

Native American Cinema: Indigenous Vision, Domestic Space, and Historical Trauma

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## Abstract

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Native American cinema: Indigenous vision, domestic space, and historical trauma

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This thesis argues that Native American cinema defines Indigenous identity by utilizing three modes of representation that revolve around the vision of American Indian protagonists, the familial space of American Indian homes, and the figuration of historical trauma through Indigenous temporal structures. Whereas Hollywood media presents American Indians through the vision of white protagonists, positions the camera outside of American Indian homes, and shows historical trauma through Western structures of temporality.

## Dedication

*To Ofer Eliaz and all my Cherokee relations*

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## Introduction

American Indians are not only left on the outside of contemporary Hollywood film and television, but scholars today also believe Native American cinema is non-existent. Hollywood's presentation of American Indians has continued to stagnate. American Indian identity in Hollywood is singular rather than plural. Indigenous characters and their communities' role in Hollywood film and television revolve around the fantasies of white spectators yearning for a past more than a century removed from Indigenous communities today. Hollywood film and television presents American Indian communities through their vanishing, annihilation, and absence from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, while American Indian characters also perform secondary roles to white protagonists. While Hollywood's presentation of American Indians has yet to evolve, scholars believe a counter cinema to Hollywood's representation of Indigenous communities such as a Native American cinema hasn't fully developed at this time. What's at stake in this thesis and the representation of American Indians in film and television is the continuation to ignore the evolution of a Native American cinema that's been developing for more than two decades. While scholars and Hollywood continue to see and present American Indians from the outside, I, on the other hand, acknowledge the presence of a Native American cinema.

Native American cinema- films such as *The Exiles*,<sup>1</sup> *The Business of Fancydancing*,<sup>2</sup> *Smoke Signals*,<sup>3</sup> *Skins*,<sup>4</sup> and *Imprint*<sup>5</sup> - revolves around three modes of

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<sup>1</sup> *The Exiles*. Dir. Kent MacKenzie. Milestone Films, 2008.

<sup>2</sup> *The Business of Fancydancing*. Dir. Sherman Alexie. FallsApart Production, 2002.

<sup>3</sup> *Smoke Signals*. Dir. Chris Eyre. Shadow Catcher Entertainment, 1998.

representation: the Indigenous look, the domestic space of American Indian homes, and historical trauma. The narrative structure of Native American cinema also works around the vision of American Indian protagonists, positioning the camera in the interior of American Indian homes, and presenting historical trauma within the circular temporality belonging to the Native American conception of time. Whereas Hollywood media like *Breaking Bad*,<sup>6</sup> *Jonah Hex*,<sup>7</sup> *The Shining*,<sup>8</sup> and *Into the West*<sup>9</sup> presents American Indians through the vision of white protagonists, positions the camera outside of American Indian homes, and shows historical trauma through Western structures of temporality.

In Blood Narrative: Indigenous Identity in American Indian and Maori Literary and Activist Texts, Chadwick Allen argues that the origins of “Native American cinema” or the representation of American Indians in popular pictographic and literary texts “...are made to evoke the blood/land/memory complex; they maintain and assert indigenous distinctiveness through linguistic, stylistic, and content markers of indigenous identity. And both forms are made to insist on remembering the cross-cultural and cross-national agreements forged between Indian leaders and the U.S. government... That identity is expressed in the confluence of personal memory, oral tradition, and official records written in complementary traditions of ink on paper and paint on skins.”<sup>10</sup> Allen argues that Native American media like film and literature revolve around characteristics

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<sup>4</sup> *Skins*. Dir. Chris Eyre. First Look International, 2002.

<sup>5</sup> *Imprint*. Dir. Michael Linn. Linn Productions, 2007.

<sup>6</sup> *Breaking Bad*. Dir. Vince Gilligan. High Bridge Productions, 2008.

<sup>7</sup> *Jonah Hex*. Dir. Jimmy Hayward. Warner Bros. Pictures, 2010.

<sup>8</sup> *The Shining*. Dir. Stanley Kubrick. Warner Bros. Pictures, 1980.

<sup>9</sup> *Into the West*. Dir. Robert Dornhelm and Simon Wincer. Dreamworks Television, 2005.

<sup>10</sup> Allen, Chadwick. *Blood Narrative: Indigenous Identity in American Indian and Maori Literary and Activist Texts*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press., 2002: 175. Print.

of Indigenous culture such as American Indian “linguistic” and “stylistic” approaches to the presentation of American Indian identity.<sup>11</sup> The relevance of Allen’s argument to my own is seen from the impact and influence of the American Indian Renaissance relating to American Indian literature on the presentation of Indigenous identity in Native American cinema.

In 1968, N. Scott Momaday, an American Indian author of Kiowa descent, coined the phrase “memory in the blood or blood memory” in his first novel House Made of Dawn.<sup>12</sup> According to Allen, Momaday’s House Made of Dawn marked the beginning of the American Indian Renaissance in relation to Native American literature through the evolution of the “blood/land/memory” narrative.<sup>13</sup> In Native American Renaissance, Kenneth Lincoln, a literary critic, was the first to adopt the term “American Indian Renaissance” in 1985.<sup>14</sup> Lincoln also argued the American Indian literary movement began with House Made of Dawn.<sup>15</sup> Lincoln contends that this literary movement revolves around the reclamation of American Indian heritage through literary expression, coupled with a renewal of interest in tribal artistic customs such as ceremonialism, ritual, and oral tradition.<sup>16</sup> American Indian authors like Momaday, Leslie Marmon Silko, Joy Harjo, Louise Edrich, and Simon Ortiz are among the authors that form this Indigenous literary movement. Like the American Indian Renaissance, Native American cinema also rewrites Indigenous identity from popular culture through tribal artistic expression.

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid. 178.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Lincoln, Kenneth. *Native American Renaissance*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press., 1985. Print.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid. xiii, xv, 2, 3.

Yet scholars like Allen resist using the term Native American cinema when working with representations of American Indians in film. Native American cinema is a contentious term for scholars, explaining its absence in scholarly work like Allen's Blood Narrative. Scholars define the representation of American Indians in film in a variety of ways, while avoiding a claim for Native American cinema. Allen in particular primarily focuses on Native American literature rather than film, while arguing personal memory, oral tradition, and the U.S. government and American Indians' contrasting interpretations of Indigenous identity define the "blood/land/memory" narrative.<sup>17</sup> Scholars like Allen, Ella Shohat, Robert Stam, Beverly Singer, and Corinn Columpar shy away from the notion of Native American cinema. Instead of arguing for Native American cinema as a counter presentation of American Indians' portrayals in Hollywood cinema and television, scholars like Columpar discuss the representation of American Indians in film through the concepts of world and national cinema. In Unsettling Sights: The Fourth World on Film, Columpar discusses an array of representations of American Indian tribes of North America in films such as *The Business of Fancydancing*, *Smoke Signals*, *Black Robe*,<sup>18</sup> *The New World*,<sup>19</sup> and *Dead Man*.<sup>20 21</sup> Columpar attempts to incorporate these films within world and national cinemas like Australian, Canadian, and New Zealand film. Scholarly work on national cinema has been broken down into two primary categories: one is the general debates over the concepts and definitions of national

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<sup>17</sup> Allen, Chadwick. *Blood Narrative: Indigenous Identity in American Indian and Maori Literary and Activist Texts*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press., 2002. Print.

<sup>18</sup> *Black Robe*. Dir. Bruce Beresford. Alliance Communications Corporation, 1991.

<sup>19</sup> *The New World*. Dir. Terrence Malick. New Line Cinema, 2006.

<sup>20</sup> *Dead Man*. Dir. Jim Jarmusch. Pandora Filmproduktion, 1996.

<sup>21</sup> Columpar, Corinn. *Unsettling Sights: The Fourth World on Film*. Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois Press., 2010. Print.

cinema, and the other is discussions of the individual branches of national cinema, such as Italian, British, and Irish. Columpar focuses on this latter approach, focusing on countries like Canada, Australia, and New Zealand.

In Columpar's introduction to Unsettling Sights, she justifies the exclusion of films dealing with Aboriginal peoples in first world nations, claiming they relate more to a national cinema rather than a Native American or Aboriginal cinema.<sup>22</sup> Specifically, Columpar highlights the opening night screening of the 2006 Toronto International Film Festival (TIFF) of Zacharias Kunuk and Norman Cohn's *The Journals of Knud Rasmussen*,<sup>23</sup> and Rolf de Heer's *Ten Canoes*.<sup>24</sup> While lecturing at the University of Auckland in 2002, Barry Barclay, a Maori filmmaker, define Fourth Cinema against its First, Second, and Third cinema counterparts, labeling them as "invader cinemas."<sup>25</sup> According to Barclay, Fourth Cinema is a cinema of "ancient remnant cultures" that persist within and separate from modern nation-states.<sup>26</sup> Fourth Cinema also presents a stark contrast between the representations of Aboriginality to institutions like Hollywood. Ironically, Fourth Cinema, while distinctly different and informative through its representation of Aboriginality, depends on the financial support of Hollywood for its

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> *The Journals of Knud Rasmussen*. Dir. Norman Cohn and Zacharias Kunuk. Igloolik Isuma Productions Inc., 2006.

