented in relation to white ideals. The 'Noble Savage' image was cast as white design of the other. For the purpose of description and analysis, is unrepresentative and taken as a whole lapses into a stereotype and has remained so (3, 4).<sup>6</sup> Berkhofer's 'White Man's Indian' maintains a constant throughout this thesis as referent for white designations of American Indians. The 'Noble Savage' image acts as a historical foundation on which American Indian stereotypes are predicated.

As Philip Deloria observes, there is a long history and tradition in American society of American Indian appropriation that is deemed authentically American. The most infamous performance of Indian-ness was during the Boston Tea Party. Rebellious colonialists, disguised as American Indians, rejected British authoritarianism by dumping tea into Boston Bay. This adoption by white society of American Indian traditions is defined as 'Playing Indian'. Deloria observes that 'Playing Indian' "offered proto-Americans a platform for imagining and performing an identity of revolution" (12). It will be referred to throughout this thesis in any example where white culture adopts American Indian cultural artefacts, or clothing.

Jean-Jacques Rousseau argued that American Indians aided to critique white society as well as serve a historical function in white renewal, e.g. via the American Revolution. To elaborate, in *A Discourse on Inequality*, Rousseau discusses the damaging effects of modern living on the 'natural' condition of man, by creating an interdependence on the state, its laws

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<sup>6</sup> As Berkhofer notes, such designations stem from the Enlightenment project of classification which began with plants and animals and extended onto human beings. Again, the quest for knowledge dovetailed with the self-interests of conquest and capitalism (28). Epitomised by the West's necessity in patronising the indigenous other, for example, Edward Said in *Orientalism* discusses Western scholarship with regards the East and how intellectual output was marred with imperialist projects (9-36).

and civil society at large. However, the creation of such institutions also extended designs of freedom and Jeffersonian notions of the 'inalienable rights of man' as natural preconditions. It was such an independence from civil society in which Rousseau offered the myth of the 'Noble Savage', stating that the "savages of America" were removed from good and evil because of their nonalignment with civil society, and their more direct link to nature presented a more natural and authentic state of being (27). In addition, the term, 'Noble Savage', implicitly emphasises the word 'savage', which justified historical violence against the American Indian. European traditions of self-criticism and conquest were interlocked and constituted, which served to underpin European colonialism and Enlightenment thought. (Playing Indian 4).

Rousseau is providing a very early model for the virtues of appropriation. If white society were to idealise itself on a society he perceived to function on a more primitive level, the benefits would undermine the consequences of modern living. However, in making his point, Rousseau disregards the actual people he is deploying to make it: which is essentially the human cost of appropriation. Furthermore, Rousseau presents appropriation as a criticism of civil society and thus, by removing oneself from modern living, or 'Going Native', offers respite to white society. However, by doing so, perpetuates stereotypes of the appropriated culture (10 – 37).

Shari M. Huhndorf's exemplary work, *Going Native: Indians in the American Cultural Imagination*, uses the "revisionist" Western *Dances with Wolves* (1990) as an example of the processes she discusses in her book. She argues that *Dances with Wolves* apprises certain historical perceptions of American Indians. In the film, they are presented as the Noble (Sioux) and the Savage (Pawnee). This informs and solidifies historical representations of American

Indians, and perpetuates them, reinforcing racial hierarchies. Huhndorf argues that the director, Kevin Costner, whilst not unsympathetic to the American Indian plight, still presents a distorted vision of indigenous life, one which reaffirms white masculine hegemony (5, 6).

In Huhndorf's thesis, mainstream (white) America envisions American Indians as idealised versions of themselves. Huhndorf presents this notion in her analysis of the film; whereby using the melancholic ending as an example of the Sioux's fate against white settlement as inevitable consequence. Kevin Costner's character, Lieutenant John Dunbar, accompanied by his love interest Stands With A Fist, played by Mary McDonnell, 'Go Native' in the film by becoming members of the Sioux Tribe, playing out a fantasy which ultimately obscures the violence of Manifest Destiny. Likewise, white people in this perspective are the "heirs" of Indian-ness, and thus, the act of 'Going Native' is regenerative to white (European) American society. The transformation on screen is one in which the white hero transcends the boundaries beset by frontier society and traverses them, ultimately, becoming American (4, 5). The term 'Going Native' will be used as a reference of white appropriation that can be read as cultural hegemony. Whereby, American Indian culture brings relief to white identity, through its handling of history, for example, via a fantasy role-play narrative, as presented in *Dances with Wolves*.

This follows the work of Richard Slotkin who, in *Regeneration Through Violence*, argued that the frontier was a place of renewal for white settlers, which was, and is, a formative, and hegemonic, part of the American experience and imagination. Those who defeated the wilderness and (American Indian) savagery of the frontier, and extended white civilisation, became American through this divine process. The triumph of civilisation over savagery, of white American colonialism over the American Indian forms dialectical

interaction, grounding a ceaseless tension between the hegemonic society and its interpretation of indigeneity (14 - 24).

As such, the use or 'role' of American Indians in this sense is to represent the lost virtues of Western society. However, as Huhndorf postulates, American Indians are agents and not simply victims. Historically they have been presented as such, but also there has been resistance to the dominant society and culture in various ways, including, the Plains Wars and the Ghost Dance; times of physical and spiritual rejection of white society. Huhndorf sees white cultural dominance as a power struggle between hegemonic ideology and American Indian discourse (13). Huhndorf is referring to the Gramscian notion of cultural hegemony in which minority narratives compete with dominant narratives in cultural space for hegemony. Throughout this thesis, the frontier can be considered as both hegemonic American narrative and metaphor for the space in which cultural mediation between American and American Indian society occurs.

This thesis will present three case studies within three chapters as evidence of conflicting narratives of white hegemony and Indian-ness that contribute to stereotype and misrepresentation, via cultural appropriation, of American Indians. Chapter One analyses the 2015 film *The Revenant* deploying a Gramscian framework to investigate whether cultural hegemony is evident within the film. Hugh Glass' image of robust white masculinity will function as hegemonic propagation, and perpetuation of the American frontier narrative, as demarcated by 'The Railsplitter' portrait of Lincoln and the work of Richard Slotkin. Juxtaposed against this, will be the consideration of Glass' Indian-ness and interpretations of American Indian characters in the film. Glass' Indian-ness will be quantified by 'Playing Indian' and 'Going Native'. Glass' appropriation will support the notion that Indian-ness is utility of

white culture and bolstered to the dominant society to support white ideals of identity and nation. This film is used as a case study because of its significance to contemporary mainstream narratives which perpetuate the deployment of tropes of Indian-ness in order to complement the white hero.

This exploration establishes Chapter Two: which addresses the debate surrounding the Washington R\*dskins mascot. The American football field will extend the metaphor of the frontier which marks the line between American 'civilisation' and American Indian 'savagery'. Chapter Two presents a contrasting white space that compliments the ongoing investigation of white masculine hegemony in American society using Gramsci's theoretical underpinning. Furthermore, illustrate how the Washington R\*dskins team mascot is a further manifestation of American cultural hegemony through appropriation of American Indian images. Resultantly, the misrepresentation of American Indians continues through stereotypical designs of the 'White Man's Indian' as will be evidenced by an analysis of the R\*dskins team main logo. Analogous to the frontier hero, the Washington R\*dskins mascot is a further design of the fetishisation of Indian-ness in American society. This is supported by the mascots deployment in American society objectified by white desire based on ideals that support white masculine identity but are also representative of hegemonic narrative of Manifest Destiny.

Finally, Chapter Three offsets the previous chapters by considering hegemonic femininity. The 'Hipster Headdress' represents the present-day obsession with, what has been labelled, the 'sexy' American Indian costume. Such devices reveal a narrative on which the interpretation of American Indian femininity exposes notions of paternalism and social hierarchy which seeks to preserve cultural hegemony. Appropriation contributes to an image of the American Indian that mirrors colonial fantasy but also contemporary sexualisation and objectification of women. Furthermore, would appear to have a consequential effect by

playing on the vulnerability of American Indian women, as indicated by the prevalence of sexual violence against them. It is possible to highlight how stereotypes of American Indian femaleness also reinforce white hegemony by exploitation of gender tropes that maintains a subjective view of American Indian women. Therefore, this chapter establishes a gender perspective on the 'White Man's Indian' that functions as an iteration of stereotypical images suggestive of cultural hegemony in American social and cultural space.





## Chapter One

### 'Going Native': Performance and Ritual of the American Hero in *The Revenant* (2015)<sup>7</sup>

This chapter considers Alejandro G. Iñárritu's 2015 *The Revenant* and its representation of the film's protagonist, Hugh Glass, played by Leonardo DiCaprio. Hugh Glass is portrayed in a heroic fantasy role in his quest to avenge his murdered son, Hawk, played by Forrest Goodluck. The chapter deploys a Gramscian framework to investigate whether cultural hegemony is evident within the film. Through the depiction of Hugh Glass, *The Revenant* presents an unyielding vision of robust, hegemonic masculinity whilst also displaying aspects of Indian-ness; his costume, weapons, disguises, language, all support evidence of American Indian appropriation. However, Glass' Indian-ness does not undermine a narrative espousing hegemonic masculinity; Glass' Indian-ness complements, even assists, in his continuation and successful negotiation of the frontier. This film is an example of how contemporary mainstream narratives deploys tropes of Indian-ness in order to complement the white hero.

Throughout *The Revenant*, Iñárritu's focus (and camera) remains largely on Glass' character. Because of this perspective, of central attention will be the consideration how *The Revenant* perpetuates white designations of American Indians to bolster white masculine hegemony. Namely, the 'White Man's Indian' and the 'Noble Savage' stereotype; discussed

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<sup>7</sup> Alejandro G. Iñárritu, *The Revenant*'s director is of Latina/o origin and it is relevant to note his ethnicity with regards his potential interpretation of 'race'. 'Race' varies in Latina/o countries dependent on context or geography, applied as an individual rather than as a group marker, as opposed to the United States 'binary' interpretation. Iñárritu's perspective may well be tempered by the *Mestizaje* caste or gradation rule that is prevalent in Latina/o countries. This may well have had an influence on his decisions as a filmmaker and may be implicit when applying this allegedly more fluid system of 'race' to his perspective on racial difference in *The Revenant*. His interpretation may be based on his analysis of white / American history that has not been influenced by a binary racial system. However, it is reasonable to point out that whilst Iñárritu does repeat well-trodden ground with regards the white hero / savior narrative, he may, or may not perceive American Indians as physically different, and this may or may not influence their position in the film (Banks).

here as the contentious title 'half-breed'. The title given many white interlopers on the American frontier who have 'Played Indian' and 'Gone Native', such as John Dunbar in Kevin Costner's *Dances with Wolves* (1990), and Daniel Day-Lewis' Natty 'Hawkeye' Bumppo, in Michael Mann's *The Last of the Mohicans* (1992). Furthermore, the white hero's position undergirds prognostications of an identifiable frontier hierarchy. This results in negative connotations, such as stereotypes of savage violence and lack of civilisation, being applied to those of racial difference; American Indians manifesting as the wilderness or animals, and further undermined by the perception of feminine qualities deemed pejorative, and applied to extend detrimental implications of racial difference.

American Indian representation in cinematography has mirrored dominant notions of American Indians very much defined by Robert Berkhofer's 'White Man's Indian'. Likewise, *Hollywood's Indian: The Portrayal of the Native American in Film*, by Peter C. Rollins and John E. O'Connor, offers scholarly interpretations of individual film portrayal of American Indians. Angela Aleiss, in *Making the White Man's Indian: Native Americans and Hollywood Movies*, offers insight onto the role of studio production in crafting the American Indian in film. Jose Armando Prats offers an analysis of the cultural role of film in its portrayal of American Indians in *Invisible Natives: Myth & Identity in the American Western*. But the reading of *The Revenant*, with supporting text from an interdisciplinary position which draws on history, American studies, film and cultural studies, offers a relevance in undertaking an analysis of ongoing stereotypical depictions of American Indians in film. Whilst Gramsci's theory of cultural hegemony offers this chapter its uniqueness by presenting evidence that suggests American Indian cultural appropriation can be read as cultural hegemony.

The 'Revisionist' period in film granted American Indians respite through greater characterisation in titles such as *Dances with Wolves* and *The Last of the Mohicans*; ending the primarily racist representations of whooping savages, for example, in John Ford's *Drums Along the Mohawk* (1939) and depictions of American Indians as villains throughout the 'Classic' Western era.<sup>8</sup> Contemporary American Indian driven films such as the adaptation of American Indian novelist Sherman Alexie's *Smoke Signals* (1998) directed by Chris Eyre, are tempered by stereotypical offerings, such as Gore Verbinski's 2013 reboot of *The Lone Ranger*, with a 'whitewashed' Johnny Depp in the Tonto role. Unfortunately, *The Revenant* seems to default to films such as Delmar Daves *Broken Arrow* (1950) as the Arikara are presented as little more than a manifestation of the wilderness. Sherman Alexie, with regards cinematographic depictions of the frontier, discerns: "it is also the place where the American Indian lingers, destined to lurk, in the dark, behind the bluffs of frontier America" (cited in Slethaug 130). This suggests the reification of American Indian images within the cinematic imagination, which are consented and naturalised by audience association with historical stereotypes and repetition of racial tropes, that seek to legitimise cultural hegemony.<sup>9</sup>

The American frontier hero has been part of American cultural imagination since colonial times. Denise MacNeil, in *Mary Rowlandson and the Foundational Mythology of the American Frontier Hero*, perceives that the frontier hero emerges from literary and cultural

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<sup>8</sup> Ken Nolley in *The Representation of Conquest: John Ford and the Hollywood Indian (1939 – 1964)* discusses the rejection and affirmation of Ford's racism. He also offers that whilst Ford's earlier work contributes such depictions to discourse, his whole body of films cannot be seen as repetition of the same tropes. Nolley argues that Ford presents representations of "real Indians" in his later work (Rollins and O'Connor, (Eds.) 73 - 90).

<sup>9</sup> The cultural style of Interior / 'Plains' Tribes (e.g. Blackfoot, Cheyenne, Lakota) is the most reproduced thus identifiable in cinema, as notes Fergus M. Bordewich: "Generations of Wild West shows and Hollywood films created an iconographic Indian modelled on idealized versions of the craggy-featured Northern Plains warrior of the mid-nineteenth century, but there is no typical Indian physique any more than there is a generic Caucasian, Asian, or African one" (66).

traditions of male characters in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> Century. However, MacNeil argues the frontier hero's genesis can be traced back to early decades of the Puritan Colonies. At that time, literature featured both male and female protagonists. MacNeil observes that the story of Mary Rowlandson represents one of the first truly "Americanised" literary characters. Captured by Algonquian Indians, Rowlandson is forced to adopt survival techniques required for the American continent (625 - 653). As MacNeil discerns in a later work, *The Emergence of the American Frontier Hero, 1682 - 1826: Gender, Action and Emotion*:

Native American ways provided the solutions that the Puritan populace needed in order to function in the New World. And this application of Native American attitudes and methods to Puritan problems is the foundation of the European American, and also of the American, hero, such as Cooper's Natty Bumppo, who fuses Native American skills with white American concerns (19).