<sup>24</sup> *Ten Canoes*. Dir. Rolf de Heer and Peter Djigirr. Adelaide Film Festival, 2006.

<sup>25</sup> Barclay, Barry. *Celebrating Fourth Cinema*.

New Zealand: Illusions Magazine., July 2003. Print.

<sup>26</sup> Columpar, Corinn. *Unsettling Sights: The Fourth World on Film* Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois Press., 2010 : 1. Print.

productions.<sup>27</sup> Barclay openly admits that his definition of Fourth Cinema is more of an ideal rather than a present film form.<sup>28</sup>

Columpar discusses the characteristics of Barclay's definition of Fourth Cinema, while arguing that *Ten Canoes* and *The Journals of Knud Rasmussen* capture the essence of Barclay's vision for Indigenous filmmaking: "to foreground the perspectives, experiences, storytelling traditions, and thus 'core values' of the Indigenous characters at their center and thereby to divest those characters from a representational logic in which they can only ever function as two-dimensional savage (be it noble or not), ethnographic specimen, or absolute other."<sup>29</sup> Columpar argues that *Ten Canoes* and *The Journals of Knud Rasmussen* embody some of the characteristics of Fourth Cinema. While introducing spectators to their Indigenous protagonists through voice-over narration, Columpar emphasizes the opening sequences of *Ten Canoes* and *The Journals of Knud Rasmussen* are an example of Fourth Cinema seen from the presentation of Indigenous "storytellers."<sup>30</sup> The narrative structure of these films also unfolds through the control and direction of their Aboriginal protagonists. However, even with the success of films like *The Journals of Knud Rasmussen* and *Ten Canoes*, Columpar argues these films aren't fully Indigenous within Barclay's claim of Fourth Cinema. According to Columpar, the directors of *Ten Canoes* and *The Journals of Knud Rasmussen* collaborated extensively with the Indigenous communities they represented. Columpar points out these films share the titles of "co-directed" and "co-produced," while the

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid. 2.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

screenplay of *The Journals of Knud Rasmussen* was co-written by its Indigenous and non-Indigenous filmmakers. Rather than establishing binaries of “Indigenous and non-Indigenous filmmaking,” Columpar opts to define the representation of Aboriginality as the “...identification of the conventions by which Aboriginality is represented and, in turn, an exploration of their legibility and resonance outside as well as inside the specific national contexts in which they are employed. In the process, Aboriginality emerges as a concept with (potentially) universal currency, as grounds for not only a stereotyped and broad notion of ‘the native’ but also the political identity of capital-*I* Indigenous that Barclay invokes, which has the capacity to recast local phenomena resulting from settler colonialism as global in dimension and systemic in nature.”<sup>31</sup>

Columpar acknowledges the elements of national and global cinema within the presentation of “Aboriginality” in New Zealand, Australian, Canadian, and cinema of the United States. Columpar also argues, in opposition to the co-direction of the Inuit filmmaker Zacharias Kunuk, that *The Journals of Knud Rasmussen* is an example of national cinema instead of Fourth Cinema due to its partial funding from the Canadian government, coupled with the extensive contribution of a non-Indigenous crew. Yet Columpar isn’t alone in arguing for a “genuine” or “authentic” Indigenous cinema before claiming a term like Fourth Cinema or even Native American cinema. Like Columpar, scholars such as Shohat, Stam, and Singer attempt to define Indigenous filmmaking as films that promote Indigenous filmmakers, crews, actors, and funding throughout its production. If films like *Ten Canoes*, *The Journals of Knud Rasmussen*, and even *Smoke Signals* fail to meet the rigorous criteria of Indigenous people’s complete control,

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid. xiv.

creation, and circulation of their film production than for these scholars these films remain outside of the strict category of Fourth Cinema, Indigenous filmmaking, and Native American cinema. Indigenous filmmaking for these scholars is defined as the control, creation, and circulation of Indigenous films to Aboriginal peoples, representing their own image and narrative.

Yet in *Reel Injun*,<sup>32</sup> a documentary film that explores the history of Indigenous representations in film, Chris Eyre, an Arapaho and Cheyenne filmmaker, admits Kunuk's *Atanarjuat: The Fast Runner*,<sup>33</sup> also a co-production, is more of an Indigenous film than any work Eyre has ever produced: "I always say that that's the most Indian movie ever made. It's much more Indian than *Smoke Signals*. *Smoke Signals* was made for Indian people, but certainly for the 'over culture.' When you get a movie like *The Fast Runner*, you're watching this movie and you're saying to yourself, 'this is an inside job.'"<sup>34</sup> Scholars like Columpar attempt to confine Indigenous filmmaking to an unrealistic taxonomy that defines Native American cinema in the shadow of colonization in connection to the history of Indigenous peoples and first world nations. The violent past between Indigenous communities and first world nations like the U.S., Canada, New Zealand, and Australian governments, along with the history of racist representations in film, leaves scholars attempting to correct and justify their arguments and criteria for claiming an authentic Native American cinema. While sensitivity and acknowledgment

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<sup>32</sup> *Reel Injun*. Dir. Neil Diamond and Catherine Bainbridge. National Film Board of Canada, 2009.

<sup>33</sup> *Atanarjuat: The Fast Runner*. Dir. Zacharias Kunuk. Igloodik Isuma Productions, 2002. Barclay, Barry. Celebrating Fourth Cinema.

<sup>34</sup> *Reel Injun*. Dir. Neil Diamond and Catherine Bainbridge. National Film Board of Canada, 2009.

of the troubling history between Indigenous communities and first world nations is always something any scholar should take in to consideration when thinking of the representation of Aboriginal people in film, Indigenous filmmakers like Eyre, Kunuk, and Sherman Alexie don't define their films' success or failure based on their complete control of the production, circulation, and funding of their films. This so-called "Indigenous authenticity" of American Indians in film that scholars like Columpar, Shohat, Stam, and Singer continue to search for is unattainable. Moreover, defining Native American cinema as this all-encompassing authenticity isn't the only, or most useful, way of defining Native American cinema.

In this thesis, I define Native American cinema as the presentation of Indigenous identity utilizing three modes of representation that revolve around the vision of American Indian protagonists, the familial space of American Indian homes, and the figuration of historical trauma through Indigenous temporal structures. When structuring an argument and approach for Native American cinema, I take into account Hollywood's extensive representation of American Indians for more than a century. In fact, I can't see any other way around defining my term for Native American cinema without referencing Hollywood's representation of American Indians from the past and present. Hollywood is interconnected with Native American cinema and American Indian communities through its extensive depiction of American Indians in film and television. My definition of Native American cinema revolves around the counter presentation of American Indian identity in Hollywood film and television. I focus my attention on Native American cinema through the presentation of POV shots, the domestic space of American Indian

homes, and historical trauma relating to Indigenous communities because Hollywood's presentation of American Indians revolves around these three characteristics. While Native American cinema by no means is restricted to three modes of representation, I feel when presenting an argument over Native American cinema establishing a starting point is important when attempting to discuss a broad range of representations of American Indian identity in film and television. While I do exclude the terms First Nations people, American Indian, or Indian in relation to my use of the term "Native American cinema" because I want to direct my readers to a specific country and Indigenous population within that country rather than engage with a political or ideological term that may only represent a fraction of the American Indian population in the United States. American Indians in the U.S. have a variety of ways of defining and labeling their racial identities. In short, I want my readers to know the specific Indigenous people and country I'm referring to when discussing the representation of American Indians in film. I believe the term Native American cinema answers both those questions for my readers.

While, due to considerations of scope, I leave out Native American documentary and experimental films, I focus my argument on narrative representations of the Native American in Indigenous and Hollywood cinema. I argue that Native American cinema should be understood as a counter cinema, a direct response to and revision of Hollywood film and television. While most scholars tend to confine their arguments to notions of authenticity in Indigenous representations, I find this approach less useful in dealing with American Indians in film. Rather than placing a stringent taxonomy on the presentation of Aboriginality relating to the production, circulation, and emphasis on American

Indians behind the camera, I examine films with Indigenous and non-Indigenous filmmakers that explore the representations of American Indian identity in connection with Indigenous communities, U.S. Indian policies, Indigenous oral history, and American Indian characters dealing with contemporary social and cultural issues in the present rather than from the past.

In chapter one, I examine films that deal with Indigenous identity in the urban setting. For *The Exiles*, Indigenous identity is in direct conflict with U.S. Indian policies like the Federal Urban Relocation Program that attempted to re-define Indigenous identity in urban city centers like Los Angeles. The urban experience of American Indians in film is something most scholars have yet to explore. The Indigenous characters of *The Exiles* attempt to forge a new Indigenous community in the peripheries of urban Los Angeles. I will examine the representation of American Indian characters engaging with white dominant culture and the space in Los Angeles. I also look at the Federal Urban Relocation Program implemented in the 1940s, which tried to assimilate American Indians into white, urban communities by luring American Indians off their reservations through financial incentives by the U.S. government. While the setting of *The Exiles* is in the 1960s, the second half of the twentieth century relating to the representation of American Indians in film has been nearly non-existent in Hollywood. The relevance of a film like *The Exiles* in connection to my justification for incorporating this film with my argument over a Native American cinema is acknowledging the presence of American Indians in the twentieth century.

I also investigate *The Business of Fancydancing*, which deals with Seymour Polatkin, a gay American Indian poet, attempting to make a new life in Seattle away from his reservation. I look at the confrontation between the vision of Indigenous characters once they are separated from their reservation and relocated in the urban landscape of Seattle. This film deals with the social and cultural complications of American Indians attempting to relocate from their Indigenous communities while also enduring scrutiny from their former Indigenous community for settling in white America.

In chapter two, I investigate the presentation of the domestic space of American Indian homes in relation to Indigenous and Christian spiritualism, Indigenous mourning, the spiritual empowerment of fry bread, and the Oglala Sioux clan system. A way of defining Native American cinema comes from the interior of Indigenous dwellings. Whereas Hollywood continues to position the camera primarily from the outside of American Indian homes, these films insist on showing the internal domestic space. Hollywood also presents the destruction of American Indian dwellings through interracial marriage of white and Indigenous families. Native American cinema, however, presents the continuation of Indigenous communities in the present and future within the familial space of American Indian domiciles.

In chapter three, I look at the contrasting presentations of historical trauma between Native American and Hollywood. Hollywood film and television continues to present historical trauma in accordance with Western time. Hollywood presents Indigenous history through the chronological ordering of events in time, relating American Indians to historical trauma through their annihilation and “vanishing” from

the American landscape during historical events like the Wounded Knee Massacre. Native American cinema on the other hand shows American Indian communities' continuation in the present and future by placing historical trauma within the circular logic of Indigenous time. Native American cinema also shows Indigenous communities from the present instead of the past.

While Native American cinema relies on different spatial and temporal articulations to counter Hollywood's representation of the American Indian, the central argument of my thesis involves these films' revision of the look or vision of American Indian protagonists. American Indians experienced a new form of visual colonization through television and film beamed directly into their homes through television. The appropriation of Indigenous visual iconography, the continual circulation of these images through the popular Western genre, coupled with its television rebroadcasting, defines one aspect of the domestic space of American Indian dwellings. Native Americans developed a number of responses to this colonization of their homes with images of their Otherness, responses such as vigilante justice, Indigenous mourning, and Indigenous and Christian spiritualism. In Indians Watching Indians on TV: Native Spectatorship and the Politics of Recognition in *Skins* and *Smoke Signals*, Joanna Hearne defines American Indian domiciles through the hegemonic presence of white popular culture like the Western.<sup>35</sup> The presentation of the Western within the domestic space of American Indian homes evokes anger, vigilante justice, and oral storytelling to counter the visual stereotypes.

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<sup>35</sup> Ed. Denise Cummings. *Visualities: Perspectives on Contemporary American Indian Film*. Lansing, MI: University of Michigan State Press, 2011: 41. Print.

Hearne argues that in *Skins* and *Smoke Signals* images of “Indians watching Indians on TV” sparks conversations, debate, and violence for Eyre’s Indigenous characters.<sup>36</sup> According to Hearne, “...televisions themselves are mediating forces that recur throughout the film, seemingly in the background but in fact acting as visual and aural transitions between scenes, sparking conversations between characters... Several crucial scenes in the film are bracketed by televisions and television screens, which structure and saturate the representation of the characters’ lives.”<sup>37</sup> Hearne also cites Sam Pack’s study on Fourth World viewers and television screens that create power relations between mediated images of American Indians and Indigenous identity, “...Pack asserts that for Fourth World viewers, television is the arena where identities are negotiated in the context of power relations: ‘the question of ‘who are they?’ directly shapes and informs the question ‘who are we?’”<sup>38</sup> Hearne defines the domestic space of American Indian homes by the influence of popular culture, such as the rebroadcasting of the Western within the familial space of Indigenous dwellings. While American Indian tribes in North America define the domestic space of their homes in a variety of ways, I define this familial space through the presentation of Indigenous and Christian spiritualism, familial connectedness, Indigenous mourning, and the Oglala Sioux clan system.

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid. 51.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid. 48.

In The Oppositional Gaze: Black Female Spectators, bell hooks investigates gender and race in film through the gaze of African American men and women.<sup>39</sup> Hooks also examines black female spectatorship in Hollywood stating: "...black female spectators have had to develop looking relations within a cinematic context that constructs our presence as absence, that denies the 'body' of the black female so as to perpetuate white supremacy and with it a phallogentric spectatorship where the woman to be looked at and desired is 'white.'"<sup>40</sup> While I argue that Native American cinema works to re-appropriate the "look" or "vision" of Indigenous protagonists, American Indian spectators also experienced Hollywood's construction of American Indians as a structuring absence in American horror films, coupled with seeing American Indian characters through the look of white protagonists. In American horror films like *The Shining*, the body of American Indians is replaced with their ghostly haunting of a white middle class family within the Overlook hotel. The look of American Indians in Native American cinema shows the power relations between Indigenous characters and the spaces they engage with in and outside of their communities. The Indigenous look in Native American cinema resembles Frantz Fanon's definition of the "look" as the power of the gaze from colonized blacks in Black Skin, White Masks: "...This 'look,' from-so to speak-the place of the Other, fixes us, not only in its violence, hostility and aggression, but in the ambivalence of its desire."<sup>41</sup> <sup>42</sup> Like Fanon's description of the look of

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<sup>39</sup>Hooks, Bell. *Black Looks: Race and Representation*. Boston, MA: South End Press., 1992. Print.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid. 96.

<sup>41</sup> Fanon, Frantz. *Black Skin, White Masks*. New York, New York: Grove Press., 2008. Print.

colonized blacks, hooks also describes her own view on the power relations to the look of African Americans: “Subordinates in relations of power learn experientially that there is a critical gaze, one that ‘looks’ to document, one that is oppositional. In resistance struggle, the power of the dominated to assert agency by claiming and cultivating ‘awareness’ politicizes ‘looking’ relations-one learns to look a certain way in order to resist.”<sup>43</sup> Likewise the Indigenous look in Native American cinema presents the power relations of American Indian characters looking, while also presenting the confrontation between the spaces in and outside of American Indian communities to the vision of Indigenous characters. I define the look of Indigenous characters as the structuring of POV shots that position spectators in relation to an optical look POV in a manner similar to Jean Mitry’s description of the “subjective camera”: “the image is called subjective because it allows the spectator to occupy the place of heroes, to see and feel like them.”<sup>44</sup> My definition of Indigenous vision revolves around the encompassing look of American Indian protagonists that grants the looker an objective mastery over a space that is being looked at. For example, in *The Exiles*, Mackenzie follows three American Indian characters as they engage and occupy Los Angeles. Throughout *The Exiles*, Mackenzie positions spectators with the vision of his Indigenous protagonists, while they continue to confront and engage with white dominant culture in Los Angeles seen through their collective vision.

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<sup>42</sup> Hooks, Bell. *Black Looks: Race and Representation*. Boston, MA: South End Press., 1992: 95. Print.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid. 95.

<sup>44</sup> *The Look: From Film to Novel An Essay in Comparative Narratology*. Web. 20 March 2013. <<http://www.fantomfilm.cz/>

The influence of white dominant culture on Indigenous communities, whether through film, television, or live news broadcasts, represents the control of American Indian iconography through the circulation and rebroadcasting of American Indian images within and outside the space of American Indian communities. Throughout this thesis, I use the terms “white culture,” “white dominant culture,” and “popular culture” to highlight the influence and impact of white society on Indigenous identity and communities through television, Hollywood, rock ‘n’ roll, and alcohol. In Unthinking Eurocentrism: Multiculturalism and the Media, Shohat and Stam discuss the hybridity of Indigenous identity within white dominant culture.<sup>45</sup> The mixing of white and traditional Indigenous culture characterizes the hybridity of Indigenous identity for the American Indian characters of Native American cinema. Stam and Shohat define hybridity as preceding colonialism, while it continually evolves: “...Hybridity is dynamic, mobile, less an achieved synthesis or prescribed formula than an unstable constellation of discourses... hybrid identities are not reducible to a fixed recipe; rather, they form a changing repertory of cultural modalities. The hybrid diasporic subject is confronted with the ‘theatrical’ challenge of moving, as it were, among the diverse performative modes of sharply contrasting cultural and ideological worlds.”<sup>46</sup>

In Native American cinema, the hybridity of Indigenous identities and spiritualism is a product of colonialism. For Indigenous tribes in the United States, like the Spokane Indian Tribe in *Smoke Signals*, Christianity was introduced through Indian boarding schools. After the attempted extermination of American Indians, along with the

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<sup>45</sup> Shohat, Ella and Stam, Robert. *Unthinking Eurocentrism: Multiculturalism and the Media*. New York, New York: Routledge Press., 1994. Print.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid. 42.

transition to assimilation policies by the U.S. government beginning in the nineteenth century, American Indians were forced to abandon or conceal their traditional Indigenous spiritualism and identities. American Indians were also forced to accept white culture within their societies. American Indians relied on their ability to adapt to their newly established social, political, and spiritual environments for their survival. For American Indians, their post-modern Indigenous spiritualism and identity is influenced by white and Indigenous cultures. Thus white dominant culture has an extensive history with American Indian communities from past to present.