Chadwick Allen recognises that such traits are also present in 20<sup>th</sup> Century representations of the frontier hero. The Lone Ranger and Tonto use "western skills" in the 1995 graphic novel; such skills are imbued with imaginations of the American Indian, and only through the frontier hero's adoption of them is he or she able to solve the issue at hand (617).

Hugh Glass adopts such techniques and utilises them throughout *The Revenant*. Iñárritu spends a lot of time setting up Glass and presenting him as the hero, focusing on a set of very specific skills. Glass can be seen constructing a shelter from the disembowelled carcase of his dead horse during a snowstorm; he is an adept rifleman, rider and swimmer; he is able to seal his wound with gunpowder and find sustenance from the bone marrow of a rotting corpse, in addition to being able to identify which wild roots to eat. In this way, *The Revenant's* rendering of Glass, continues the traits associated with textual representations of white heroes, such as Rowlandson, and the Lone Ranger, who have performed as the American Indian for their survival on the American frontier. Glass' horseback riding and sharpshooting complement the skills presented by filmic heroes, such as Fess Parker in 1953's

*Davy Crockett: King of the Wild Frontier*, directed by Norman Foster, as well as Dunbar in *Dances with Wolves* and Hawkeye in *The Last of the Mohicans*. Rowlandson's femininity, however, is transferred and reframed by a masculine driven narrative which has perpetuated; whilst all feature the same fantasy of white success over the wilderness via Indian-ness. The success of *The Revenant's* hero is granted because he displays the right skills. As will be illustrated, his designs are one that anticipates his potential Americanness, and not impeded by his adopted Indian-ness (Deloria, *Playing Indian*); (Huhndorf).

Despite there being no evidence of Glass ever having a Pawnee wife or child, Glass' adoption of the Pawnee language further illustrates his otherness (Friedman). This trait of Glass' in the film arouses suspicion with Tom Hardy's antagonist, John Fitzgerald, but this has more to do with his personal agenda than Glass' otherness. In fact, Glass Indian-ness in *The Revenant* acts as a device that helps establish his character. It measures his intelligence and acculturation, distinguishing Glass from the monosyllabic and bellicose villain Fitzgerald and the rest of the party of fur trappers, suggesting this was a deliberate deployment by Iñárritu. Crucially, it offers an advantage when interacting with American Indians. Glass' grasp of Pawnee language, it seems, deals him an all-pervasive otherness by which he is able to interact with American Indian helpers. This serves an important function in the film as it gives him a special status, as well as further extending his Indian-ness. Comparable to other frontier heroes, such as Mary Rowlandson, Lone Ranger, Davy Crockett, John Dunbar and Hawkeye, the character of Glass, in *The Revenant*, functions as a cultural mediator between white and American Indian societies (C. Allen 620); (In 92).

Consequently, places limitations on American Indian characters in *The Revenant* as they are only identified with, or granted expression, through DiCaprio's hero. This privileges

Glass' narrative over representations of the American Indian, also, his whiteness above his Indian-ness. This trope in the film can also consider Glass as, what Jose Armando Prats, calls the "repository of Indian-ness" (193). The presentation of the white hero as authority on the American Indian can be read as cultural hegemony. Iñárritu enables Glass to speak for, and define the American Indian, which is qualified by the American Indian, mirroring tropes of the white hero. For example, in *Dances with Wolves*, Ten Bears (Russell Means) "bestows honour, authority and authenticity" upon Dunbar, a device analogous to Glass' nameless wife (Grace Dove) and son who function in minor characterisations that justify his Indian-ness (178). This assumption is fashioned amongst the audience, therefore, in following such a trope, Iñárritu consents to such a reading:

We accept and certify it neither because we believe in the power of the Indian to transfer his Indianness without decrease nor because we trust in the special powers of the hero. Ours, rather, is the acquiescence *derived from* the presumed protean quality that allows the yet unformed American to become Indian. He embraces - and becomes - all that is Indian - all of it, without exception or condition; yet, somehow, he must never be the native's own authenticity, he must disclaim his whiteness, but he must never quite abrogate it. He is the double Other, authentic neither as Indian nor as white, yet the genuine *American*, and his Americanness - that identity that promotes his Indianness even as he belies it - always seems tragically linked to the power of the Myth of Conquest to enforce the disappearance of the Indian (193).

Prats observes that the white hero's special skills are subject to audience association with his Americanness, and by design, Indian-ness embellished as corollary of the white hero; Iñárritu has followed trend by making them central to his representation of Glass, and bolstered his protagonist through his Indian-ness (178).

Moreover, as indicated by Prats preceding passage, Glass' whiteness must remain irreproachable and his adoption of Indian-ness must never present "cultural backsliding" (200 - 203). As with the white hero's in *Dances with Wolves* and *The Last of the Mohicans*, Glass straddles white / American Indian society and culture with apparent ease by his actions,

interactions and innate and learned characteristics. These physiognomies prompt audience identification with the hero, and by doing so, consent to his ambiguity through his moral disposition beset by his overarching whiteness / Americanness, therefore, expresses a narrative of cultural hegemony (Aleiss); (Rollins & O'Connor); (Lipsitz); (Slotkin, *Regeneration Through Violence: The Mythology of the American Frontier, 1600-1860*).

This can be demonstrated if Glass's characterisation is framed by the concept of the 'half-breed' (C. Allen). The 'half-breed' on the frontier is identifiable in heroes who have 'Gone Native' by transcending their whiteness via adopted American Indian traits and become American (Huhndorf). The conception of the 'half-breed' can support a reading of cultural hegemony by highlighting *The Revenant's* narrative that follows suit of previous texts and films which bolster Indian-ness to the white hero. The 'half-breed' depiction echoes 'Noble Savage' discourse. 'Noble Savage' references a historical description of 'good' and 'bad' American Indians which can be framed in *The Revenant* as a duality (Berkhofer); (Rousseau).

The hero's special status ultimately distinguishes him from the mere racial or criminal 'half-breed' or the renegade Fitzgerald: "not only because these are their own type but because their identities as such hold neither mystery nor possibility nor resonance" (Prats 183). The character of Fitzgerald prompts Glass' reification because of his own lowly status in contrast to the hero. DiCaprio's hero is believable and tangible because the audience needs him to be. Tom Hardy's Fitzgerald, the criminal / renegade, lacks a moral compass, and is less easily identifiable, prompting allegiance with the white hero, in a similar fashion to the temperamental Magua (Wes Studi) who plays foil to Hawkeye's hero in *The Last of the Mohicans*. Resultantly, whiteness and maleness are imbued with a greater morality, which



elevates the white hero, privileging his narrative over other characterisations in *The Revenant*, but Glass' portrayal is never mitigated by his otherness (Deloria, *The Last of the Mohicans*).

Following tropes in *Dances with Wolves* and *The Last of The Mohicans*, Iñárritu's hero spans the 'Noble' and 'Savage' features of his appropriated Indian-ness and therefore it is possible to see him in terms of a 'half-breed' comparable to Lone Ranger, Dunbar or Hawkeye. This interpretation distinguishes Glass' character and the positive aspects of his adopted Indian-ness as well as his 'Noble Savage' American Indian 'helpers' from the criminal white Fitzgerald, and the 'Savage' Arikara who play to type by emerging from, and then disappearing into, the wilderness at Iñárritu's direction. Furthermore, quantifies the points in the film that Glass's character does adopt savagery: such as eating raw flesh with a Pawnee refugee named Hikuc (Arthur Redcloud) that he meets on his travels; or when he shelters naked in the carcass of his dead horse after disembowelling it during a snowstorm. These moments of violence are alleviated by the fact they aid the hero's quest, therefore contributing to the 'Noble' act that necessitated them

Additionally, Glass' American Indian helpers display 'Noble' characteristics but are never allowed to obtain the heights of Glass', merely because their 'Nobleness' is defined by their position of subservience to Glass. Iñárritu has already killed off Glass' wife and does so very promptly with Hawk; both appear as devices to aid the protagonist on his journey. Glass' wife supports a reading of the Celluloid Maiden / Princess who functions as a corollary to the white, heterosexual male form; indicated by the fact she is dead and rendered to Glass' memory (Marubbio 5, 6). Having no name and only appearing in dream sequences further reduces her to Glass narrative in the film. The subjective position of Glass' son, Hawk, is emphasised, by Glass' chastisement, which will be elaborated later in the chapter.

Hikuc very much displays 'Nobleness' in saving Glass' life, but he is rendered 'Savage' by his murder at the hands of French-Canadian trappers. After leaving Glass to heal, Hikuc, reappears onscreen moments later hung from a tree. Degraded too, with a sign around his neck displaying: "On est tous des sauvages", which translates as "we are all savages". Certainly, in the bleak wilderness portrayed in *The Revenant*, all men require a requisite savagery to function. How that is maintained, and how it is viewed is certainly skewed against the American Indian. The most identifiable word to an English-speaking audience is "sauvage", and it appears that this is the reason and justification for Hikuc's hanging, implicated by the sign and Iñárritu's rendering of Hikuc.

Hikuc's characterisation, one of the more developed American Indian's in *The Revenant*, would appear as device to aid Glass, evidenced by his subsequent quick disposal by Iñárritu. Across racial difference and moral behaviour and by reducing American Indians to plot devices to drive the narrative, e.g. Hikuc saving Glass' life and Fitzgerald ending Hawk's, complements a reading of *The Revenant* as perpetuation of cultural hegemony. This is evidenced by the deployment of contrasting white / American Indian characterisations that constructs a hierarchal nature to the society viewed in the film, and also, creates a binary position between the characters of Glass and Fitzgerald, who both affect the narrative by their actions, both 'Noble' and 'Savage'.

A hierarchical frontier of racial difference and relative morality (deemed by whiteness and tempered by savagery) can further support a reading of cultural hegemony based on Iñárritu's positioning of Glass and Fitzgerald, as protagonist and antagonist, and drivers of *The Revenant's* narrative. (C. Allen) places the racial hierarchy of the frontier in context with regards the Lone Ranger and Tonto. He discusses, with reference the 1995 graphic novel, how

ideology in *The Lone Ranger* series changes from ‘treaty discourse’, described as “idealized racial representatives” or pure white and pure Indian and their subsequent negotiations, to “Indian-White relations through the denigrated figure of the half-breed, who plays a dual role in frontier transactions”. He illustrates:

First, the half-breed is a marginal figure who is nevertheless necessary for White’s successful navigation of the frontier: Tonto serves as friend, scout and doctor, and his indeterminate status gives him the potential power to circumvent White legal conventions in order to serve the greater purposes of White justice. At the same time, the half-breed threatens White success on the frontier (623).

This is crucial in understanding the characterisation of Glass, particularly when compared to Fitzgerald. Fitzgerald’s character, as foil to the hero can move the narrative on by killing Hawk for the greater good of the Party (and white capitalism / civilisation), and carry out the actions that drive Lñárritu’s narrative that Glass cannot. Viewing the characters together represent white progress over the frontier. By deploying two conflicting narratives of ‘Noble’ / ‘Savage’ whiteness Lñárritu creates a tension that is only resolved through Glass’ transcendence (and Fitzgerald’s death).

Glass can be identified in *The Revenant* as the American hero / scout furthering white advancement; he is helping the trappers of Captain Henry’s (Domhnall Gleeson) company complete their cycle in the wilderness before the expedition is derailed by an Arikara attack. The whole point of the trappers’ expedition is materialistic, emphasising a reason to be in the wilderness, whilst the Arikara, playing to type, simply manifest. Materialism is the venture of Glass’ fur trapping expedition; highlighted by Fitzgerald’s monetary concerns which drive his nefarious actions throughout. Contrasted against DiCaprio’s Glass, Fitzgerald ultimately wants the same ends, albeit resorts to murder, ultimately motivated by acquisitiveness and self-preservation to achieve them.

In addition, Henry's trappers are happily going about their business when, in a case of mistaken identity (they are simply all white), they are stricken by the Arikara. This portrays the Arikara as disruptors of white society, capitalism and progress (as well as murderers), offering a further distinction between white civilisation and savage wilderness, and contributes to Iñárritu's racial / moral hierarchical frontier. This tension is only resolved, as is Glass' racial (and moral ambiguity) at the finale of *The Revenant*, through his realisation of the futility of taking revenge on Fitzgerald and his redemption with the audience. In this moment too, is the perpetuation of the Arikara Tribe as the wilderness / savage in their final act of killing Fitzgerald and condemning American Indians. Iñárritu sends the vengeful Arikara Tribe into the wilderness akin to *Dances with Wolves*, but not as the 'Noble Savage' projected within 'Revisionist' film, rather replaying the characterisation of American Indians within Classic Westerns as the murderous and violent other. Repeating the implicit trope of white civilisation and its progress over the savage wilderness and its inhabitants.

A key scene in *The Revenant* that supports a narrative of hegemonic masculinity is when Glass is mauled by a Grizzly Bear exhibiting the savage wilderness Glass is seeking to overcome. As noted, the Arikara attack early in the film sets Glass on his altered journey, whereas the Grizzly Bear that savages Glass renders his portrayal even more heroic. This scene also illustrates an analogue between American Indians and animalistic savagery, subsequently moralising Glass' wounds as a result of the Arikara's disruption. Due to cause and effect the Grizzly Bear attack can also be read as part of a narrative of savagery against Glass' character in *The Revenant*. It is relevant to note that the 'bear attack' scene was subject to scrutiny in reviews and designated as a sexual assault and not merely an animal attack (Child). By labelling the bear attack a rape presents an anthropomorphic alterity to the

wilderness (Kyriazis). Crucially, this scene imparts Glass' moral authority over the landscape as well as the humans he interacts with.

Additionally, Leonardo DiCaprio, who plays Glass, lent this scene extra controversy when he referred to the "intimacy between man and beast" during a 2015 interview with the Australian Broadcasting Corporation.<sup>10</sup> The intimacy DiCaprio refers to is stimulating for what happens to his portrayal of Hugh Glass post the attack. Remarkably, despite his wounds, he is more adept, but equally prurient. It is only following the bear attack that Glass becomes more heuristic (Iñárritu presents a large bulk of his Indian-ness / 'western' skills post this scene). However, the bear attack scene is not only useful for being ubiquitous to Glass 'Going Native'; the bear represents aspects of the wilderness that are incompatible with white civilisation. The bear in *The Revenant* can also represent American Indians in that they, like the wilderness, must be defeated (Slotkin, *Gunfighter Nation*).