Scholars such as Georges Benko, Ulf Strohmayer, Tim Cresswell, Deborah Dixon, and Ashish Rajadhyaksha use the terms colonialism, post-colonial, and postcolonial discourse when discussing the representations of American Indians in film. In Unthinking Eurocentrism, Shohat and Stam argue that "...post-colonial thought stresses deterritorialization, the constructed nature of nationalism and national borders, and the obsolescence of anticolonialist discourse."<sup>47</sup> They argue that the post-colonial implies the possibility of resistance, yet at the same time leaving absent any clear domination or opposition within a post-structuralist academic context. The term post-colonial also suggests a phase beyond colonialism, where "postcolonial discourse" references leftist theoretical writings attempting to surpass binarisms of Third World militancy.<sup>48</sup> It is associated with "Third World" countries that have gained political independence after World War II, while also being linked to a Third World diasporic

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid. 38.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid. 39.

presence within “First World” urban city centers.<sup>49</sup> For Shohat and Stam, “postcolonial” is a less useful term when speaking about the unequal distribution of global power and economic resources:

The simultaneous privileging and distancing of the colonial narrative in the “postcolonial” become evident through a kind of commutation test. While one can posit a duality between colonizer and colonized and even between neocolonizer and neocolonized, it makes little sense to speak of “postcolonizer” and “postcolonized.” While “colonialism” and “neocolonialism” imply both oppression and the possibility of resistance, “postcolonial” posits no clear domination and calls for no clear opposition. This structured ambivalence, while appealing in a post-structuralist academic context, also makes “postcolonial” a fragile instrument for critiquing the unequal distribution of global power and resources.<sup>50</sup>

The term postcolonial leaves absent the identification of location in connection to politics, where the ambivalence of history between the dichotomy of colonizer or colonized for the many nations associated with colonialism is simply replaced with the “post.” The post becomes an all inclusive pass for theoretical examinations of texts with ties to colonialism read through a post-colonial lens. The term post-colonial also ignores the stark differences between historical contexts of various forms of colonization from the extensive histories of first world nations.

Like Shohat and Stam, Laura Marks also rejects the restrictions and ambiguities of the term postcolonial in her study on intercultural cinema in The Skin of the Film: Intercultural Cinema, Embodiment, and the Senses.<sup>51</sup> Marks criticizes the term postcolonial and other terms describing the relationship among nations as devouring the

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid. 38.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid. 39.

<sup>51</sup> Marks, Laura. The Skin of the Film: Intercultural Cinema, Embodiment, and the Senses. London: Duke University Press., 2000. Print.

distinctions among nation, location, period, and agency.<sup>52</sup> For Marks, quoting from Aijaz Ahmad, a Marxist literary theorist from India, intercultural cinema "...points out that 'postcolonial' ignores political relationships other than, and sometimes predating, colonial ones and maintains the binary relation between former colonizer and colonized."<sup>53</sup> According to Marks, the "postness" in "postcolonial" designates between these power relations with an emphasis on time. Stam and Shohat argue, on the other hand, that many scholars leave absent a specific historical "time," showing a sense of ambiguity to their arguments, while also covering up this void with the use of the 'postness.'<sup>54</sup> Marks also concludes when talking about Aboriginal or First Nations people, "apartheid" is a more appropriate term to use in describing the separation of lands, forced education, and the confinement of reservations.<sup>55</sup> While some scholars see the benefits of post-colonial discourse in their arguments about the representations of American Indians in film, I for the most part avoid the use of the "post" in the social and economic history of Indigenous communities and the U.S. government. Likewise I also feel that the term post-colonial attempts to sum up the lengthy history between American Indians and the U.S. government within a term that leaves far too many ambiguities to the understanding of Indigenous identity and communities in the past, present, and future.

If Chris Eyre sees Indigenous identity through the representation of American Indians to their position within and outside the space of their reservations in films like *Smoke Signals* and *Skins*, what would happen to the Indigenous look of American Indians

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<sup>52</sup> Ibid. 8.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid. 8.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid

<sup>55</sup> Ibid. 9.

if they left the space of their reservations permanently? Once American Indians leave their Indigenous communities, how would the structuring of Indigenous identity to the vision of American Indian characters look if they primarily engaged with white dominant culture rather than their own? The American Indian experience isn't limited to reservations or American Indians living in isolation from white communities. In fact, throughout the twentieth century, the U.S. government continued to play a significant role in the lives of American Indians and their communities, where U.S. Indian policies attempted to define and influence Indigenous identity for more than a century.

The following chapter will explore the American Indian urban experience, where Sherman Alexie and Kent MacKenzie represent American Indian identity from their Indigenous characters' voluntary engagement with white dominant culture in the urban space of Seattle and Los Angeles in *The Business of Fancydancing* and *The Exiles*. For Alexie and MacKenzie, their representation of Indigenous identity presents the alteration of the Indigenous look within the urban periphery of American cities.

## Chapter 1: Defining Indigenous Vision in Native American Cinema

Images of a barren Indian reservation forty miles outside of Albuquerque, New Mexico, leads in the opening sequence to the pilot of the acclaimed television series *Breaking Bad* on the AMC network. Walter White, a high school chemistry teacher, lung cancer victim, and producer of methamphetamine, frantically barrels down a winding dirt road in his Winnebago RV. Walter attempts to guide his mobile meth lab to safety. Walter then loses control of his RV in a ditch. Walter exits the camper, while the sound of police sirens begins to build in the distance. Walter returns to the RV for his camcorder. He then turns the camcorder on himself, recording a personal testimony for his wife and son, “My name is Walter Hartwell White. I live at 308 Negro Arroyo Lane Albuquerque, New Mexico 87104. To all law enforcement entities this is not an omission of guilt. I’m speaking to my family now...Skyler you are the love of my life. I hope you know that. Walter Jr...you’re my big man! There are going to be some things that you will come to learn about me in the next few days. I just want you to know that no matter how it may look I only had you in my heart...Goodbye.”

The minimal presence of American Indians in *Breaking Bad* shows Indigenous characters’ position to the war on drugs from the outside. However, as Walter White continues to position himself closer to the war on drugs, Walter’s actions continue to bring American Indians closer to the frontlines of the drug war. At the height of the Mexican-American drug war, the frontier of *Breaking Bad* sets the stage for new villains, heroes, and victims to rise and fall again. Debuting on January 20, 2008, *Breaking Bad* begins during the final year of the George W. Bush administration’s war on drugs, and

continues through the Barack Obama administration. Albuquerque becomes the backdrop for a social crisis revolving around the expansion of the illegal drug trade of methamphetamine. The DEA, the Drug Enforcement Administration, and the Mexican cartel attempt to seize control and access to the American Southwest. Albuquerque residents like Walter White and his business partner Jesse Pinkman discover new economic opportunities in the cooking and selling of methamphetamine. The DEA attempts to rid the southwest of a drug epidemic, whereas the Mexican cartel, along with its U.S. competitors like Walter and Jesse, continue to profit off the misery of drug addicts. Old foes of the classic Western genre such as the Southwestern Indians find themselves caught in the middle. American Indians in *Breaking Bad* perform the role of victims to the Mexican-American Drug War. American Indians once again endure the actions and consequences of their former colonizers. American Indian characters are nameless bystanders on the outside of the drug war. Yet as the drug war slowly makes its way to reservations and hospitals, American Indians must deal with the repercussions of the war on drugs. The Indigenous look of American Indian characters in *Breaking Bad* reveals the confrontation with white dominant culture revolving around the drug war.

Hollywood television shows like *Breaking Bad* continue to represent American Indians through the look of non-Indigenous characters. Rather than American Indians being the central source of antagonism to white protagonists in Westerns like *The Searchers*<sup>56</sup> American Indians are now pushed to the background of the modern Western. Walter's vision sees American Indians as sympathetic. After Walt's lung cancer

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<sup>56</sup> *The Searchers*. Dir. John Ford. Warner Bros. Pictures, 1956.

diagnosis, Walt begins intensive chemotherapy treatment. While at school, Walt is overcome with nausea and sickness. Walt retreats to the school bathroom, while the school janitor, Hugo Archuleta, an American Indian, assists Walt by handing him a moist towel to wipe his mouth. Walt sees Hugo as a friend. Later on, Walt's decision to steal lab equipment from his school's chemistry lab will cost Hugo his job. Walt's look reveals his shame and sympathy for Hugo, while also revealing Walt's cover up in allowing Hugo to take the fall for his actions. Walt sees American Indians as unfortunate pawns, enabling him to use Indigenous reservations and characters to sidetrack the DEA from their investigation into his illegal drug activities. The DEA and members of the Albuquerque establishment see American Indians as suspicious or through old racist stereotypes. *Breaking Bad* positions its Indigenous characters on the outside of this continuous power struggle between the DEA and the Mexican cartel.

Hollywood films construct Indigenous communities as background filler, slowly vanishing, or encapsulated in a past more than a century removed from American Indians today. Hollywood films and television series represent Indigenous communities through the subjective POV to their white counterparts. Films and television series such as *The Lone Ranger*,<sup>57</sup> *Broken Arrow*,<sup>58</sup> *Dances with Wolves*,<sup>59</sup> *Last of the Mohicans*,<sup>60</sup> *The New World*, *Pathfinder*,<sup>61</sup> *Breaking Bad*, *Avatar*,<sup>62</sup> and, more recently, *Hell on Wheels*,<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> *The Lone Ranger*. Dir. George Trendle. Apex Film Corp, 1949.

<sup>58</sup> *Broken Arrow*. Dir. Delmer Daves. Twentieth Century Fox Film Corporation, 1950.

<sup>59</sup> *Dances with Wolves*. Dir. Kevin Costner. Tig Productions, 1990.

<sup>60</sup> *Last of the Mohicans*. Dir. Michael Mann. Morgan Creek Productions, 1992.

<sup>61</sup> *Pathfinder*. Dir. Marcus Nispel. Twentieth Century Fox Film Corporation, 2007.

<sup>62</sup> *Avatar*. Dir. James Cameron. Twentieth Century Fox Film Corporation, 2009.

<sup>63</sup> *Hell on Wheels*. Dir. Joe Gayton and Tony Gayton. Entertainment One Television, 2011.

depict their Indigenous characters through a white male protagonist that shares in the access to and privileges of their Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities once white characters befriend an American Indian. The narrative structure of Hollywood film and television revolves around the vision of white characters. Hollywood positions American Indian characters in secondary roles to white characters. While the vision of American Indians is nearly absent from Hollywood, American Indian characters are seen through look of white protagonists. Hollywood emphasizes Indigenous characters' "otherness" to a time and place now absent in American Indian communities today. The commercial and financial success of *Dances with Wolves* and *Avatar* shows the demand for films that expose white spectators to Indigenous communities immersed in the supernatural, traditional Indigenous spiritualism, and American Indians' relationship to nature.

The narrative structure of Native American cinema, however, such as *The Business of Fancydancing* and *The Exiles* works around the vision of American Indian protagonists. The position of the camera in Native American cinema comes from the inside of American Indian communities and the subjective POV of Indigenous characters rather than from the outside of white characters and communities in Hollywood television. Native American cinema constructs American Indian identity around three primary elements: the vision of Indigenous characters, the domestic space of Indigenous homes, and the presentation of historical trauma. Kent MacKenzie and Sherman Alexie elicit the power relations between their white and Indigenous spectators through the position of their camera. In *The Business of Fancydancing*, Mouse, a resident of the Spokane Indian Reservation located in Wellpinit, Washington, reverses roles as possessor

and creator of Indigenous visual iconography through his camcorder. While on his reservation, Mouse re-appropriates his Indigenous look through the possession and ownership of his camera. Mouse uses the space of his reservation as a counter-hegemonic community to Hollywood's presentation of American Indians. Both *The Exiles* and *The Business of Fancydancing* define Indigenous identity through the influence of space, white dominant culture, and the vision of American Indians. American Indians' position to the inside and outside of their reservation creates conflict to the look of Indigenous characters. These Indigenous characters prefer the space of white culture, while also engaging with two forms of assimilation. In *Fancydancing*, Seymour, a gay American Indian poet, migrates to Seattle from his reservation and appropriates the lives of his Indigenous friends and community within his poetry for the consumption and comforts of the white middle class, whereas in *The Exiles*, the U.S. government provides financial assistance for American Indians to migrate from their reservations to urban city centers like Los Angeles. The hegemonic influence of the national space outside their reservation borders attempts to influence American Indians to become less reliant on their Indigenous communities, while transforming them into lower and middle class consumers.

Alexie and MacKenzie show the collective looks of their Indigenous characters to the urban periphery, coupled with their personal engagement to white dominant culture. The vision of American Indians in Los Angeles and Seattle presents the conflict among space, white dominant culture, and Indigenous identity. Thus space and Indigenous

vision work hand and hand in the narrative structure of Native American cinema through the subjective POV shots of their Indigenous characters.

In this chapter, I explore Native American cinema through the collective subjectivity of Indigenous characters within the urban peripheries of America. I define one of three characteristics that present Native American cinema's vision of Indigenous characters in contrast to the view of Hollywood television series such as *Breaking Bad*. The conflicts arising between two different generations of American Indians in *The Exiles* and *Fancydancing* allows for a unique study of Indigenous vision. Both films share in the American Indian urban experience, an area of Indigenous experience that scholars have rarely explored. I begin with *Breaking Bad*.

#### *Breaking Bad: The Vision of Walter White*

The opening sequence to the pilot of *Breaking Bad* presents the first subjective POV shot through Walter White's look to his hand held camcorder. The narrative structure of *Breaking Bad* works around Walt's actions resulting in moral consequences and the victimization of the people around him. Walt, recently diagnosed with stage three lung cancer, turns to making meth in the hopes of providing financial support for his family before he dies. American Indians in particular are caught in the path of Walt's downward spiral resulting from his involvement in the illegal drug trade of methamphetamine. In the beginning of Walt's rise in the Albuquerque underworld, Walt and Jesse, his partner and former student, use the Indigenous space of a reservation forty miles outside of Albuquerque to produce, sell, and stage meetings relating to their drugs.

The reservation allows a space for Walt and Jesse to cook meth in their Winnebago RV away from the gaze of the Albuquerque authorities. Ironically Walt and Jesse, members of the white middle class, seek refuge and protection on an American Indian reservation in the southwest. American Indians of the southwest are only one century removed from genocide and forced relocation to reservations like the one Walt and Jesse use for cover. Yet Albuquerque's social and economic privileges relating to middle class jobs and wealth are absent from the barren reservation outside Albuquerque's city limits. Rather than receiving economic benefits from a metropolis that once belonged to American Indians of the southwest, the descendants of the Southwestern Indians former colonizers bring the drug war to the backyard of an Indigenous community.

Throughout *Breaking Bad*, American Indians are on the outside of the drug war. Indigenous characters are never seen abusing, producing, or selling drugs. Yet, while the white residents of Albuquerque like Walt and Jesse continue to exploit the demand for meth, American Indians once again deal with the effects of greed and abuse on their Indigenous lands from their former colonial antagonists. In the backdrop of the American Southwest, the vision of American Indians in *Breaking Bad* reveals the confrontation and influence between its Indigenous characters and the war on drugs. The majority of the POV shots of American Indians in *Breaking Bad* come from the subjective experience of white characters. The victimization of American Indians as a result of Walt's drug activities, coupled with the growing expansion of the Mexican-American drug war, re-positions American Indians from the background to the foreground of the war on drugs. In the beginning of *Breaking Bad*, American Indians are

absent from Walt's life and the Albuquerque tri-city area. Once Walt gradually slides deeper into the Albuquerque drug scene, American Indians find themselves caught in the middle. While Indigenous characters are granted POV shots, the vision of American Indians in *Breaking Bad* reveals the influence of white protagonists on the look of Indigenous characters.

In season one, episode two, *The Cat's in the Bag*,<sup>64</sup> an American Indian man on a bulldozer pulls Walt and Jesse's RV from the ditch. After the Indigenous man unearths their RV, Walt and Jesse nervously explain their situation. Once they establish their lie, Jesse pulls some chemically soaked cash from a brown paper sack, handing two twenty dollar bills to the man. After a few seconds of awkward silence, Walt returns to the bag for another wad of twenties. With a brief exchange of goodbyes, the man rides off on his bulldozer. This sequence presents the first encounter with an Indigenous character in *Breaking Bad*, and, notably, it is filmed entirely through Walt and Jesse's POV. The exchange of "dirty" money marks the beginning of a series of actions resulting from Walt's decisions involving his drug business. Throughout *Breaking Bad*, Walt unknowingly involves a group of American Indians, his family, and dozens of Albuquerque residents in the drug war.

The final sequence of episode two opens with establishing shots of the reservation outside of Albuquerque. While near the crash site of Walt's RV, two Indigenous children kick and chase a red ball in the empty space of the desert. A young Indigenous girl<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> *Breaking Bad*. Dir. Vince Gilligan. High Bridge Productions, 2008.

<sup>65</sup> Although it's never said explicitly that these characters are American Indians, the exterior of the American Indian body, such as hair and skin tone, and the location of the American Indian reservation establishes their Indigenous race. The state of New Mexico has a 10.7% American

discovers a gas mask on the ground. The girl pulls the gas mask over her head, while looking up at the sky. Hank Schrader, Walt's brother-in-law, and the DEA discover an abandoned car on the reservation in the following episode, *And the Bag's in the River*.<sup>66</sup> Hank, a member of the Albuquerque DEA, finds a bag of methamphetamine tucked away inside the car's stereo. Once Hank uncovers the meth, another DEA agent directs Hank's attention to where the young girl's Indigenous mother and brother show the DEA officer the gas mask. The abandoned car belongs to a rival Albuquerque drug dealer by the name of Diego Molina aka "Krazy 8." Krazy 8, Jesse, and Walt were involved in a previous altercation over accusations of snitching, along with a territorial dispute. As discussed earlier in this chapter, the opening sequence to the pilot of *Breaking Bad* shows Walt attempting to drive his RV to safety, while Krazy 8 and his cousin, Emilio Koyama, lie unconscious in the back of his camper. Walt's decisions relating to his involvement in the illegal drug business not only drive Walt deeper into the Albuquerque underworld, but the consequences of Walt's actions continue to gradually progress and worsen for the Indigenous residents of Albuquerque as the *Breaking Bad* series unfolds.