This can be quantified by drawing a parallel with the bear in *Davy Crockett* (1953). As Clifford E. Trafzer contends, the bear constitutes an allusion to the "Injuns" and "Redskins" that are used as defamatory descriptions of American Indians in *Davy Crockett* (45). This distinction, naturalisation and animalisation, draws a closer comparison with the Arikara and the Grizzly Bear presented as the "natural enemies to civilised frontier" in *The Revenant* (46). (Trafzer) continues:

Our hero charges back in to kill the bear the old-fashioned way, with his hunting knife – rather than with his rifle from a safe distance. After finishing off the bear, Crockett returns to camp victoriously with his kill [...] It's not difficult to make the leap from Crockett's interaction with the bear...willing to use deadly force if necessary to maintain his safety and that of his fellow Americans. This identification of Natives with a wild animal deliberately classifies them as savage (45).

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<sup>10</sup> The interview is reproduced, complete with transcript in (Sales). Taken from cinemablend.com (Libbey, n.d.) notes: *The Revenant's* production company, 20<sup>th</sup> Century Fox, was quick to debunk the rumours of a "rape" and attest this was the case because the bear was "female" and defending her cubs. It did not help the furor that Internet sites and commentary fanned the flames, regardless.

This also, of course, dramatises the wilderness and any savage being that stands in white America's way as anathema to progress (and Manifest Destiny). This privileges Glass' narrative in the film, whilst diminishes the American Indian position to one of stereotype, therefore strengthens a reading of cultural hegemony in *The Revenant* through Inárritu's decision to deploy the Arikara Tribe in this way. Moreover, aligning the Arikara with the wilderness and the hero with civilisation morally justifies Glass' Indian-ness. Underscoring the point that any act of savagery Glass engages in, as part of his character development or in order to complete his quest, contributes to his (and white) redemption.

By contrast, the physical wilderness and its inhabitants, animal or American Indian, must be defeated if it cannot be simply moved or manipulated as not to impede white progress. The subtext in *Davy Crockett* frames ideology of "Noble Savage versus Ruthless Savage" (45). In this way, it helps define Glass' character as the 'Noble Savage', particularly when compared with Fitzgerald's 'Ruthless Savage', but, as discussed, Fitzgerald's race distinguishes him further from this reading as the 'Ruthless Savage' American Indian (e.g. the Arikara). Through racial qualification, as well as demonstrable moral authority, further supplements Glass' heroic performance of exceptional hegemonic masculinity whilst utilising Indian-ness.

Likewise, this can also be offset by considering Fitzgerald's actions following Glass' mauling. On the brink of death, Fitzgerald, Jim Bridger (William Poulter) and Hawk, stay behind to give Glass a proper burial. Fitzgerald has already expressed his distaste at abandoning the boat and pelts at Glass' order, so it is clear that his intentions towards Glass may not actually be charitable. The character of Fitzgerald does not display many redeeming qualities, but it is possible to tease some honourable traits. Sure, he is bellicose towards most of the Party and generally unpleasant in his nature, but also an ex-army man, he can be

pragmatic and, at times, fecund. Fitzgerald's character is the only member of the Party to offer an alternative to Glass' direction and he successfully charts a path back to Fort Kiowa for himself and Bridger. However, Fitzgerald's selfishness and self-preservation allows him to dupe Bridger into leaving the badly-wounded Glass for dead, after Fitzgerald has murdered Hawk and disposed of his body.

This serves in corroborating the strata of white hegemony presented in *The Revenant* by making a clear distinction between the criminal white constituent of Fitzgerald and Glass' 'half-breed'. If all men are savage, echoing Rousseau, and as deemed by the deployment of Hikuc, there is a hierarchy of savagery on the frontier in the film, with Glass at the pinnacle. Iñárritu sets up the antagonist / protagonist, whereby Glass represents the 'Noble', whilst Fitzgerald the 'Savage': Fitzgerald is a dangerous and irrational character, but also intelligent and productive. In addition, he can also straddle the 'Noble Savage' contrast himself; he displays his savagery when he murders Hawk in cold blood, but he also distinguishes himself from the savagery of the Arikara, emphasising the moral privilege that is seemingly affixed to whiteness and extending notions of a hierarchy qualified by 'race' in *The Revenant*. Restressing these points of white morality and racial distinctness, when contrasted against the homogenous, savage Arikara.

Fitzgerald's backstory (to Bridger) can help illustrate this last point. Fitzgerald describes being scalped by one of the Arikara, but how he only heard them "laughing, whooping and hollering", maintaining a distance, and tension, between white and American Indian interaction. Fitzgerald is the villain of *The Revenant*, but he is not an American Indian, which seems to place him higher in the frontier hierarchy. His brutality in murdering Hawk is justified as not to impede the Party, or endanger any more (white) lives. His prior victimhood

at the hands of American Indians, though, is foul of a savage otherness. Alluding to an event that takes place before the story of *The Revenant* allows Fitzgerald to dictate the narrative. Also, Fitzgerald is constantly fixing / cutting his hair, throughout the film and Iñárritu focusses on this, implicitly underscoring Fitzgerald's disfigurement. Iñárritu further allows Fitzgerald to negotiate this position with the audience in dialogue and characterisation. The Arikara (and Pawnee) characters in *The Revenant* are not given an equal privilege of representation, consequently undermining American Indians in the film, positioning even the most debased white man as morally and racially superior. This projection of white masculinity, even through a murderous and duplicitous characterisation supports a reading of cultural hegemony, by contrasting the position of the Arikara, as *The Revenant* does through Fitzgerald's monologue.

Conversely, Fitzgerald also exemplifies what Glass must not become, as Chad A. Barbour stresses: "the white renegade challenges the notion of the white male playing Indian" and of course, the "threat of savagery" if Glass does not keep his Indian-ness in check with his white American peers (35). Undeniably, scalping and murder, would appear to be unredeemable, signifying the point of no return on the frontier presented in *The Revenant*. This is one of the functions of the renegade, however, to lend value to the hero's narrative. The film sees Glass transcend the frontier, unlike Fitzgerald who ultimately takes a fall and "succumb[s] to the evil temptation of the wilderness" (54). Indeed, contrasted with Glass' hero, Fitzgerald inspires hatred towards his character, he murders Wolf in cold blood whilst Glass watches helplessly; he has no place in civil society and he is not representative of the - potential - American character, a distinction the audience also can make.

A gradation of savagery bolsters a racial / moral hierarchy which supports a reading of cultural hegemony in *The Revenant*. Such inventions are common in cinematographic depictions of the frontier, whereby designating even the most degraded white as above the



American Indian. For example, the Lone Ranger and Tonto partnership can be seen in such a context (C. Allen). Whilst Glass' hero can manifest both white and Indian-ness in the film and rely on his appropriated skills to tame the wilderness, there is no 'Tonto' role, but Fitzgerald can be deployed to drive the plot on in an unsavoury way so as to not encroach the representation of the hero. Furthermore, an explicit racialised hierarchy implies a gender hierarchy, by which Fitzgerald distinguishes himself from the American Indian, through his whiteness but also invoking his masculinity.

Lñárritu further develops this hierarchy by positioning the renegade in this fashion. To elaborate, the relationship between the Lone Ranger and Tonto can be framed by gender equally as by race. Additionally, whilst the role may be reciprocal in this context, it is also subservient (C. Allen 619 - 620). The racialised social strata of the frontier in *The Revenant* can also be framed by gender, the lack of female characters, however, means that those of a racial difference also assume the feminine e.g. Hawk. Again, this reflects the artistic decision Lñárritu has made in relegating women in the film to dreams / victimhood, as a result further privileges white male character's through the denigration of Hawk as feminine. Stratification via gender, in addition to race, also supports an interpretation of cultural hegemony whereby presenting the debasement of lesser characters' results in the special dispensation awarded those representing white masculinity throughout the film.

Indeed, Hawk's character is condemned as "savage", 'half-breed', and feminine. By Jones' (Lukas Haas) vilification; contravening a single or even binary ranking characteristic e.g. renegade white or criminal 'half-breed' in this instance leads to more wide-reaching ambiguity within *The Revenant*. Stratifying the frontier across status, or racial component, is further reduced by using gender as denouncement of difference contrived to affirm the social order in *The Revenant*. Glass and Fitzgerald's characters occupy the same class in terms of

position as trappers, but Glass is elevated, as ultimately, his nobility of morals and outright humanity distinguish him from the villain. These qualities are instruments of the hero, which suggest are assets predisposed to exceptional white males, exemplified by the maintenance of tropes attributed the hero, discussed previously.<sup>11</sup>

In the film, Hawk's subordinate position via gender as well as race, is emphasised by Fitzgerald referring to him as a "girly little bitch", "little dog" and also a "half-breed". His station is further undermined by Glass who chastises him: "they don't hear your voice, they just see the colour of your face". The choice of dialogue in *The Revenant* really gives Hawk no respite. The Pawnee 'half-breed' is rebuked by his white father, thus expressive of historical notions / 'treaty discourse' of the (great) 'white father' in Washington (the American Government), equally undermining Hawk's (and American Indian) autonomy (Barbour 59). This decision to treat the young boy this way restates *The Revenant's* seemingly end goal of emphasising white designs of civilisation and a narrative of progress over the wilderness and American Indian savagery. The project of American Manifest Destiny is underlined here, emphasising white male hegemony in Glass' rebuke, and implicitly pre-empting Hawk's demise and Glass' racial redemption as metaphor for white / American Indian relations.

This is further emphasised by considering the name, Hawk. 'Hawk' suggests keen sight, as well as stressing his innate naturalistic disposition by inverting the anthropomorphic bear that attacks Glass. But, unlike *the Last of the Mohicans* Hawkeye, Hawk is given no autonomy

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<sup>11</sup> The name Hawk also has precursors in television; Burt Reynolds played John Hawk in the 1966 detective series, *Hawk*, in which he was renowned for his tracking skills; as was Tommy 'Hawk' Hill played by Michael Horse as Deputy Chief of Police in the early 1990's David Lynch Series *Twin Peaks*. Usually American Indian characters supported the 'white savio[u]r' (FitzGerald 11 - 13). Of further interest is the use of natural lighting in *The Revenant*, displaying a staged authenticity which, when considered in terms of Indian-ness, authenticity, as well as naturalness are key aims. Interestingly, when Montana could not provide Iñárritu with the prerequisite snow he moved shooting to a location in Argentina. However, in major parts of the movie, Alberta, Canada, doubled for the American wilderness (Jun).

outside of Glass' character or the Party, rather he presents an ironic analogue to the defeated Sioux at the end of *Dances with Wolves*, with Hawk unable to 'see' the inevitable white advance. In fact, Hawk's character only affirms Glass' Indian-ness, which Glass is no longer hindered by at the end of the film. In this way, Hawk legitimises and serves Glass' Indian-ness but Hawk ultimately, by the end of *The Revenant*, does not impede Glass' whiteness / Americanness. This further serves as an example of the hierarchical nature of frontier relationships and underlines masculine authority in the film. As a result, contributes to an interpretation of cultural hegemony, as Hawk's relationship with Glass presents a patriarchal vision of frontier society, revealing the hegemony of American civilisation, and the subordinate position and imagined space American Indians occupy therein, as intimated throughout *The Revenant*.<sup>12</sup>

There is a more obvious comparison between the 'half-breed' Hugh Glass and Hawkeye. Whilst the 'half-breed' of Fenimore Cooper's fiction was a derogatory term, Wai Chee Dimock argues that Glass' characterisation is a positive inversion of Hawkeye. Dimock discerns the term revised here, in this sense, but does mistakenly observe that the phenomenon of 'half-breeds' is deployed in *The Revenant* in a derogatory manner. After Hawk is erroneously identified as a horse thief by the French-Canadian trappers, Jones scoffs and claims: "that half-breed couldn't steal a horse". Consequently, the term is not wrested from Fenimore Cooper's designation as a pejorative description, but this sets up an important

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<sup>12</sup> Sally L. Jones, in *Edwin Forrest and Mythic Re-creations of the Native*, discusses the many 'Lasts' (e.g. *The Last of the Mohicans*) that sets up the American Indian as 'vanishing': "This myth was very important to the ideology that expanded the new country and established white hegemony" (Bird 21 - 22). For a comprehensive account of the 'Vanishing' American Indian in American history, see (Dippie). As Carol Spindel points out: "white perceptions of Indians share a curious timelessness" (37). This is also outlined in Berkhofer's work, who himself deems the Native 'real' and the 'Indian' as formulation of white myth assigned to history. This contributes to the American Indian's place in nation building myths such as Pocahontas, or The Boston Tea Party.

point. More importantly, is the insinuation that Hawk as a 'half-breed' is devoid of any ability or skill, white or American Indian, which the director renders by his consistently awful handling of the boy.

What is interesting, in a contrasting sense, is the judgemental nature of the term employed here in *The Revenant*. Whilst Dunbar, Hawkeye and Glass, the white men 'Playing Indian' / 'Going Native' represent 'Noble' aspects of the 'half-breed'; Hawk, the half-Pawnee boy, represents entirely the 'Savage' (as well as the feminine), if considered by his demarcation in the film. Perhaps Iñárritu thought he was avoiding a well-played trope by not ascribing Hawk the Tonto role. However, Iñárritu's treatment of Hawk ultimately undermines the characters' representation, and of American Indians in general, within his deployment. In addition, the notion of the 'half-breed' Pawnee / white in this context serves a further function. To elaborate, racial 'half-breeds' in *The Lone Ranger* are the worst kind of criminal due to their breeding (C. Allen 620). The only actual racial 'half-breed' in the film is Hawk, but it is not his criminality or even his offensive depiction that undermines his characterisation, but his representation of utter passiveness.

However, Fitzgerald is the character that displays a savagery that has crossed a line into criminality, and ignored the warning that Glass and other heroes are seemingly aware of, that their "flirtations with Indian-ness must not become romances" (Barbour 61). As highlighted, Glass virtuously spares Fitzgerald at the end of the film, thus Glass' racial and moral ambiguity is beset by his ceaseless remorse, but never undermined by his hatred of Fitzgerald or even Glass' adopted Indian-ness. Glass' frontier hero ultimately chooses the higher path in *The Revenant*. Whilst the Arikara Tribe can do what Glass chooses not to at the end of the film, and pass retribution on Fitzgerald; as foretold by Hikuc, that "revenge is in the Creator's hands", thus rendering the Arikara the morally debased 'Savage' at the films'

end. In this instance, the creator is not a benevolent white god, but a retributive American Indian god. Quite as to why they do is not frankly clear, as Fitzgerald has had no contact with the Arikara Tribe personally; unless, of course, his scalping reveals a past injustice. They simply kill him because he is white, but spare Glass for his rescuing of Powaga (Melaw Nakehk'o) from French Canadian trappers who are the actual root of the Arikara's grievances, further illustrating Glass' characters redeeming qualities as per American Indians.

Thus, solidifying Glass' redemption as *The Revenant's* hero, as well as making the distinction between the criminal and the 'Savage', and the 'Noble' and just. It is perhaps a further extension of the 'Noble Savage' stereotype in that Fitzgerald can place himself in a protected position by being white, thus a 'Savage Noble' in comparison to the American Indian. By extension the Arikara are positioned as 'Savage Savage' through their lack of characterisation and brutality in the film. This also demonstrates that the 'Noble Savage' historical stereotype is not immutable, but fluid and dynamic, and negotiable to the dictates of society. Which suggests its ability to be ascribed and interpreted within a variety of narratives, in this instance, to support a vision of a robust white male hero. Complimenting an interpretation of cultural hegemony, as narrative and counter-narrative, of whiteness and Indian-ness within *The Revenant*.