In episode six, *Crazy Handful of Nothin'*,<sup>67</sup> Hank tracks the source of the gas mask to Walt's high school. Walt stole the gas mask from his chemistry lab, the same gas mask seen in the opening sequence to the pilot episode. Hank questions Walt over the missing mask in his classroom. Walt denies any knowledge of a missing mask from his lab equipment room, while Hank searches through his inventory. Later on, Hank's

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Indian population, which ranks as the third largest American Indian population of all fifty states in the U.S. *U.S. American Indian population*. Web. 15 March 2013. <<http://www.census.gov/>

<sup>66</sup> *Breaking Bad*. Dir. Vince Gilligan. High Bridge Productions, 2008.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*

search eventually leads him to Hugo Archuleta, the J.P. Wynn High School janitor, and an American Indian. While Hugo raises the American flag in front of the high school, Hank confronts him. DEA agents then cuff and arrest him while the J.P. student body, Walt, and his son, Walter Jr., look on in dismay.

In the following sequence, the White and Schrader family enjoy an evening of cards in the domestic space of Walt's home. Hank reveals the motive for Hugo's arrest to Walt and Walter Jr. According to Hank, they found a blunt of marijuana inside Hugo's car, along with marijuana inside his home, and officials had learned of two previous drug related arrests. Hank also states that Hugo "fit the profile" of a meth dealer, while Hank admits that Hugo didn't steal the gas mask after all. Walt comes to Hugo's defense, but Hank responds in return, "Yea, well, nothing personal Walt, but you wouldn't know a criminal if he was close enough to check you for a hernia." Hank and the DEA have racially profiled Hugo and determined "he fit the profile" of a meth dealer. Hugo's racial identity, coupled with his criminal background, lead to his arrest and firing from the school. Moreover, Walt has a chance to save Hugo by telling his brother-in-law the truth, but instead conceals the custodian's innocence with his silence. Once again Walt's actions lead to dire consequences for an American Indian with no ties to Walt's drug activities.

In episode seven, *A No-Rough-Stuff-Type Deal*,<sup>68</sup> a member of the Albuquerque police department, and the J.P. Wynn high school principal, organize an after school meeting to discuss the missing lab equipment, while fielding questions from teachers. Walt and his wife Skyler White are in attendance, and once again Walt has the

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<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

opportunity to come forward and reveal the perpetrator of the stolen mask incident.

While the teachers begin to raise questions and concerns relating to Hugo and the stolen lab equipment, Walt begins sexually stimulating his wife under the table. Walt's white middle class status within the Albuquerque community and his relationship to Hank allow him cover from the local authorities, whereas Hugo's status as an American Indian leaves him vulnerable to suspicions and false accusations.

The actions and consequences of Walt's decisions lead to danger for both non-Indigenous and Indigenous characters. A tribal police officer is shot and killed by the Mexican cartel's assassins while investigating the home of an elderly woman, Walt's marriage eventually collapses, Hank escapes a deadly encounter with the Mexican cartel's assassins, and Walt poisons the son of Jesse's girlfriend to deceive his partner. Walt's actions and their consequences continue to play a significant role in the lives of his family and the Albuquerque community. The Indigenous characters of *Breaking Bad* suffer the least from Walt's actions. Yet the closer these characters are to Walt, the more they suffer. American Indians' position on the outside of Albuquerque and Walt's life spares them the greatest of tragedies.

The relatively small number of POV shots given to Indigenous characters shows the confrontation with and influence of Walt's involvement in the drug war. In the beginning of *Breaking Bad*, American Indians are absent from the American west. Once Walt engages with the Indigenous space of an American Indian reservation outside of Albuquerque, Indigenous characters become the victims of a vicious cycle revolving around Walt's actions. Native American cinema, however, structures its narrative around

the vision of its Indigenous protagonists. Rather than from the outside of Indigenous communities and the vision of white characters, Native American cinema works from within American Indian communities. The position of American Indians in and outside the Indigenous space of their reservations marks the look of Indigenous characters to white dominant culture, while presenting the conflict between American Indians and white culture once they leave the space of their former homes. Native American cinema resurrects Indigenous identity to the narrative structure and vision of American Indians. The look of American Indians in Native American cinema defines a way of seeing Indigenous characters. While Hollywood film and television like *Breaking Bad* positions its former antagonist to the background of the modern Western, Native American cinema positions American Indian characters to the foreground.

*The Exiles: The Federal Urban Relocation Program*

*The Exiles* establishes the space of the urban periphery through its Indigenous characters look in the Los Angeles neighborhood of Bunker Hill. Popularized through its depictions in the work of Raymond Chandler, John Fante, and Charles Bukowski, Bunker Hill experienced the immigration of American Indians. Los Angeles in particular experienced a high influx of American Indians between 1948 and the early 1970s, when the federal urbanization experiment relocated American Indians from their reservations to the nation's cities.<sup>69</sup> One of the many themes of *The Exiles* is the relationship between

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<sup>69</sup> Rosenthal, Nicolas. *Reimagining Indian Country: Native American Migration & Identity in Twentieth-Century Los Angeles*. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press., 2012: 2. Print.

Bunker Hill's Indigenous residents and the U.S. government's Federal Urban Relocation Program. MacKenzie's Indigenous characters' relationship to Bunker Hill reveals American Indians' engagement and participation in this unique and troubling Indian policy. In Reimagining Indian Country: Native American Migration & Identity in Twentieth-Century Los Angeles, Nicolas Rosenthal discusses the effects and impact of the Federal Urban Relocation Program on American Indians throughout the U.S., focusing primarily on the Los Angeles area.<sup>70</sup>

Through financial assistance by the U.S. government and the BIA, the Bureau of Indian Affairs, American Indians willing to volunteer for urban relocation were provided with monthly checks, housing and job placement, along with vocational training to relocate from their reservation to cities across America. The U.S. government introduced this policy in 1948, when the BIA began this program on a relatively small scale with the Hopi and Navajo tribes of the southwest who had experienced economic devastation as a result of a particularly harsh winter in 1948.<sup>71</sup> In 1950, Dillon Myer, known for his "success" as director of the agency that oversaw the relocation and internment of Japanese Americans during World War II, was appointed as the new Indian commissioner overseeing this program.<sup>72</sup> According to Rosenthal, more than 155,000 American Indian women, men, and children took part in the Federal Urban Relocation Program, in which "...Meyer saw relocation as a corollary to 'termination policy,' the federal government's efforts to end its government-to-government relationship with Indian tribes, to remove Indian land from trust status, and to cease providing services to

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<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid. 52.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

Indian people...Meyer and other supporters of relocation also believed in depopulating reservations to the point that they would be ‘self-sufficient’ and no longer in need of federal services.”<sup>73</sup> The U.S. government’s termination policy in the second half of the nineteenth century sought to physically eradicate American Indians from the American frontier, whereas “Americanization” policies such as “Progressive Era settlement houses, ‘100% Americanism’ campaigns, and the development of national education policy were all extensions of policies first tested on American Indians and designed to create a society based on common values, beliefs, and practices.”<sup>74</sup> In short, American Indians were being recruited into a program that aimed at Americanizing Indigenous people. The program’s success would be defined on a case by case basis, depending on the applicant’s willingness to evolve in to the U.S government’s standards of what made a “good” Indian.

*The Exiles* chronicles twelve hours in the intersecting lives of Yvonne Williams, Homer Nish, and Tommy Reynolds, a group of American Indians attempting to eke out a living in Los Angeles, while also leaving their reservations behind. Within the span of twelve hours, these Indigenous characters reveal through voice-over narration, coupled with their subjective look, an Indigenous community dealing with the effects and influences of urban relocation.

The Indigenous community of Bunker Hill evokes the collective subjectivity through POV shots of its Indigenous residents. The narrative structure of *The Exiles* revolves around the collective look of its Indigenous protagonists. The collective look of

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<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid. 50.

these characters shows a way of seeing American Indians within Bunker Hill.

MacKenzie cuts between Yvonne, Homer, and Tommy throughout the film. MacKenzie shows each character's personal engagement with the space of Bunker Hill.

MacKenzie's camera shares in the space and movement of its Indigenous protagonists within Bunker Hill, producing a collective subjectivity of the Indigenous residents of Los Angeles. The collective subjectivity of the Indigenous characters of *The Exiles* revolves around the Federal Urban Relocation Program. Yvonne, Homer, and Tommy participate in this "Americanization" policy, as seen by their presence in Los Angeles. Without this Indian policy, all three characters, along with the majority of the Indigenous residents of Bunker Hill, would be absent from Los Angeles. These characters' personal engagement with Bunker Hill presents the contrasting and similar looks of these characters.

MacKenzie characterizes the collective look of these characters through poverty, drunken brawls, Hollywood movies, and rock n' roll, while culminating at Los Angeles' infamous "Hill X." Like *Fancydancing*, *The Exiles* represents the transition of American Indians to the urban space of Los Angeles through the vision of MacKenzie's Indigenous protagonists.

### *The Exiles: Gender and Vision*

The American Indian women of Bunker Hill pursue and unconsciously engage with the U.S. government's Federal Urban Relocation Program. The Indigenous women of Los Angeles attempt to gain access to the white middle class through their labor. The majority of the American Indian women in Bunker Hill work as waitresses or are

unemployed, while also picking up the bar and gambling tabs for their Indigenous male friends. For the U.S. government and the BIA, Yvonne's exposure to Los Angeles gradually transitions her into the role of care taker within the domestic space of the Indigenous home. Gender marks the division between its Indigenous characters' personal engagement with the space of Bunker Hill.