By applying Huhndorf's conception of 'Going Native' it is possible to perceive Hugh Glass' regeneration and frontier transcendence in *The Revenant* and conclude a reading of cultural hegemony. As perceived, American Indian characters in the movie are peripheral, only to remain incidental to Glass' story which also parallels Dunbar in *Dances with Wolves*. Furthermore, throughout the movie it is possible to identify a hierarchy placing Glass at the pinnacle of white maleness and American Indian characters reduced to his interaction, such

as his wife, Hawk and Hikuc, further subjectified by their racialised and gendered characterisation. As Huhndorf observes, the hierarchies that *Dances with Wolves* seeks to destabilise ultimately reinforces them. This, argues Huhndorf is a function of 'Going Native', and ultimately leaves stereotypes intact and assumes white superiority and moral authority in its presentation of the hero. *The Revenant* repeats this trope by affirming the white hero whilst replaying stereotypes associated with American Indians, such as the wilderness or animalistic savagery. Regarding *Dances with Wolves*, Huhndorf observes: "although the film manifests some sympathy towards Indians, its primary cultural work in fact is the regeneration of racial whiteness and European-American society" (3). In addition, the film seeks to confirm the boundaries separating white and American Indian societies. *The Revenant* echoes the sentiments of *Dances with Wolves* finale with power in the hands of white America. What is more, American Indians exhibiting no peril to white privilege, or societal or cultural dominance (4), determined by the camera fixed on Glass' character at *The Revenant*'s climax, and the Arikara skulking off into the wilderness.

Glass' character uses his otherness to transcend his identity as well as the frontier whilst ultimately transmitting a very robust image of masculinity and self-determination. In supplement, he is free to re-join society, without the hindrance of an accompanying, racially different, wife and son. His cultural ambivalence is successfully transcended, externally or internally and his whiteness remains intact. In this sense, Glass is the typical frontier hero. Furthermore, also an American hero the same way Mary Rowlandson was presented, one that owes their survival due to their familiarity with American frontier land, as well as their application of Indian-ness. Reaffirming the hegemonic narrative of American exceptionalism, progress and renewal on the frontier, and the role of Indian-ness as supplementary to this. Glass, like Lone Ranger, Davy Crockett, Dunbar and Hawkeye extend contrasting readings of

Indian-ness and, through interaction, American Indian characters, who ultimately do not impede the white American narrative, by themselves reaffirming their whiteness, as well as complementing cultural hegemony through the masculine fantasy of 'Going Native'.

As evidenced by *The Revenant*, this chapter presents a very defined view – the 'White Man's Indian' – via Hugh Glass. Not only does this interpret the American Indian in terms of white definition / interaction, but gradates their position according to race and gender. Employing Gramsci, it is possible to decipher a narrative of Indian-ness that supplements the hegemony of the white hero through his 'helpers', such as his wife and Hawk. In *The Revenant*, Hugh Glass, by 'Playing Indian' and 'Going Native', greatly undermines American Indian representation and reduces American Indians to stereotypes demarcated by the wilderness or animalistic savagery. In this way, the frontier can be reconsidered to represent a view of America that defines whiteness / Americanness and self-determination whilst bolstering Indian-ness to it as a narrative to authenticate the white hero and his frontier transcendence. Resultantly, the frontier presented in *The Revenant* establishes a (white) space of cultural negotiation which presents one of heroic masculinity occupying a hegemonic narrative, and Hugh Glass' Indian-ness as a cultural corollary.

As will be shown in the next chapter, Michael Taylor, perceives the sports field as an allegory of the frontier which represents American society's post-frontier maintenance of a contested space. This metaphor helps support the thesis of white space, and prepares the investigation of hegemonic masculinity in Chapter Two. Analogous with Hugh Glass' Indian-ness and American Indian characterisations in *The Revenant*; the Washington Redskins mascot and associated imagery, continues the mediation between 'savagery and civilisation',

prompting further notions that suggest cultural hegemony negotiates white America's application of Indian-ness.





## Chapter Two

### Mediating the 'White Man's Indian': American Designs of Masculinity and the Washington R\*dskins Mascot

As noted in Chapter One, Hugh Glass displays an Indian-ness that is subordinated to his whiteness and, ultimately, Americanness. Whilst *The Revenant* illustrates how the imaginary American Indian is useful to American identity, by offering an opportunity to 'Go Native' in a fictional frontier space, it is argued the R\*dskins mascot functions similarly as a corollary of cultural mediation within American football.<sup>13</sup> This chapter, presents the Washington R\*dskins team mascot as a further manifestation of American cultural hegemony through appropriation of American Indian images. Resultantly, the misrepresentation of American Indians continues through stereotypical designs of the 'White Man's Indian'; as will be evidenced by an analysis of the R\*dskins team main logo. The Washington R\*dskins football team's mascot is an example of how contemporary American society appropriates stereotypical images. This helps to signify a dominant narrative in support for the mascot that defaults to American football traditions and brand identification as opposed to concerns regarding American Indian representation.

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<sup>13</sup> As (Kidd) observes, sport is a pervasive part of American culture and it is also one that is predominantly associated with masculine, violent and dominant white values and images. As a result, notions of Americanness seep through sporting ideals, as vehicles for white cultural hegemony. Whilst sport may give the impression of familiarity and has been naturalised into every part of the daily lives of Americans, there is a consistent misgiving that it is free from the nefarious shadows of society and its ills, but the fact of the matter is they are intertwined. Generally, sport is not an "innocent" pastime, or free from ideology or purpose. Sport in history has juxtaposed with images of war, for example, the US military works directly with the NFL for recruitment purposes (116/7).

American Indian mascotry is illustrated in Michael Taylor's *Contesting Constructed Indian-ness: The Intersection of the Frontier, Masculinity, and Whiteness in Native American Mascot Representations*. Taylor views sporting mascots as an expression of ongoing white colonial dominance. Maureen Trudelle Schwarz, in *Fighting Colonialism with Hegemonic Culture: Native American Appropriation of Indian Stereotypes*, perceives mascots as constructs of white hegemony but stresses their use as cultural protest by subverting hegemonic images. C. Richard King's work emphasises the outright racism of the stereotypic depictions found in sporting mascots and echoes the work of Robert Berkhofer. This chapter complements and builds on this by highlighting a white space where stereotypes are naturalised by white utility via cultural hegemony. Interpreting the R\*dskins mascot image through this chapter's interdisciplinary nature in applying history, American studies and cultural studies, offers a unique perspective on American Indian cultural appropriation. Furthermore, how stereotypes are naturalised by Gramsci's concept of cultural hegemony accentuates this chapter's relevance to the existing literature.

Like the frontier hero, the Washington R\*dskins mascot is a further example of the fetishisation of Indian-ness in American society. This is supported by the mascots deployment in American society objectified by white masculine ideals. This will be illustrated by comparing the R\*dskin's logo to historical imaginations of the 'White Man's Indian'; such as Uncas from James Fenimore Cooper's *The Last of the Mohicans* (1826) and the 1856 Frederick Pettrich statue of *The Dying Tecumseh*, illustrating how designs of the 'Noble Savage' are perpetuated in contemporary America within the R\*dskins mascot. Because of this transaction, American Indians are limited to caricatures or stereotypes, the image of the American Indian is dictated

by white society and can be read as cultural hegemony, in support of the American narrative of colonisation and Manifest Destiny.

Indeed, the Washington R\*dskins mascot is a firm construal of white cultural hegemony. This can be demonstrated by a recent poll concerning the Washington R\*dskins ongoing use of the R\*dskins name and mawkish American Indian imagery.<sup>14</sup> Adrienne Keene, responding through her website *Native Appropriations*, asserts that the poll “dismisses wider questions of cultural identity for a politically correct whitewashing”. Continuing a hegemonic trend of misrepresenting American Indians and expressive of enduring possession of the ‘White Man’s Indian’. Keene contends that the poll was dubiously conducted with an illusory sample which does not reflect the diversity of American Indian Nations and Tribes. Therefore, perpetuating the myth that all American Indians share a homogenous identity and that the poll itself is suggestive of cultural hegemony through the view adopted by Keene. (Wapos New Redskins Survey); (Berkhofer).

In contrast, the *Washington Post* maintains a narrative that misrepresents American Indians through the insistence that the poll is vindication of the continued deployment of the R\*dskins mascot. This can be further illustrated by Washington R\*dskins owner, Dan Snyder’s reaction to the poll, perceiving its results as justification to continue using the R\*dskins mascot. In Snyder’s assessment, the debate has simply been a “distraction”, however, it is this postulation that obfuscates, and by doing so offers evidence of cultural hegemony. To elaborate, Snyder’s defence and justification of mascotry perpetuates the historical trend of

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<sup>14</sup> *The Washington Post’s* R\*dskins survey was conducted between 16<sup>th</sup> December 2015 and 12<sup>th</sup> April 2016 and published in the *Washington Post* on 19<sup>th</sup> May 2016. The *Washington Post* announced that nine out of ten American Indians were not offended by the Washington R\*dskins mascot. *The Washington Post* included a breakdown of demographics, and if analysed, it is clear that the poll is unrepresentative, as Keene points out: “56% of the sample has no tribal affiliation.”

objectifying American Indians in popular culture (Barbour). His position is one that exerts influence economically as well as culturally through the R\*dskins brand. His association of the mascot with the brand and not as contemporary stereotype renders his interpretation one of economic interests (Schwarz). The viewpoint of Snyder, and *Washington Post* commentary, in this this context extends hegemony by perpetuating the opinion that its acceptable to stereotype and that American Indians are fair game.

This can be stressed further by considering how the R\*dskins mascot maintains the 'White Man's Indian' whilst subverting Indian-ness which support white ideals of masculinity. Steven Salaita maintains that cultural appropriation and colonisation are at work within the notion of commercial branding: "Not merely image or design but also the thoroughgoing cant of colonial fantasy [and the] identity it peddles has nothing to do with being Native". The R\*dskins mascot signifies an image of male masculinity and one which reaffirms Rousseau's notion that modern society has an undesirable effect on white male identity. 'Playing Indian' via the deployment of sporting mascots would recapture the essence of masculinity removed by modern society by appropriating notions of Indian-ness as expression of white identity via the 'White Man's Indian' (Deloria, *Playing Indian*).

Again, this importantly re-emphasises the tenure of the 'White Man's Indian' by the coloniser. Which in turn, serves discourse of hegemonic designs of American identity and social hierarchy in a post-frontier society (Slotkin, *Regeneration Through Violence: The Mythology of the American Frontier, 1600-1860*). Perpetuation of stereotypes in vindication of the mascot, by subverting the American Indian to white masculine design and identity, as well as corporate interests reveals cultural hegemony. Dan Snyder's capitalistic interests, and those that identify with the brand, support one another through the Base / Superstructure dialectic and offer evidence of an ideology that maintains white masculine hegemony. Dan

Snyder's defence of mascots can therefore be informative, as C. Richard King stresses the ideological malleability within such a cultural institution:

Commonly, this has meant that supporters of mascots turn attention away from questions of racism and victimization, extolling instead the virtues of convention and the positive values expressed through such images (*Unsettling America: The Uses of Indianness in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* 34).

Therefore, the R\*dskins mascot would perpetuate a hegemonic narrative that would misrepresent the American Indian through the maintenance of stereotypes by preserving the mascot (*Unsettling America* 31).

Furthermore, the question of American Indian representation, and the conflict over the R\*dskins sporting mascot is part of a wider narrative of devaluing historical stereotypes; originating with the 'Noble Savage' and perpetuated against American Indians, which are taken for granted in public spaces and naturalised via cultural hegemony. To elaborate, the *Washington Post* poll continues to contribute negative images of American Indians to discourse. Therefore, the maintenance of the 'White Man's Indian' and of American Indian stereotypes in the context of American Indian mascotry lends weight to a reading of cultural hegemony. Whereby, cultural appropriation through mascotisation removes representation from American Indians and places it in white ownership resulting in an ongoing binary distinction. Demonstrating how cultural hegemony is exposed through the perpetuation of American Indian stereotypes within sporting mascotry and cultural appropriation perpetuates historical connotations associated with American Indian imagery. Michael Taylor discusses how hegemonic discourse and cultural appropriation continue to shape notions of the 'Noble Savage':

Sports teams which utilize mascots as symbols of their teams, or sides of the conflict, are invested in the paradoxical nature of Indian-ness as the Noble and Ignoble Savage

representations as mascots. The mascots are used in the context of the substituted indigenous people who had inhabited the land. The mascots represent a controlled version of such peoples, one that can be modified and fit onto the preferred readings of Indian-ness as seen as necessary for whichever setting the Indian mascot is presented for the public gaze (29 – 30).

Taylor expresses the designation of the 'White Man's Indian' within mascotisation, but also, the idealising of American Indians emphasises their interconnectedness with hegemonic myths and denotes the privilege of the coloniser as proponents of Manifest Destiny (*Slotkin, Gunfighter Nation*).

To demonstrate, Laurel Davis stresses how the anti-mascot movement is concomitant to anti-nationalistic sentiments. In this way, perpetuates cultural hegemony through the identification of the R\*dskins brand as American tradition, and not American Indian culture. Resultantly, the point against appropriation gets overwhelmed, not only by those defending the R\*dskins brand, but by emotionally charged accusations of anti-American sentiment (18):

Vicious resistance to this challenge occurs because the myth is central to the shaping of American and hegemonic masculine identity. We are taught to take pride in the myth from an early age. Yet, if we want a truly just, multicultural society, we must begin to examine even those issues which challenge the core of who we are (20).

Davis makes the important point in connecting the defence of the mascot as an ideologically hegemonic response. Defending the mascot by uniting American history and tradition supports white cultural hegemony, through the assumption of a morally superior position predicated on coloniser privilege, and of ownership of the 'White Man's Indian'.

The Washington R\*dskins mascot also provides evidence of 'Playing Indian' in white culture which can further support the notion that in the maintenance of the mascot perpetuates stereotypes through manifestation of the 'White Man's Indian'. In example, the R\*dskins half-time / in-game cheer-leader performs dressed in a full body foam suit imitating

an American Indian likeness at Washington R\*dskins home games. The suit, like most in-game mascots, is very child friendly and gives the impression of a cartoonish-ness, evocative of the bold, but simple, detail of the club insignia. As a more direct crowd facing mascot, it displays a clownishness, through colour and material as well as countenance. However, it is a physically different interpretation of an American Indian when compared to the R\*dskins crest. Rather than the feathers and long hair culture of, for example, the Cheyenne and Lakota Plains Tribes, present in the R\*dskins main logo, the side-line 'R\*dskin' has a cropped Mohawk. This is more reminiscent of the Mohawk Tribe of the Eastern American and Canadian seaboard, but does stress how indigeneity is usurped without any real basis in reality for the purpose of white ritual and consumption, and echoing Adrienne Keene's earlier point about the continued homogenisation of American Indian identities.

Of course, 'Playing Indian' reemphasises such careless interpretations evocative of the historical trend of white cultural appropriation that continues to misrepresent American Indians. It does suggest a buffoonish-ness because of its disposition, further trivialised by its position as crowd pleaser. Moreover, cementing notions of white supremacy by the mascots epicurean position. Resultantly, establishes racial difference through cultural mediation demarcating American Indian and white American societies on the football side-lines. This consonance is plausible because mascots are borne as a representation, a mask or disguise, as the name suggests. In this context, it is worn as custom or ritual representing American football tradition, whilst also displaying white ideals and white assumptions regarding Indian-ness. This is rested on invented tradition whereby American football forms prognostications to undergird sporting mascot use as exclusive to, in this instance, the Washington R\*dskins. A narrative that grounds utility of the mascot as fabricated white tradition ultimately lends evidence towards an interpretation of cultural hegemony, again through the perpetuation of



a homogenous American Indian as a signifier of racial difference. (King, *What Do We Talk About When We Talk About American Indian Imagery in Sports: Thoughts on Mascots and Racialized Masculinity*); (Hobsbawm).

Additionally, the half-time or side-line processions that take place at sporting events, signifies the wider historical trend of the mascotisation of American Indians, restressing ownership of the 'White Man's Indian'. King illustrates:

Native Americans mascots are not unlike trophies, remnants from a kill, longingly kept reminders of past glory, and continuing signs of their prowess and superiority through which EuroAmericans channel the strength and energy of those they (or better said, their forbearers) have vanquished. Such conjuring's, of course, depend on disfigurement and dehumanization, transmutations that have reduced an abject and imagined other to cypher and stereotype. Warriors, Chiefs, and Braves have a generic appeal, embodying the ideals of white masculinity on the plain of battle and the field of play, namely bravery, bellicosity, strength, aggression, leadership, and comradeship. Qualities amplified in more extreme monikers like Savages and Redskins replace nobility with intensity, animalism, terror, and brutality, elements understood to be part of the masculine ideal as well, best understood perhaps as darker complements. Together, these renderings of what Robert Berkhofer dubbed the "white man's Indian" provide the raw materials for making men and for making masculinity meaningful. They anchor character building and individual aspiration, bind teams and communities to one another, anchoring them in time and place, map the world and one's location in it, and bring social distinctions and cultural values to life (*What Do We Talk About When We Talk About American Indian Imagery in Sports: Thoughts on Mascots and Racialized Masculinity*).

King's paragraph further demonstrates the connection between white masculine tradition and Indian-ness. Additionally, American Indian mascots on the side-lines of American football games reifies a space where the 'White Man's Indian' manifests. One that suits a Gramscian interpretation of (white male) cultural hegemony by transmitting a discourse of white dominance and American Indian submissiveness as cultural narrative in a space that American Indian stereotypes are taken for granted and deployed by white people to lend weight to football traditions.

To elaborate, the Washington R\*dskins team's main logo manipulates an image of the male American Indian. The skin colour is cartoonish dark red / brown, the other facial features dwarfed by the large exaggerated nose. Regardless, it is a strong persona, accentuating traits of fearlessness and dependence by projecting the archetypal American Indian. Contained within the R\*dskins logo is the 'craggy' Plain's warrior, synonymous with the cinematic frontier evoking a timelessness, previously noted. Associations with the past renders the R\*dskins warrior's threat null; but it also evokes the frontier image of violent masculinity that is a prerequisite to travail the wilderness. Therefore, the badge implicitly taps in to existing notions of the 'Noble Savage', even while it represents a mawkish stereotype of an imagined American Indian man (Sports Logo History).

Moreover, as well as what the crest references, a literal reading of the Washington R\*dskins logo can be equally revealing, particularly when compared to Greek statues. For example, *The Discobolus of Myron*, exhibits sporting prowess with a desirable male body image (Sooke). Equally, *Aphrodite of Knidos* is nude save for a hand covering her pubic area. Upright, she is proportioned and beautiful, her face gallant and symmetrical as her body, but carries the larger noble nose (Astier). The R\*dskins mascot shares similar characteristics and disposition that objectifies the body. All three share a similarity by representing the preferred or desirable aspects of the human physique as well as what these aspects present suggest or allude to: strength, bravery, desire, sexuality and potential threat. This draws out the link between mascotisation and hegemonic masculinity within the Washington R\*dskins mascot, and ongoing fetishisation of the American Indian male body, that can further demonstrate cultural hegemony through the maintenance of the 'White Man's Indian' and stereotype expressed by the R\*dskins mascot.

This can be exemplified further if the Washington Redskins warrior is contrasted with the statue of *The Dying Tecumseh*, and *The Last of The Mohicans* (1826) Uncas, as examples fostering the link between historical fetishisation and contemporary consumption of the American Indian male body. First, Tecumseh's statue is rendered in marble, which makes a direct link to the Greek and immediately westernises Tecumseh's origins. This casting also removes his most obvious otherness: his skin colour, but his facial features are particularly devoid of obvious racial characteristics, aside from his Mohawk hair style. *The Dying Tecumseh* presents a striking rendering: a human being that is proportioned and athletic, sharing the classic features found in Greek statues. His presentation decrees him both 'Noble' and 'Savage', his large tomahawk situated front and centre, marks his savageness and his potential threat. However, his disposition (dying) extracts him from a position of peril to white society. Leaving him to be appreciated, and possessed, but removed of danger to contemporary American society (Gilbert).

The Washington Redskins mascot signifies a contemporary metonymic male body that bolsters hegemonic masculinity through a comparison with the historical fetishisation of Tecumseh, in that the mascot stresses aspects of 'Noble Savagery' as an American Indian warrior consigned to history, but still depicts robust masculinity. This reading is supported by the historical desire to capture and maintain the American Indian for white utility, but equally how historical designs contribute to discourse, is mirrored by contemporary America's fetishisation of the American Indian through the Washington Redskins mascot, and therefore perpetuates stereotypes naturalised through cultural hegemony. As Chad A. Barbour observes:

The power of this strategy lies in white males' affective detachment from the Indian body in its objectness, which receives emphasis through its marginalized status in white imaginations structured upon the "vanishing Indian" trope (16).

This is crucial when considering present day renderings of the 'Noble Savage' within the R\*dskins mascot, as it maintains distance from the American Indian body / savagery. (Barbour) interprets this act of deliberation the "embodiment and disembodiment" of the American Indian which is rendered historically as the "vessel of desire" (15, 20). This comparison is central to understanding the ongoing use of the American Indian as sporting mascot through historical examples of the idealised American Indian body; symptomatic of the transference of preferred aspects of American Indian culture via cultural appropriation. The Washington R\*dskins emblem can be interpreted as a device which emphasises the link between historical designation and contemporary appropriation by perpetuating the projection of designs of the 'White Man's Indian'.

Presentation of the American Indian body as both subject and object can be analogous to the 'Noble Savage' the hero embodies on the frontier. The frontiersman must utilise Indian-ness to master the wilderness but never cross the line into savagery. However, as stressed by Rousseau's romanticisms, American Indian male forms are desired because they have not been softened by civilisation but are tempered by their savagery "to which whites must not succumb" (15). It is reasonable to identify the Washington R\*dskins mascot as a 21<sup>st</sup> century manifestation of this phenomenon whereby the mascot denotes the line of savagery that white society must not cross; but that it may still usefully engage. This strict differentiation can be read as cultural hegemony as it appropriates American Indian culture and subverts it through white design and utility which simultaneously perpetuates a derogatory stereotype.

The power of the R\*dskins image is its capacity to safely blur lines of demarcation.<sup>15</sup> If the frontier hero occupies such a space (and place) in the national imagination, prompting white desire to 'Go Native', then the sporting mascot could realistically occupy a similar role within sport. The R\*dskins mascot embodying the imagined American Indian functions as a critique of the suffocating designs beset on the individual by modern society, and provides a safety valve by defaulting to Rousseau's more natural state, as well as continued desire to capture the 'Noble Savage'. Comparably, Uncas, in James Fenimore Cooper's 1826 novel *The Last of the Mohicans*, offers a further comparison, and Cooper's description of Uncas features unmistakable overtones of cultural fetishisation:

At a little distance in advance stood Uncas, his whole person thrown powerfully into view. The travellers anxiously regarded the upright, flexible figure of the young Mohican, graceful and unrestrained in the attitudes and movements of nature. Though his person was more than usually screened by a green and fringed hunting shirt, like that of the white man, there was no concealment to his dark, glancing, fearful eye, alike terrible and calm; the bold outline of his high haughty features, pure in their native red; or to the dignified elevation of his receding forehead, together with all the finest proportions of a noble head, bared to the generous scalping tuft (42 – 43).

This admiration of the American Indian males perceived strength and courage, whilst maintaining a potential menace, serves as a historical precedent of American Indian fetishisation that contributes to discourse as stereotypical designs of the 'White Man's Indian'. Throughout Cooper's preceding passage there are references to nature, but also to Uncas' nakedness as well as his perfect physique, akin to the rendering of *Discobulus*, Aphrodite, and Tecumseh. Furthermore, the reference to his "noble head", is very quickly tempered by Uncas' "generous scalping tuft" denoting his savagery. Uncas is presented as having a classic

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<sup>15</sup> As discussed by Lynn Klyde-Silverstein, in *The "Fighting Whites" Phenomenon: An Interpretative Analysis of media Coverage of and American Indian Mascot Issue*, American Indian mascots can be interpreted as marker of difference and continue the stereotype of American Indians as homogenous group (Carstaphen and Sanchez 113, 123).

physique but Cooper's description maintains the 'Noble Savage' trope through the caveat that signifies Uncas' otherness.

The embodiment and disembodiment of the American Indian can also be deciphered to reaffirm the point that Indian-ness and its interpretations are white construed equally bolstering an image of the American Indian that complements a hegemonic narrative. A further passage from Fenimore Cooper's text emphasises the classic disposition of Uncas through the perception of Alice and Captain Heyward: "as she would have looked upon some precious relic of the Greek chisel...while Heyward...openly expressed his admiration of such an unblemished specimen of the noblest proportions of man" illustrating how the American Indian male body could be marveled at and appreciated by both white men and women (Elizabeth S. Bird, *Savage Desires: The Gendered Construction of the American Indian in Popular Media* cited Meyer and Royer 69).

In addition, Uncas epitomises the duality within the deployment of the American Indian male as the R\*dskins mascot. Uncas and the R\*dskins warrior present an impressive but impassive image of masculinity, similar to *The Dying Tecumseh* (Stedman 187). Rendering the image an ambiguous threat (apart from opponents of the R\*dskins) through his stoicism, whilst equally evoking formidable bravery associated with the wilderness, the mascot identifies those ideals of masculinity that predicate strength and honourableness in battle. As Carol Spindel observes:

When most of us look out on the football field and see an Indian chief, what does the symbol bring to mind? Simply and most obviously, fighting spirit and bravery, often attributed to Indian chiefs and needed by every sports team (30).

The Washington R\*dskins mascot presents a 'Noble' but also 'Savage' portrait of violent but strong masculinity, echoing the frontier hero, which utilises Indian-ness in a dual prescription.

As discussed, the bold simplicity of the design outlines a stoic countenance and maintains 'Noble Savage' depictions rendered to history by Tecumseh and Uncus. Furthermore, white desire for the 'Noble' characteristics of the American Indian is always tempered with 'Savage' aspects. This underscores the continuation of white designation of American Indians as well as the 'Noble Savage' stereotype and its derivatives, and a narrative that supports cultural hegemony. To which, Washington Redskins lends its own designation, stereotype, and contribution to language by extension of historical reference by the mascots deployment in contemporary America.

As noted in Chapter One, the frontier serves as such a mediation zone between coloniser and colonised. Through the specific reading of *The Revenant*, white people are positioned as inheritors of Indian-ness. This interpretation is based on drawing a parallel with American history and subsequent characterisations within the film. At the end of the movie, Glass' Indian-ness is no longer required; but it has been central to his survival and prompts his transformation. As Richard Slotkin asserts in *Gunfighter Nation*, the frontier is America's dominant myth forming and symbolising national identity. Furthermore, violence is central to the myth, as is progress over the wilderness: "conflict with the Indians defined one boundary of American identity: though we were a people of 'the wilderness', we were *not* savages (11)".

The Washington Redskins team crest expresses just that, functioning as a cultural mediator, in a similar fashion to *The Revenant's* Hugh Glass. Following Gramsci's theory of cultural hegemony, culture is contested terrain; the allegorical frontier presents such a space and the metaphor is carried over to the sports field. Michael Taylor identifies the mascot as signifier of a contested space in society, through which cultural narratives are played out, between Americans and American Indians disseminated by white hegemony:

Mascots then are the result of conquest and control. In making them a more recent or modern phenomenon of mass-marketing and mass communications, they are produced to fill the space between whiteness and Redness, the space that was created by social and cultural differences. Mascots act and are situated as intermediaries as they move about among those created contested spaces between Native American and White societies, serving to connect the two groups in those spaces that are controlled and contextualized by white society (16).

The mascot on the Washington R\*dskins side-lines creates a space in which racial mediations are played out. It also creates a side-show attraction to the main event of football; a notion that further disconnects American Indians within the white imagination. The link with the American frontier, or indeed the American spirit (of the frontier), demonstrates why mascots are defended so fervently (Slotkin, *Regeneration Through Violence: The Mythology of the American Frontier, 1600-1860*). As noted this defence creates a narrative whereby Base and Superstructure support the interests of the R\*dskins brand and those affiliated with it. As Laurel Davis articulates:

On the one hand the use of Indian imagery reinforced dominant notions of masculinity, citizenship, sport, and tradition, while on the other hand the controversy over mascots derived in part from efforts to defend traditional formulation of identity in the United States, especially its foundations in race (whiteness), gender (masculinity), nation (Americanness) and history (the myth of the frontier) (cited in King, *Unsettling America* 29).

In highlighting this relationship between white masculine hegemony, the frontier and sport in America, reveals how hegemony functions by connecting the historical idealisation of American Indians and their contemporary cultural appropriation as sporting mascots. The perpetuation of American Indian stereotypes adds evidence of the assumed cultural hegemony over white space. Furthermore, American cultural expression exposes the strength of this narrative due to the interconnectedness of masculine identity and American history, as cultural hegemony. Whereby, the mascots utility distinguishes between white and American Indian society. Cultural appropriation applied as expression of white identity results



in the misrepresentation, and stereotyping, of American Indians. Consequently, use of the Washington R\*dskins mascot exemplifies cultural hegemony through the maintenance of a colonial ideal (Slotkin, *Regeneration Through Violence: The Mythology of the American Frontier, 1600-1860* 10 - 13). As Steven Salaita emphasises:

Such abundance of Native likenesses is no accident. Nearly absent from debate about mascots is the fact that Indian nations were colonized by the United States, leading not only to relationships of disparate power, but also to the fascination with the natives common to all colonial projects and the desire of the colonizer to maintain control of the historical and contemporary narratives of their encounter.