The opening sequence of *The Exiles* establishes the Indigenous space of the American west through voice-over narration and still images of American Indians in the open space of the plains and the southwest. This sequence presents the transition between the pre-colonized space of the American west to the post-colonial space of Bunker Hill. Cutting from multiple close ups of American Indian faces, coupled with shots of Natives in the open space of their traditionally held tribal lands, MacKenzie presents the historical link between American Indians and the pre-colonized land. MacKenzie transitions from the colonized space of the American west to the post-colonial space of Bunker Hill, when the camera zooms in for a close-up of an Indigenous baby on the back of its mother in a cradle board. Here the shot dissolves into the faces of Yvonne, Homer, and Tommy, introducing spectators to its three American Indian protagonists. The narrator then states: "...a new generation [of American Indians] wandered into the cities. What follows is the authentic account of twelve hours in the lives of a group of Indians who've come to Los Angeles, California. It reflects a life not true of all Indians today, but typical of many." Transitioning from the nineteenth century, MacKenzie then shows a series of still images of Bunker Hill's residential neighborhood, coupled with the films' introductory intertitles. The following sequence

presents a series of shots of the Los Angeles fish market. Sporting a fashionable perm and drinking a Dad's root beer, Yvonne shops for food in the fish market. Yvonne, two generations removed from the U.S. government's extermination policy, embodies the stark contrast between her grandfather's generation in the opening sequence, and a new generation of American Indians "wandering into the cities" aspiring to economic upward mobility.

MacKenzie shows the hegemonic power relations between the position of the camera and its Indigenous subjects. These images represent Indigenous visual iconography associated with colonization. The opening sequence of *The Exiles* establishes the Indigenous space of the American west through voice-over narration and still images taken before 1890 of American Indians in the open space of the American west. This sequence marks the transition between the Indigenous and colonized space of the American west for the post-colonial space of Bunker Hill. Through still images of Bunker Hill, MacKenzie presents the control and influence of the United States government within and outside of American Indian communities. The contrast between the film's opening sequence of the pre-colonial space of the American west, and the modernized space of Bunker Hill presents the transition of time to the urban periphery of Los Angeles. Here MacKenzie shows the effects of the U.S. Federal Urban Relocation Program. MacKenzie also represents the vanishing of the Indigenous space of pre-colonial America, while replacing it with Yvonne's presence in Los Angeles.

Yvonne embodies the transition of American Indians into white dominant culture. While her grandfather's generation was forcibly removed from their traditionally held

tribal lands and culture, Yvonne voluntarily moves to Los Angeles in hopes of seeking a job, family, and a new life away from her reservation. Yvonne's body marks the physical changes that many American Indians of her generation underwent over the past one hundred years. Like all of the Indigenous women shown in Bunker Hill, Yvonne uses make up, trendy perms, and stylish dresses. The Indigenous women of Bunker Hill, like the women of Hollywood, engage with popular culture through fashion.

More importantly, Yvonne is a unique example of the subjective relationship between MacKenzie's camera and her movement. Yvonne, Homer, and Tommy move on foot within Bunker Hill. Yvonne and the physical locations within Los Angeles, such as the fish market, the domestic space of her home and the homes of friends, the local movie theatre, and the streets of Bunker Hill, share a unique relationship to the physical position of MacKenzie's camera. MacKenzie's camera becomes part of the physical surroundings of Bunker Hill. The camera tracks the movement of Yvonne, Homer, and Tommy throughout *The Exiles*. The spectator shares in Yvonne's subjective experience within the space of Bunker Hill through her movement and POV shots.

For example, Yvonne enjoys a Saturday night movie alone, while spectators observe with her the familial drama of a classic Hollywood film. Yvonne, surrounded by non-Indigenous spectators, looks at the screen, while watching the domestic space of the white middle class. Yvonne's look, such as partaking in a Saturday night movie at her local movie theatre, where Hollywood cinema promotes and symbolizes the middle class values of "good" Americans, also shows the power relations that represent the influence of white dominant culture outside the theatre through the implementation of the Federal

Urban Relocation Program. This sequence also signifies the influence of popular culture on American Indians once they arrive and engage with the urban space of Los Angeles. Yvonne's look in and outside the theatre reflects her subjectivity to the refashioning of her Indigenous identity into the identity of a member of the white middle class. Through voice-over narration, Yvonne states she wants to get married in a church and raise a family. Yvonne's values and aspirations share with the U.S. government's desire for American Indians to accept white middle class standards once they enter a space outside of their reservations. The vision of American Indian women of Bunker Hill marks the influence of white culture on their performance as domestic care takers of their Indigenous homes, while also illustrating their economic independence as "breadwinners."

Directly after watching the film, Yvonne wanders on the streets of Bunker Hill. While window shopping, she discovers a framed photo of herself in one of the front store windows. Yvonne, seeing her image amongst photos of white women and their families, at first seems surprised, but she looks back at her own image with a smile, demonstrating with her facial expression a sense of satisfaction. MacKenzie represents the Americanization of Yvonne's identity by showing Yvonne confronting her own image in the non-Indigenous space of Bunker Hill. MacKenzie also shows the effects of the U.S. government's Federal Urban Relocation Program. Specifically, Yvonne embodies middle class ideals through her aspirations for a nuclear family, her desire for Homer to finally settle down, her ambitions for economic upward mobility, and her dream that her future children will benefit by membership in the white middle class. Moreover, Yvonne

and Homer also come from different reservations and tribes throughout the U.S. Yet without the Federal Urban Relocation Program, Yvonne and Homer never would of met. Homer and Yvonne's non-marital relationship also presents the potential of filling the domestic space of their apartment with children, where through the mixing of their Apache and Hualapai cultural backgrounds marks the refashioning of the Indigenous family through the implementation of the Federal Urban Location Program. According to Rosenthal, the U.S. government's Americanization policy attempted to refashion gender roles within Indigenous communities:

Eligibility requirements also showed the tendency of federal officials to use relocation for the promotion of nuclear, patriarchal families. Federal officials allocated women's benefits in relation to prevailing notions about their secondary positions within the American family. Specifically, many Indian women were denied opportunities afforded to men for vocational training and relocation services because officials regarded women as domestic caretakers dependent upon male breadwinners...Relocation officers also teamed with local religious organizations in order to promote middle class, Christian values of temperance and propriety.<sup>75</sup>

Ironically, the majority of American Indian women in *The Exiles* holds down a steady job, while also paying for the Indigenous men's drinking tabs, gambling excursions, and even gas money. The refashioning of the urban periphery to the U.S. government's urban relocation program positions American Indian women within the domestic space of the Indigenous home through their gender. Yet the Indigenous women of Bunker Hill not only maintain the domestic space of their homes, but also exemplify their economic

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<sup>75</sup> Rosenthal, Nicolas. *Reimagining Indian Country: Native American Migration & Identity in Twentieth-Century Los Angeles*. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press., 2012. Print.

independence through their ability to maintain and hold down a job, along with their independence to their marital status. Yvonne's look shows the transition of Indigenous vision to her personal engagement with the space of Bunker Hill. Her look signifies a cause and effect relationship with the Federal Urban Relocation Program. Like many future mothers, Yvonne wants the benefits that the white middle class can provide for her children. Whereas in her Apache community on the San Carlos Reservation in Southeastern Arizona, also known as "Hell's Forty Acres" for its harsh environmental and health conditions, these economic privileges are absent. Thus Yvonne's look characterizes her transition into white culture, where she desires the space of Bunker Hill over her reservation.

Like the Indigenous women of Bunker Hill, the Indigenous men also mark the presence of their look within and outside the domestic space of the Indigenous home. Homer, after receiving his monthly check from the government, immediately proceeds to the liquor store to buy a jug of cheap wine. While waiting for his friend Rico to buy the wine inside, Homer reads a letter from his mother and father on the Hualapai Reservation near Valentine, Arizona. MacKenzie transitions from Bunker Hill to the Indigenous space of Homer's reservation. Homer visualizes his former home, where his family gathers outside their house under a shade tree to avoid the mid-afternoon desert sun. MacKenzie represents the stark contrast between the space of Los Angeles and the Indigenous space of the Hualapai Reservation through Homer's subjective POV. The Hualapai Reservation, barren, isolated, and lacking an economic infrastructure, illustrates the absence of any physical and economic mobility within the reservation. An

Indigenous man on horse back approaches Homer's father. They exchange a brief dialogue in their native language absent any subtitles. Once their conversation ends, the man rides off on his horse into the expansive and desolate space of the reservation. MacKenzie transitions back to Homer waiting outside the liquor store. Through the U.S. Federal Urban Relocation Program, Homer's look now comes from the outside of his reservation. Homer's Indigenous vision presents the alteration of his look as a result of the influence of the Federal Urban Relocation Program. The position of Homer to the space of Bunker Hill represents the transition and influence of American Indians' look to Los Angeles.