Insistence on ongoing colonial dominance via cultural dissemination makes for a compelling case for a coloniser / colonised set of narratives that contribute to a reading of cultural hegemony. The deployment of the mascot in this way, and as expressed by defenders of the mascot, affirms its position as the 'White Man's Indian' and reasserts colonial ownership of the imagined American Indian.

This consideration of masculine identity and cultural appropriation comes together in the defence of the R\*dskins mascot through a hegemonic narrative. Therefore, the Washington R\*dskins mascot offers a prime example of a prevailing and expressive authority. In addition, as a hegemonic influence over its fan base and beyond in its stereotypical fetishisation of American Indians. White designs of Indian-ness manifested in the R\*dskins 'White Man's Indian' signifies the ongoing historical fetishisation of American Indians that reveals cultural hegemony by elaborating on imaginings of the 'Noble Savage' within the R\*dskins insignia. Designs of the 'Noble Savage' recreate historical mediations between white and American Indian cultures. Contemporary appropriated American Indian culture configures the space in which this occurs, subjugating a narrative of Indian-ness whilst simultaneously perpetuating stereotypes through renderings of the 'White Man's Indian'.

Maureen Trudelle Schwarz sees images of American Indians very much in this sense, as cultural hegemony that supports colonialism through the consumption of images associated with the R\*dskins brand / mascot. By signifying power over individuals, via a historically paternalistic attitude, but also the deployment of the mascot informs and articulates interaction between European Americans and American Indians (1). Sporting mascots are fetishes of the American Indian within hegemonic institutions, largely stereotypical or derogatory, serve as representations or narratives that form discourses of interpretation. As Schwarz asserts: “such discourses play significant theoretical and political roles in the achievement of hegemony and resistance to it” (2). Cultural hegemony is maintained by conflicting narratives; sometimes contradictory images of American Indians will be prevalent within hegemonic discourse, as noted previously through consideration of the *Washington Post*'s poll. The R\*dskins mascot spans the 'Noble Savage' dichotomy equally as much as it has been expended as a historical description of the American Indian. When white American needed the American Indian to occupy the space of a certain trope then the white imagination has cast it as such:

Though there are literally dozens of tropes used to figure Indians over the last four centuries, several are recognized as remaining influential well into the 20th century, almost all of which can be seen as derivative of the dualistic Noble/Ignoble Savage imagery...The dualistic nature of the Noble/Ignoble Savage can be seen as just such a binary system. However, while some contemporary depictions of Native Americans doubtless are reflective of and deploy the rhetoric of the Noble Savage...the colonial discourses that have shaped the Ignoble Savage produce an identity that is both knowable and “Other” (Schwarz 2).

The sporting mascot fills this space in contemporary society in a dual prescription; it is both knowable as well as containing notions of the 'other'. This supports cultural hegemony as the Washington R\*dskins mascot is simply a perpetuation of a stereotype that functions in this manner through the deployment of the 'White Man's Indian'. Cultural hegemony is implicit

in this process as it reveals the use of the mascot to have a prescribed meaning to white society, masculine identity and overarching hegemonic myths of Manifest Destiny.

The Washington R\*dskins mascot is expressive of the desires and designs of the American majority. For example, any alteration to the R\*dskins mascot would mark a shift from white privilege, and ultimately undermine white mainstream identity. As Salaita confirms: “the Redskins mascot is a powerful symbol and progenitor of majoritarian angst in todays United States.” Majoritarian angst can be considered as a class, and racialised, reaction against the other; those identifiable as non-white, native or indigenous peoples and alien immigrants to the United States. In this way, majoritarian angst can be identified as a hegemonic narrative representing white male traditions and ideals that continues to subvert the American Indian through appropriation. Maintenance of the stereotype affirms hegemonic designs of the ‘White Man’s Indian’. To stress this point: “humane assimilationists of the past set out to save the man but kill the Indian. These days the goal is to save the fake Indian so we don’t kill the white man.” This prevaricates a position that suits a hegemonic narrative and offers no representation to American Indians. Only to the ‘White Man’s Indian’ does this pose a threat:

No matter who says what about Indian mascots, one need only observe their popularity and endurance to realize that they occupy a special position in the American imagination. Regrettably, it is a colonial imagination, emerging only in relation to the Indians it has invented and must control in order to survive (Salaita).

This would maintain ownership and control of the ‘White Man’s Indian’ within white cultural imagination, and stress how cultural hegemony is maintained by the presentation of counter-narratives that affirm the hegemonic narrative by deploying a defence of the mascot based on white tradition. Additionally, the inherent symbolism of not conceding to indigenous wishes maintains the moral centre for white society. Concerns of this nature can be illustrated

by reconsidering the *Washington Post* survey. The poll is the agenda of white people and contributes to a narrative of white hegemony. In other words, that the issue itself is dismissed as a white 'politically correct' agenda being pursued by white liberals in the white media. The result of this evaluation challenges and discounts those affected by cultural appropriation. In this process, at least in the mass (hegemonic) media, American Indian voices are being silenced (Jay).

In conclusion, this chapter has considered how the Washington R\*dskins mascot perpetuates the misrepresentation of American Indians as stereotypical manifestations of the 'Noble Savage' via the 'White Man's Indian' in the cultural domain. The R\*dskins brand is positioned by the *Washington Post* and Dan Snyder as representative of hegemonic ideals of sporting tradition, brand identity and white masculinity. Hegemonic ideology protects the R\*dskins cultural identity by rooting anti-mascot sentiment in anti-American discourse. This position undermines the counter-narrative of representations of Indian-ness that are seeking to move them away from white designs. By securing hegemonic masculinity to an overarching thesis of the myth of the frontier makes the anti-mascot counter-narrative untenable. After all such a postulation, interspersed racial and genderised superiority indicated by the trophy-isation of the idealised American Indian body, is driven by narratives of white privilege and chauvinism. One equally manifested in representations in post-frontier society, as well as the imagined frontier society, formulating a white space that bolsters Indian-ness to American society.

The hegemony of American ideology would appear to be a burgeoning monolith to shift entrenched opinion and consciousness against such continued use of the R\*dskins mascot. Being that the hegemonic narrative is one of exceptionalism over the savage frontier

that made modern America; removing notions intrinsic to these values would undermine such creative license in the application of the frontier as driver of national ideology. To reconsider Manifest Destiny as anything other than a god given right, and contemplate any nefarious or criminal element in the mastery of the frontier would not conjure such creative imaginings as to what the frontier lends American masculine identity. The 'Noble Savage' distinction, implicit within the Redskins crest, contributes a stereotype to discourse that is predicated on white designs of the American Indian which supports a reading of cultural hegemony. The omnipresence of white privilege and male hegemony of the economic, political, social and cultural renders it so. Sporting mascots fill the space between such Institutional dominance contemporaneously, and historical conceptions of nation building and colonisation, and the leap between a frontier and post-frontier American society.

This chapter employed a very masculine determination of the American Indian. Of course, the hegemony of a white masculine narrative suggests dominance of gender as well as race. Building on the notions of white hegemony within American social and cultural spaces the final chapter will consider a gender specific binary of the 'Noble Savage', to assess how this forms part of culturally dominant stereotypes, whilst also giving a fresh gender position on the 'White Man's Indian'.



## Chapter Three

### Fashioning an American Fantasy: Femininity, the ‘Hipster’ Headdress and ‘Playing Indian’

Gramsci’s conception of cultural hegemony underlines how American Indian tropes serve dominant notions within society through previous examinations of *The Revenant* (2015) and the Washington R\*dskins mascot. Chapter Three builds on the preceding establishment of white space which formulates and utilises Indian-ness that is grounded on a robust image of white masculinity. Therefore, this chapter considers a gender perspective on the ‘White Man’s Indian’ that functions as an iteration of stereotypical images of American Indian femaleness. An analysis of the utility of the ‘Hipster Headdress’ reveals the present-day obsession with, what has been labelled, the ‘sexy’ American Indian costume. This design contributes a very specific image of female Indian-ness to discourse and acts as a prism into the wider debate of American Indian sexualisation and objectification. The ‘Hipster Headdress’ is an example of how contemporary fashion deploys Indian-ness as white cultural expression. Revealing a narrative on which the interpretation of American Indian femininity supports cultural hegemony.

The employment of appropriated devices of Indian-ness within social and cultural spaces, signifies mediation between white and American Indian culture and prompts further interpretation of cultural appropriation, as well as the ‘White Man’s Indian’. American Indian appropriation contributes to an image of the American Indian that mirrors colonial fantasy but also contemporary designs on indigenous femininity. Moreover, would appear to have a consequential effect by playing on the vulnerability of American Indian women, as indicated by the prevalence of sexual violence against them. It is possible to highlight how stereotypes

also reinforce white hegemony by exploitation of gender tropes that maintains a subjective view of American Indian femaleness.

Interpretations of female Indian-ness is qualified by the work of Devon Abbott Mihesuah, *American Indians: Stereotypes and Realities*, who considers female subjectivity as a result of ongoing limitations beset by post-colonialist white and tribal structures; and later, Jessica R. Metcalfe whose, *Callahoo Parade and the Sexualization of Native American Women*, seeks to address issues of stereotyping and objectification. Whereas, Debra Merskin's scholarly work, *The S-Word: Discourse, Stereotypes and the American Indian Woman*, acknowledges how contemporary discourse affects feminine identity, and undermines the position of women in society. In contrast, Derek T. Ono et. al. approach representations of femininity from a position of commodity fetishism in *Deciphering Pocahontas: Unpackaging the Commodification of a Native American Woman*. Finally, Andrea Smith's *Conquest: Sexual Violence and American Indian Genocide*, demonstrates how indigenous vulnerability results in sexual violence and seeks to empower women by breaking down ongoing stereotypes through decolonisation.

This chapter builds on the previous interdisciplinary approach that draws on historical analysis, film and cultural studies and offers a gender perspective on the 'White Man's Indian'. The chapter, framed by Gramsci, offers further relevance to the literature by considering how American Indian stereotypes become legitimised by cultural hegemony. Hegemonic femininity is investigated through a genderised version of the 'Noble Savage' stereotype, defined by the 'Princess / Squaw' binary, which is offset against derivatives within contemporary American society. An exploration of feminine American Indian stereotypes is complemented by considering *Pan's* (2015) *Tiger Lily*, played by Rooney Mara, who presents



an overtly sexual but also mismatched indigeneity. This reading is buttressed by the exploitation of indigeneity by white women 'Playing Indian' or appearing in 'red-face' which further underscores notions of cultural hegemony. As such, white cultural hegemony has a controlling influence over the space Indian-ness inhabits and where American Indian stereotypes are taken for granted. 'Playing Indian' has deep roots in the national subconscious. The Pocahontas Myth is enmeshed with the origins of the American colonies and an expression of desires and fantasies of European explorers. Its modern-day iteration, can be viewed - metaphorically - through the 'Hipster Headdress', and is deployed here to emphasise how this device signifies the maintenance of stereotypes via cultural hegemony<sup>16</sup>

In 2012, Victoria's Secret lingerie model, Karlie Kloss walked the runway in an ensemble outfit consisting of a leopard-print bikini, fringed-moccasin high heels, with Navajo inspired jewelry topped off with a full length archetypal 'Plains' headdress. Kloss, and Victoria's Secret instantly withdrew the section that depicted Kloss wearing the outfit from the show. In response to criticism of cultural appropriation, Kloss reiterated her apologies through a Twitter statement on 11<sup>th</sup> November. This reemphasised her original declaration, mirroring Victoria's Secret apology, along with concerns that she had caused wider offence.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Pocahontas is part of the 'American origin myth'; Pocahontas, by saving the life of John Smith, legitimises the Anglo-American presence in North America (Christian F. Feest *Pride and Prejudice: The Pocahontas Myth and the Pamunkey* 50). Similarly, the myth of Squanto teaching white colonists to employ 'Indian ways' to cultivate corn functions in a similar fashion (Lynn Ceci *Squanto and the Pilgrims: On Planting Corn "in the manner of Indians"* 71) both cited in (Clifton). The Princess legend can be substituted for the mythical representation of America (18). Stedman views this through the 'lightly clad maiden' that accompanies 'Americus Vespucci' in a late 16<sup>th</sup> Century illustration by Stradanus (32). Elisabeth S. Bird discusses the objectification of the American Indian woman through designations of the 'Princess' / 'Squaw' (Meyer and Royer 78). Whilst Stacey J. T. Hurst and Debra Merskin, in *The "S"-Word: Activist Texts and and Media Coverage Related to the Movement to Eradicate "Squaw"*, discuss 'Squaw' as a contested idea in a public space (128). Stedman illustrates how the 'Noble Savage' woman was presented as a mascot for Buffalo Bill's Wild West Shows as Arrow-Head "the Belle of the Tribe" (41) as well as embodying "pristine femininity" mirroring Pocahontas (187).

<sup>17</sup> Of the top 25 replies following the Twitter post, 10 were empathetical and only three critical. One even noted that *No Doubt* were also criticised for the same reason, when Gwen Stefani donned a headdress in their video for *Looking Hot*.

A range of news agencies and celebrity websites picked up on Kloss' regret and a simple search illustrates a rather nonthreatening position within their headlines. Of the first twenty-eight results using a Google search engine eighteen restate Kloss' apology. With only four suggesting any deeper insight from the title of their article. As few as four headlines offering a counter position of anti-appropriation. General, the benign language and lack of deeper questioning fails to highlight an immediacy of discussion within popular culture and suggests a positive outcome. Of course, this point is superficial, but further investigation reveals how popular opinion contributes to discourse, as well as the distinct lack of choice for those seeking a more profound meaning, analogous to the debate distilled by the deployment of the R\*dskins mascot.<sup>18</sup>

This prompts a deeper investigation of the image Kloss presented. Furthermore, how the palliative response supports cultural hegemony, through the perpetuation of stereotypical images of American Indians which seeks to contain the images of female Indian-ness, within the colonial design of the 'White Man's Indian'. First is the uber-fashionable 'Plains' headdress coupled with Navajo jewellery again disseminating a confused and homogenous view of American Indian Indigeneity. Her buckskin bikini was more reminiscent of Raquel Welch's infamous fur bikini, that she donned in Don Chaffey's *One Million Years BC* (1966), giving an impression ultimately of the wanton primitive or 'savage'. A photo of Kloss,

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<sup>18</sup> The first relevant 28 websites that occur in a simple Google search engine of 'Karlie Kloss headdress', restated Victoria's Secret / Kloss' apology and included: *The Cut*; *USA Today*; *The Telegraph*; *Fashionista*; *Jezebel*; *The Daily Mail* (twice); *L.A. Times*; *Independent* (U.K.); *E* (online); *You Tube*; *ABC News* (twice); *U.S. Magazine*; *Pinterest* (twice); *Gawker*; *S.F. Gate* and *Huffington Post* (once restating the apology and the other denouncing Kloss' actions as racist); *St. Louis Today* referred to the headdress' use as "insensitive". Counter position / anti-headdress discourse comes from three websites: *Native Appropriations*; *Indian Country Media Network* and *Popsugar*. Three others used rather benign language: *Business Insider* referred to the removal of the headdress from the show; *The Fashion Spot* also noted it had been "pulled"; and *CNN*.

taken during the runway performance, shows her either war-whooping or blowing a kiss; regardless, in its entirety, the costume presents another white person 'Playing Indian' (Keene, *Guess we can add Victoria's Secret to the list* ).

This image of femininity reveals ongoing notions of paternalism and colonialism that are apparent in cultural appropriation. However, colonial control over indigenous woman also implies ownership of white women by white males in a hegemonic patriarchal system: "colonisation of native women (as well as other women of color) is part of the project of strengthening white male ownership of white women" (Smith 29). Building on the frontier presented in *The Revenant*, and the R\*dskins mascot denoting hegemonic notions of masculinity, with the headdress as a metaphor for hegemonic femininity. After all, such fictionalised mascotry buttress real life representation. The practices deployed in the representation of fictional characters are also evident when white performers adopt an imagined indigeneity in their public personae.

American pop band *No Doubt's* music video for *Feeling Hot*, further illustrates this point. The video amounts to serious overtones of BDSM opening with Stefani, in headdress, tied up and at the mercy of a cowboy. Native motifs are palpable: tepees, blankets, spears and even using smoke signals to alert her rescuers. This prompts a good old fashioned 'Cowboys and Indians' fight, securing the western scene. The opening lyric anticipates her objectification and invites this: "Go ahead and look at me, that's what I want". Her depiction capitalises on American Indian sexuality through appropriation but also trivialises a violent undercurrent as the statistics of sexual violence against American Indian women illustrate (Charleyboy). This video examples how 'Playing Indian' perpetuates stereotypes associated with the 'Wild West', whilst securing Indian-ness to white culture, through an objectified and

vulnerable depiction of femininity. The headdress thus serves as a metaphor for this process and continues the historical process of stereotypical depictions of American Indians.

The earliest observations of the American Indian woman have been dictated by white men, and one of the earliest projects was to destabilise American Indian tribal structures. Perceiving that white women were subservient in patriarchal societies that were driving colonialism, structured interpretations of the American Indian woman to suit European ideals of patriarchy. American Indian women were presented as subject to the male warrior within tribal systems and seen as a slave and a drudge forced to carry out menial tasks. (Lajimodiere 105). The roles forced upon American Indian Tribes and Nations is one that reproduces European notions of hierarchy. Whereas prior to the conquest of North America there was generally a more equal distribution of work and power within American Indian societies which were essentially more matriarchal in structure. For example, Cherokee women owned family plots which were matrilineal in inheritance. Being one of the 'Civilised Tribes' who were forcefully removed from their homes in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, by Congress' Indian Removal Act, to reservations effectively dissolved Cherokee government (Alvarez 137 - 140); (Toensing). This serves western notions of sovereignty in the imagination of the nation-state, something Andrea Smith claims must be moved away from because it is based on power and not reciprocity (184 – 187).

The undermining and repression of such systems of labour support Gramsci; whereby if cultural hegemony fails to assert its dominance and more violent or physical removal of systems support a system of patriarchal colonialism. Consequently, perpetuation of what Rayna Green calls a "xenophobic sociocultural framework" (cited in Mithlo 7). This can also be a way of stratification via gender through the objectification of the American Indian female

form, thus mascotting it through an idealised – in this instance highly sexualised - image extends the “symbolic and literal control over [female and native] bodies” (Smith 15). After the destruction of tribal structures, American Indian women were taken by whites as slaves and subject to sexual and physical violence. Deemed subhuman in literature and film, which presented American Indian women in a binary prescription, as the depersonalised ‘squaw’ or the ‘princess’ helper (Lajimodiere 105). In addition, the relative invisibility of American Indians to the average American person means stereotypes contribute to discourse and reflect ideals and designs of the ‘White Man’s Indian’ (Fryberg et. al. 208/9). These continued depictions can be seen as the ideological maintenance beset on American Indian women by colonialism and as such continuation of these tropes can be viewed as cultural hegemony, based on historical precedence (Berkhofer).

This can be demonstrated by the 1995 Disney movie *Pocahontas* which projects and maintains a stereotypical image of an American Indian girl. Echoing colonial fantasy with modern day imaginations of American Indian femininity and sexuality. Disney’s heroine cements hegemonic notions of female submissiveness in her sacrifice to save John Smith. Furthermore, her racial subservience is also expressed through the ‘Noble Savage’ trope suggested in her actions. Described by *Harper’s Weekly* as a “wild little heathen in the midst of a rude Indian tribe”, Pocahontas’ sacrifice for the white man had “won her enduring fame” (Coward 71), Pocahontas’s character can be viewed as lower class framed by (savage) racial and gender characteristics, further defaulting to the white male, even while she is romanticised as ‘primitive nobility’ in the film.

However, this colonial fantasy is also added a contemporary position of American Indian stereotype by her overt sexualisation. Pocahontas is not presented as a pre-cautious adolescent. Her obvious form presents an alternative to the child of colonial lore. Her long

black hair, extremely pretty features and her slim, but curvaceous figure denotes an ongoing sexual fantasy within the story: “the heroine [...] is clothed provocatively (contrary to the modest dress typical of the woman of her tribe) and in true Disney fashion, is blessed with a Barbie doll figure” (Mihesuah 14). Such tropes within the film support contemporary cultural hegemony of white masculinity by continuing to define American Indian women through stereotypical historical depictions:

Pocahontas transitions from Native American woman of contemporary colonial lore into a contemporary commodity form; a fragmented and empty body inscribed within contemporary codes of woman as sexual heroine supporting patriarchy (Buescher 34).

Pocahontas does not simply default to patriarchy, but supports masculine hegemony by her subsequent position in the narrative of the film. Furthermore, as will be elaborated, the image of female Indian-ness presented through Pocahontas in the movie, contrasts a position of hegemonic femininity via white cultural appropriation. Disney has effectively replayed the Pocahontas origin myth instead of presenting a story that reflects the true-life tale.<sup>19</sup> The Princess trope can therefore establish a position of subservience, but as noted, through her title, signifies a ‘Noble-ness’. The Celluloid Maiden / Princess fills the stereotypical role subject to the white, heterosexual male form. The Princess personifies the more romanticised elements of the American Indian female form whilst the maiden embodies the ‘squaw’ (Marubbio 5, 6).

Debra Merskin identifies the frequent use of the word ‘Squaw’ in American public discourse. These designs of feminine Indian-ness weave an American narrative perpetuated by cultural hegemony, further affecting notions of female compliance and supporting white

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<sup>19</sup> Research has uncovered that Pocahontas and John Smith were not involved and never had any offspring (Schilling).

masculine dominance. In addition, restates the continued use of stereotypes which marginalise American Indians reflective of ongoing historical imaginings:

The term squaw as an element of discourse that frames a version of indigenous female-ness with the historical colonial construct of stereotypes of American Indians in general as animalistic, savage and sub-human (Merskin 346).<sup>20</sup>

Through Merskin and M. Elise Marubbio's analysis, the 'Princess' trope is set against the binary distinction of 'Squaw'. Therefore, both these terms are suitable signifiers of a continuance of the process of American Indian stereotyping, but representing a unique gender disposition. Stereotypes destabilise American Indian femaleness and identity through the reification of images that sustain racial and gender subjectification throughout America's colonial history (Merskin 353). Resultantly, the duality of the 'Noble Savage' is maintained in the 'Princess' / 'Squaw' binary:

Where the princess was beautiful, the squaw was ugly, even deformed. Where the princess was virtuous, the squaw was debased, immoral, a sexual convenience. Where the princess was proud, the squaw lived a squalid life of servile toil, mistreated by her men—and openly available to non-Native men (Daniel Francis cited in Merskin 353).

Whether it be 'Princess' or 'Squaw', both are subjected to the sexually-available wantonness ascribed all American Indian females since colonial times. The continued narrative of such stereotypes only reaffirms hegemonic discourse if an analogy is drawn within the fetishisation of the American Indian 'warrior' / masculine form discussed in the previous chapters' analysis of the R\*dskins mascot (Barbour); (Berkhofer).

Whereas the historical precedent for mascotry could be found in white desire for Tecumseh or Uncus, Pocahontas prompts a similar reading but this is offset by her gender and sexuality. However, desire for the 'Pocahontas Princess' is established on patriarchal

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<sup>20</sup> Merskin also discusses the origins of the word 'Squaw', and whilst she emphasises they are varied and complex, it was adopted by white settlers to show derision or contempt and should be disregarded as a sexist and racial slur (346).

notions of heterosexual relations. Pocahontas' objectification reveals the 'embodiment and disembodiment' of the American Indian found in Barbour's analysis of Tecumseh and Uncas, removing her agency and establishes the American Indian both as idealised and stereotype. The 'Princess Squaw' gender binary is predicated on historical designs of the 'Noble Savage' therefore signifying a relationship with contemporary American Indian fetishisation which supports cultural hegemony through the perpetuation of the 'White Man's Indian' (15, 20).

To elaborate, locked in Disney's image of Pocahontas is the cartoon 'babe' archetype evident in animation from Jessica Rabbit to the Little Mermaid. These portrayals of femaleness in films have been criticised by their exploitative attempts to empower women through overt sexualisation (Valkenburg 164). Being both unacceptable image and endemic of the contemporary 'mascotting' trend, for example, in 2016 *Wonder Woman* was made "woman's mascot" to the United Nations, with much criticism (Ross). Additionally, *Wonder Woman's* scant costume presents an overtly sexualised image of femaleness in the Jessica Rabbit or Pocahontas mould.

Described as 'whitewashing' ('redface' / 'Playing Indian'), this performance can be identified in *Pan*, Joe Wright's 2015 'prequel' to J. M. Barrie's *Peter and Wendy* (1911) (Hopkins / Yuhas). The character of Tiger Lily, played by Rooney Mara presents a white actor as an American Indian of the 'Picaninny' tribe. The term 'Picaninny' is also a racial slur, like 'R\*dskins'; but one that denotes an African American child, and not American Indian. Again, highlighting the interchangeability of indigeneity when applied to stereotypes as constructs



of the white imagination (Sturgis)<sup>21</sup> (Deloria, *Playing Indian*).

In addition, gender disposition maintains the female stereotypes uniqueness, but in this way, can evidence cultural hegemony. There are many facets to this. Dealing with the issue of American Indian / female mascotry first: Tiger Lily is presented as a sidekick to Peter Pan in an analogous fashion to Pocahontas and John Smith. As previously highlighted, this is a subservient position predicated on race and gender dispositions. Tiger Lily can be viewed as subservient to Peter's 'Great White Father', which extends notions of white masculine dominance, as well as colonial ownership of American Indians. The 'Great White Father' moniker is also evident of the narrative and language of 'treaty discourse' and ongoing paternalistic attitude by the United States Government in its dealings with American Indians. (C. Allen).

However, suggestion of paternalism is undermined by the fact Peter Pan never grows up. Rather it reflects the pattern of white socialisation that educates boys through deployment of American Indian identity as a metaphor for wanton sexuality.<sup>22</sup> If the American Indian male presents attainable bravery via racial difference, as discussed in Chapter Two, then the American Indian female presents attainable ownership through gender distinction. This carries notions within such racial mediations that further undermines gender when viewed through white masculine assumptions, as can be conveyed through Hugh Glass' frontier hero, instead of Peter Pan. Whilst Peter Pan may not grow up, boys invariably will. Cultivated with the notion that in spaces of cultural dissemination in America, white maleness epitomises a dominant narrative that replicate male social pedagogy. This can

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<sup>21</sup> Sturgis' interview with Mara claims she had been on the wrong side of the 'whitewashing' debate, came post the release of *Pan*, dovetailing with the OscarsSoWhite controversy surrounding the lack of representation of non-white people at the 2016 Academy Awards. Merriam-Webster online dictionary describes picaninny (pickaninny) as: dated, now offensive – used as a term for a black child.

<sup>22</sup> See note 13.

support a Gramscian analysis that cultural institutions reflect and support hegemony, and more than paternalism, it is expressive of violent, white masculine dominance that is suggested by both the idealised American Indian masculine and feminine stereotype (Kidd); (King, *What Do We Talk About When We Talk About American Indian Imagery in Sports: Thoughts on Mascots and Racialized Masculinity*); (Messner).

Cultural hegemony is further expressed by Tiger Lily's association with the Picaninny Tribe. In *Pan*, Tiger Lily is also situated in a strange position of 'not as evil as the bad guys but not as good as the heroes' (Yuhas). This morally ambiguous position, evokes an image of *The Revenant's* idea of robust and violent masculinity, or the 'Noble Savage', but it also positions the feminine as sexualised and submissive objects of white desire through the 'Princess Squaw'. The female mascot presents a genderised version reflecting white male dominance but also affirms masculinity through ownership (suggested by her sidekick position) and sexualisation (in her dress and disposition). However, the objectification of the feminine form leads to another consequence of stereotypical depictions of female indigeneity in the maintenance of cultural hegemony.

This can be established by American Indian cultural appropriation by white women. In example, Ruth Hopkins observes that the NBC production of *Peter Pan: Live!* presented a thoroughly 'sexed up' version of Tiger Lily. Again, played by a white American, which Hopkins surmised as another manifestation of the historically stereotypical caricature tantamount to 'redface'. Additionally, Tiger Lily is presented as a "hipster version" reflective of the contemporary trend where American Indian females are presented in the show as 'hot Indians'. As Hopkins continues: "where we're naked, sexy and wearing little more than a

headdress (cited in Yuhas). Hegemonic femininity emphasises how designs of the 'White Man's Indian' and masculinity contrive to assign a subservient position to female Indian-ness.

To illustrate, Lana Del Rey sported an American Indian headdress in a music video for her 2012 song, *Ride*. By adopting 'redface' / 'Playing Indian', comparable to Rooney Mara's Tiger Lily, Del Rey imposes a sexual vulnerability on American Indian women by combining the headdress with a revealing outfit, and other motifs of subservience and helplessness. Entwining American Indian imagery with solid symbols of American pop culture, the video has over 87,000,000 'hits', and Lana Del Rey is a modern pop success story predicted on her highly-stylised image as much as her smoky vocal delivery. *Lana Del Rey Today* justified the video on Twitter, rather dismissively: "Y'all are reaching with this cultural appropriation thing, it was a music video...". Del Rey has yet refused to acknowledge cultural insensitivity to American Indians. Simply justifying her wearing the headdress because it was a video suggest a disposable nature to such appropriation.<sup>23</sup> However, such a throwaway comment does not mean popular culture is ephemeral. It prompts readings of appropriation, framed by a narrative that supports cultural hegemony by presenting both female vulnerability, and of white male dominance.

The video itself leans heavily on American imagery within popular culture, the 'Stars and Stripes' features throughout, whilst motifs such as the open road, diners, truck stops and the desert represent Lana's lyrical claims she is an "unusual girl...with...no moral compass". This statement seems to justify her position of subservience in the video, herself searching for a place to combat her inherent rootlessness. This is supported by her assertion that her

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<sup>23</sup> Lana Del Rey claims herself in a separate interview that she is free from cultural appropriation, see (Callahan-Bever).

position reflects her “nomadic point of madness”. Throughout she is seen with multiple suitors: three “lovers” in fact. This suggestion is no problem for Del Rey, being subsequently dismissed by her assertion she was “born to be the other woman, belonging to no-one...everyone”. Furthermore, the videos heavy reference to nature and her lyrical yearning for the American past (“I believe in the country America used to be”) hearkens for a more simple, authentic time and carries clear overtones of conservatism. Del Rey’s assertions in video can draw a parallel with Rousseau’s romanticisms in rejecting modern life for a more ‘primitive’ imagining.

However, it is the videos crescendo: Del Rey resplendent in ‘Plains’ Tribe style headdress, with gun, booze, campfire, and accompanied by bikers, express her freedom and minimalism, but also her vulnerability. She is scantily dressed throughout, in white mainly, with short denim-shorts, and barefooted stressing her oneness with nature, equally dramatising her carefree lifestyle and rejection of social convention. Del Rey fuses images of the American west and packages them neatly into a ten-minute pop video prompting suggestion of a free spirit; one that is equally American Indian, Midwestern love story whilst hearkening for America’s golden age. Insinuated by her appropriation, though, is her vulnerability as a woman, and her overt dependence on men. Her acceptance in this lifestyle is based on her submissiveness that to her suitors she is disposable as her headdress; she has already accepted her position as the ‘other woman’. Additionally, reflective of a practice that has been normalised within popular culture, like the sporting mascot, the headdress buttresses suggestion of cultural hegemony. The headdress now a device to express Lana Del Rey’s femininity but also her otherness. The placement of the headdress within a context of highly suggestive and sexualised accompaniments, reveals a diaspora of hegemonic notions and assumptions regarding the role of Indian-ness in American popular culture through

'Playing Indian', the 'White Man's Indian' and the 'Noble Savage' trope that also reveals its gender uniqueness.

These reading compliments those already explored with regards Pocahontas, Tiger Lily, Karlie Kloss and Gwen Stefani, but conveys them onto the white woman, rendering all woman vulnerable to a narrative of violent masculinity. This precariousness is expressed through literal and figurative dangers apparent in the presence of bikers, guns, alcohol, wild camp fires and fireworks discharging in the video. This is where Lana Del Rey places herself (and all women) in the video; her appropriation a device to transmit cultural dominance of the white male whilst uniting a narrative of American symbolism with American Indian culture, and reveals cultural hegemony when considered in context of Del Rey's *Ride*, but as demonstrated has wider contemporary implications as well as historical precursors. The video highlights the (previously discussed) resulting binary of the 'Princess Squaw' stereotype - or genderised 'Noble Savage' stereotype - which are ingrained in the dominant culture. To reiterate, such depictions are based on white imaginings of society, and create cultural narratives that misrepresent American Indians, whilst bolstering notions of white male hegemony, and stereotypical depictions of American Indians. Furthermore, as hegemonic notions that "work" to vitiate American Indian personhood as well as support American nationhood revealing a set of coloniser / colonised narratives. Whereby colonial history is supplanted by a less problematic notion suggested by the 'White Man's Indian' (Mithlo 2, 7).

In this process of cultural appropriation is the ongoing stereotyping of American Indians. Appropriation is based on "culturally specific views of ownership and property" as well as "long standing tradition of white hegemonic control of Native identity" which preserve stereotypes and follow a narrative that inculcates and maintains cultural hegemony (Black

606). This advances Gramsci's notion that culture supports the institutional framework of capitalism. Economic and political foundations of colonialism are preserved and maintained through cultural imperialism. By doing so, assimilated roles forced upon American Indians by conquest serve hegemonic structures and institutions, which are maintained by the utility of stereotypical depictions of the colonised. Ultimately these social and cultural spaces (cinema; American football; fashion shows; music videos) in which stereotypes are taken for granted supports colonisation and assumptions regarding ownership of the 'White Man's Indian'.

The cumulative weight of the historical practice of cultural appropriation suggests that cultural imperialism, in its late capitalist mode, requires a legitimating rationale. One that enables the dominant culture to mask the fundamentally oppressive nature of its treatment of subordinated cultures (Whitt 8). Again, this follows Gramsci that a narrative of white supremacy without contestation would be doomed to failure. By creating such cultural brokers or mascots within social and cultural space, American Indian representations are presented (even appropriated ones) in narratives that serve to maintain white cultural hegemony.

This chapter established a gender perspective on the 'White Man's Indian' that functions as an iteration of stereotypical images of American Indian femaleness. Through an analysis of the utility of the 'Hipster Headdress' reveals how contemporary fashion deploys Indian-ness as white cultural expression. The deployment of the 'Hipster Headdress' contributes a very specific image of female Indian-ness to discourse. By doing so, demonstrates how designs of the 'White Man's Indian' are perpetuated through a very specific gender binary. This reading is buttressed by the exploitation of indigeneity by white women 'Playing Indian' or appearing in 'red-face' which further compliments notions of

cultural hegemony. American Indian appropriation contributes to an image of the American Indian that mirrors colonial fantasy but also contemporary designs of female Indian-ness. Moreover, would appear to have a consequential effect by playing on the vulnerability of American Indian women. It is possible to highlight how stereotypes also reinforce white hegemony by exploitation of gender tropes that maintains a subjective view of American Indian femaleness. As such, white cultural hegemony has a controlling influence over the space Indian-ness inhabits and where American Indian stereotypes are taken for granted.





## Conclusion

### Outer Space: The Final Frontier and Indian-ness in *Avatar* (2009)

Essentially, the premise of *Avatar* is simple: the white hero saves alien primitives. The protagonist, Jake Sully, played by Sam Worthington is a paraplegic United States marine. Sully interacts with the Na'vi, the indigenous population of the planet of Pandora, with the intention of usurping their land and valuable resources therein. Unsurprisingly, is the resemblance between James Cameron's story and American history. White colonialists supersede the indigenous peoples of their once native lands and benefit in the process. However, *Avatar* reveals a storyline that mitigates white guilt of colonialism through the triumph of the Na'vi over the United States Armed Forces. By exhibiting this narrative American colonialism (and violence) against the American Indian is supplanted with an alternative account of indigenous resistance and the reverse of the white invader. Whilst in *Avatar* the Na'vi successfully defend their planet and turn away the encroachers, American history took a different turn, which is thrown into relief by *Avatar* presenting a marginal narrative, which can be read as cultural hegemony.

This can be evidenced further by comparing Shari Huhndorf's reading of *Dances with Wolves*. The ending of *Dances with Wolves* allays white guilt by supplanting Indian-ness with whiteness. Whereas, *Avatar* presents an alternative but 'safe' parallel with American history. White colonial dominance is maintained as inevitable in *Dances with Wolves*, when the settler-colonial characters become the heirs of Indian-ness. In this way, white hegemony is not undone, despite the defeat of the white invaders in *Avatar*. Beleaguered by American history, Manifest Destiny and cultural appropriation, American Indians are legitimised by white hegemony. Expression and resistance only feasible through white dissemination and in

a way that is safe to white culture through narratives that support a construction of Robert Berkhofer's 'White Man's Indian'. Both movies present as cultural hegemony by exhibiting conflicting narratives that ultimately support a narrative that does not unsettle American dominance. Sully's contact breeds sympathy for the Na'vi, and he rejects his whiteness, echoing the path of Glass, Dunbar or Hawkeye; navigating a path between civilisation and savagery analogous to his peers in *The Revenant*, *Dances with Wolves* and *The Last of the Mohicans*.

A result of 'frontier' interaction, America has usurped Indian-ness for its own ends through cultural hegemony. This can be established by contemporary American Indian mascotry and the perpetuation of historical stereotypes characterised by designs of the 'Noble Savage'. Such stereotypes reinforce class, race and gender hierarchies within society. The social and cultural space they are played out in reaffirms such notions, representing an American Indian culture through the white imagination and thus a relationship which is dictated by social conventions overcome by cultural hegemony.

All settle lines of ownership and design of the other. A space in which they manifest and are manipulated. The frontier was, and is, is one such device in American history which suits dominant economic and political lines. This is perpetuated by the mythical frontier and depictions of indigenous peoples; whether that be the western frontier or space, the 'final' frontier, beyond earth's atmosphere. The suggestion by *Star Trek* that outer space's frontier is final, but also limitless, is particularly the point of *Star Trek* in connecting with a 1960's audience prompted by Kennedy's 'New Frontier' and the space race. Pandora, the Na'vi's home planet in *Avatar* taps into such ideals of American exceptionalism, but also expansionism beset by colonial and economic dominance.

America's hegemonic narrative of Manifest Destiny is one of exceptionalism over the savage frontier. This creative imagining places American Indians in white cultural and social space in an equally malleable position with regards American history. Mascots indicated by Hugh Glass, the Washington Redskins and placement of signifiers such as the 'Hipster Headdress' is reflective of the license granted white culture through colonialism and naturalised through cultural hegemony. American Indians, via white design, have contributed to American society, but it is predicated on an alignment that suits the 'White Man's Indian' and the perpetuation of stereotypes in social and cultural spaces reflect this.

In *Avatar*, the 'avatar' itself sets the mediation zone between white and Na'vi cultures. More than just a virtual reality simulation it is a human / alien hybrid that allows human beings to interact with Pandora's toxic environment. The avatar allows Sully to engage as a fully abled person permitting him to 'Play Indian'. The avatar also signifies a cultural or social space fabricated in order to interact with Pandora's inhabitants, analogous with America's western frontier. The frontier – real or imagined – manipulates the position of the native. In contemporary America, the frontier has been repositioned and presents mediation zones within public and cultural space; the cinema, the football stadium, the catwalk or the music video, each with its own signifiers of American Indian mascots.

The avatar extends such notions, and the inhabitants of Pandora perform as the 'Noble Savage' mascot for Jake Sully's white hero. Their characterisation reduced to Sully's interaction, function as signifier of the indigenous other. The Washington Redskins mascot which denotes similar designs of 'Noble Savagery' but also of arbitration amongst white and indigenous cultures akin to an imaginary border between civilisation and savagery that the fictionalised frontier represents. American football sidelines, resplendent with mascot,

mirrors tropes beset by the avatar where cultural interaction between white and indigenous culture ensues. Mascotry of American Indian Indigeneity appears throughout American cultural and social space. The Na'vi have more in common with the transient application of a headdress worn by a Victoria's Secret model than they do with actual American Indians. In essence, the Na'vi in *Avatar* function as a similar cultural corollary. Like imaginary or stereotypical American Indians, the Na'vi whoop, wear face paint and fire bows and arrows and are fearsome warriors. This is beset by their obvious concern for nature, spirituality and honest ways. Like the stereotypes of American Indians, the Na'vi are racially different, primitive and, having rejected all attempts to foster a peace (through assimilation) are facing their own doom, allegedly by their own design for standing in the way of the white advance and ideals of civilisation.

*Avatar* follows a similar narrative of the story of the white hero. He transcends his former whiteness and engages in indigenous lifeways. He becomes one with nature, and his mastery over Pandora's animals even leaves the locals aghast; forming a bond with the one Kenten (flying lizard's native to Pandora) - Toruk - that the Na'vi deem impossible to tame; akin to the skills shown by Glass. Kenten make a bond with the Na'vi, whereby the creature chooses the rider, not the other way around, and form a symbiotic link with one another (through a physical and mental connection). Repetition of these tropes help aid in the depiction of Nativeness or Indian-ness, and perpetuate designs of the 'Noble-Savage'. But it is his initial contact that allows for Sully's immersion within the Omatikaya Tribe, and the maintenance of another important trope in establishing the white hero as conduit of Indian-ness.

Mirroring the myth of Pocahontas, Neytiri (Zoe Saldana) at first saves Sully before

bringing him to her tribe. The Pocahontas stereotype is essentially repeated in outer space. She is, of course, daughter of the chief – Eytukan – played by Wes Studi. Like Pocahontas she is imagined nobility but also displays fierce hunting and fighting skills, and a feisty temper, but also dutiful to her tribe and Sully following designs of indigenous femaleness. The white hero is further established through his relationships within the Na’vi. Neytiri, by becoming his inevitable love interest, and extending white desires for the exotic other.

Sully has a (love) rival in Tsu’tey (Laz Alonso), at first, but through experience of combat become fast friends, and after the death of Eytukan, Tsu’tey becomes clan chief. This and Sully’s acceptance into the Omaticaya Tribe, initiated by Neytiri’s mother Mo’at (C.C.H. Pounder), the spiritual head of the clan, aligns the white hero quickly in the narrative with the important members of the Omaticaya. Of course, Sully’s position through his interactions with Mo’at, Neytiri and Tsu’tey, gives him a place at the top of the tribe where all seek his council, which only reaffirms his nativeness, and the matriarchal Na’vi default to the white hero.

Paralleling Hugh Glass in *The Revenant*, the white hero in *Avatar* interacts and benefits physically, emotionally and spiritually from his experience. He becomes an ally of the Na’vi, comparable to other white heroes that have pursued indigenous lifeways. Like Glass he successfully learns Na’vi language, cultural norms and hunting skills. These invariably resemble American Indian traditions such as mounted hunting, use of javelins and spears as weaponry, and, as observed, developing a oneness with nature and animals. Sully, by exercising his otherness to transcend his former self, effectively ‘Goes Native’. Aligning himself with the Na’vi to defend their homeland against the white invaders, his physical and cultural transformation is complete, not just a manifestation via the avatar. However, the

triumph here of the Na'vi is not one of indigenous expression via Jake Sully's assistance, rather reduced to it, as with Glass in *The Revenant*.

The Na'vi's indigenous narrative is subverted by the white hero, and then conveyed through him. Much like Hugh Glass, who perfect as a vision of white masculinity, can straddle white and indigenous societies and bend the American Indian to his will. The story of the Na'vi is now beset by the white hero's narrative, as is their cultural expression and resistance. This narrative of whiteness is hegemonic which reflects colonial fantasy of the white hero leading the alien other to victory. Ultimately, Sully's benevolence sets the plot and seems better course for the Na'vi to be dictated by a friendly white as opposed to his former, imperialist superiors. Finally, his actions prompt the Na'vi into resistance, and as a result says more about hegemonic white identity, cultural appropriation, and notions of paternalism than an expression of Na'vi autonomy. Resist or be colonised, the result is the white man's Na'vi.



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