The climax of *The Exiles* captures the collective look of its Indigenous characters during a gathering at the infamous "Hill X" overlooking the nightscape of Los Angeles. At "Hill X," American Indian residents of Bunker Hill gather in secret to perform Indigenous spiritualism away from the look of white authorities within Los Angeles. In the previous sequence, Homer drinks in the backseat of a car with some Indigenous friends directly across the street from a bar. Homer explains in voice-over the secrecy for the 49 party, "We like to go places where we won't be watched." According to urban dictionary, 49 parties "among Native Americans [is] an after pow wow party featuring socializing with booze, drugs, and snagging." Homer continues to look at the police officers gathering outside the bar, while they spy on the Indigenous locals inside. The officers eventually arrest some American Indian men and women for public drunkenness once they leave the bar. Once they arrive at "Hill X," the American Indians of Bunker Hill form a large circle within the space of their cars. They begin to play drums, dance,

whoop, and sing. While performing before the backdrop of Los Angeles, American Indians of Bunker Hill move beyond the U.S. government's vision for their cultural identities to their own personal engagement within Los Angeles. At the same time, they continue to support their Indigenous past. The Federal Urban Relocation Program, coupled with Mackenzie's camera, refashions the space of Los Angeles to the Indigenous look of American Indians within Bunker Hill. This Indian policy gives rise to an Indigenous community within America's urban peripheries. The U.S. government's funding of Indigenous mobility attempts to refashion Indigenous identity through an Americanization policy that aims to dissolve reservations. Rather than the eradication of Indigenous communities, the vision of American Indians at "Hill X" marks the evolution of an Indigenous community within Bunker Hill. This Indigenous space counters the goals of the U.S. government and the BIA in the Federal Urban Relocation Program. Through the influence of white culture, and the exposure to the space of Bunker Hill, cities like Los Angeles create a melting pot of cultures within the urban space of America through the mixing of white and Indigenous cultures. At the same time, this assimilation policy breaks down the cultural and geographical barriers to tribalism in America.

Throughout *The Exiles*, Mackenzie's narrative structure revolves around the vision of Yvonne, Homer, and Tommy. Through voice-over narration, POV shots, and Yvonne, Homer, and Tommy's personal engagement with the space of Bunker Hill, Mackenzie reveals the collective subjectivity of the Indigenous residents of Los Angeles during a 49 party. Native American cinema works through the vision of Indigenous characters throughout its narrative structure. *The Exiles* in particular focuses on the

vision of its three Indigenous protagonists, while Mackenzie's camera tracks the movement of Yvonne, Homer, and Tommy within Bunker Hill. The vision of American Indians in *The Exiles* is a way of defining Indigenous identity. At the same time, Mackenzie maps the space of Los Angeles to the look of its Indigenous residents.

*The Business of Fancydancing: Space and Vision*

Through a non-linear narrative structure revolving around the funeral of Mouse, an unemployed fiddle player on the Spokane Indian Reservation, *Fancydancing* follows the intersecting lives of Seymour, Aristotle, Mouse, and Agnes Roth. After their high school graduation, Seymour and Aristotle leave their reservation for Seattle to attend St. Jerome College. Once there, Seymour embraces the opportunities of the white world while Aristotle returns home bitter and angry after two years of school. Sixteen years later, Seymour, Aristotle, and Agnes are reunited after the death of Mouse, a long time friend and acquaintance.

Like *The Exiles*, Alexie's *Fancydancing* uses the camera as an extension of power, but through the control and POV of an American Indian. The opening sequence of *Fancydancing* celebrates the high school graduation of Seymour and Aristotle on the Spokane Indian Reservation. While the two friends celebrate their accomplishment, Mouse, an Indigenous local, videotapes them using his camcorder. Seymour and Aristotle detail their future plans after graduation to Mouse and declare to be "buddies" forever, while preparing to leave the reservation to be college roommates in Seattle, Washington. Mouse, stating he has his GED, turns the camera on himself, declaring he

plans to work in the uranium mines. As for Alexie's non-Indigenous spectators, Mouse's confrontation with his camcorder plays out throughout *Fancydancing*. Mouse's look elicits anger, resentment, and humor through the power relations between his camcorder and spectators. While at the same time, Mouse performs the role of a trickster,<sup>76</sup> misleading others by humorously embellishing on stories and banter to outsiders of his reservation. Mouse's ownership of his camera, along with his ability to control and create images of himself and his community, marks the contrast between Alexie's representation of American Indians and Hollywood's representation of them.

For more than a century, non-Indigenous spectators experienced American Indian identity through the control of Hollywood. The Western in particular symbolizes the long standing relationship between Hollywood and Indigenous communities. The Western shows the lack of control by American Indians of their own representation. Westerns such as *The Searchers* instead represent the visual colonization of American Indian communities. Yet Mouse not only confronts his spectators through his Indigenous look, he also controls and owns the circulation of his own image through his camcorder. Native American cinema like *Fancydancing* resituates Indigenous identity to the vision of American Indian characters. The narrative structure of Native American cinema revolves around the vision of Indigenous protagonists. The modern Western, like *Breaking Bad*, positions Indigenous characters to the outside of white communities, whereas Native American cinema brings Indigenous characters and communities to the

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<sup>76</sup> A trickster in American Indian mythology is an animal who plays tricks on others. The trickster also causes disruption to the order of things. The trickster takes on many physical forms. The body of the coyote is a very popular form to the Spokane tribe of the Pacific Northwest on the Spokane Indian Reservation.

center of its narrative. For Seymour, Aristotle, Mouse, and Agnes, the Indigenous space of their reservation maintains a psychological hold on Alexie's protagonists on and off the reservation. The narrative structure of *Fancydancing* works around the intersecting looks of Alexie's four protagonists.

Alexie focuses on two primary cinematic spaces, the Spokane Indian Reservation, and the space outside Wellpinit in the urban sprawl of Seattle. Alexie continually cuts between these spaces, presenting diverse sets of Indigenous looks in connection to these locations. Alexie also cuts from Seymour's life in Seattle to six sequences involving Mouse and his camcorder throughout *Fancydancing*. While Seymour occupies a space beyond his reservation borders, his former companions continue to influence his life and poetry through their absence. While in Seattle, Mouse and Aristotle frequently reappear through Seymour's look and imagination. Whether in night clubs, conducting poetry readings, participating in AA meetings, or while writing poetry in bed, Seymour must deal with the spirits of Mouse and Aristotle repeatedly haunting him in Seattle. The physical position of these characters to their reservation marks a contrasting POV to the look of each character. The vision of Mouse and Aristotle to his camcorder elicits an array of emotions that results in a double Indigenous look within and outside the space of their reservation.

Once Aristotle arrives home from college, Mouse and Aristotle rekindle their friendship, teaming up to cause havoc on their reservation. Mouse's camcorder becomes an extension of their emotional state to the space in and outside the Spokane Indian Reservation. In Theo Van Alst's essay "Sherman Shoots Alexie: Working with and

without Reservation(s) in *The Business of Fancydancing*.” Alst points out the dual existence between Alexie’s characters, and the space they occupy,

The distinctly different lives of Seymour in the city and of the friends that he has left behind on the reservation illustrate the dual existence Alexie continually indicts and questions throughout the film. This dual existence is constantly under siege in the hands of Alexie...Alexie weaves the untied yet still-related threads of his three storytellers back together through audio and visual means.<sup>77</sup>

Alst references three sequences involving Mouse, Aristotle, and his camcorder. While on the Spokane Indian Reservation, Mouse and Aristotle partake in self-destructive behavior for the production of their homemade movies, *How to Huff Gas* and *How to Make a Bathroom Cleaner Sandwich*. Mouse and Aristotle show spectators the art of huffing gas from a car. Later Mouse and Aristotle make a sandwich at home by spraying bathroom cleaner between two pieces of bread and washing it down with rubbing alcohol. Once off their reservation, Mouse and Aristotle encounter a white pedestrian stranded on the side of the road. They pull over in an attempt to assist the man, and, after a brief exchange of banter and humor, Aristotle proceeds to physically assault him. Mouse records the beating with his camcorder. After Aristotle stops, he invites Mouse to join him. Reluctantly Mouse lays his camera on the ground and he proceeds to kick the man. Alst argues Alexie’s presentation of Seymour, Aristotle, and Mouse’s actions relating to their physical location within and outside the space of the Coeur d’ Alene Indian Reservation comments on the dual existence of their lives. I argue this “dual existence” actually revolves around the double look of Alexie’s Indigenous protagonists. Mouse and

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<sup>77</sup> Ed. Denise Cummings. *Visualities: Perspectives on Contemporary American Indian Film*. Lansing, MI: University of Michigan State Press, 2011: 73. Print.

Aristotle's look reveals the tension between space and Indigenous identity. Here the physical position of Alexie's Indigenous characters within and outside the Indigenous space of their reservation exposes the contrasting vision of American Indians. The look of Aristotle and Mouse shows a physical and verbal confrontation with the space outside their reservation. While on the Spokane Indian Reservation, Mouse and Aristotle take part in self-destructing behavior, while at the same time rejecting the social norms of society.<sup>78</sup>

Seymour's engagement with white culture represents his transition to Seattle, where Seymour sells his poetry to white consumers. Seymour exploits his friends and community by appropriating their lives for his poetry. Rather than defining Seymour's look through anger, resentment, or even his rejection of Seattle like Aristotle, Seymour's look represents the transformation of his identity from the mixing of Indigenous and white cultures. Seymour leaves behind his former Indigenous space, while embracing the urban space of Seattle. More than a decade after his graduation, Seymour is put on display by a Seattle book store, where he performs as an Indian poet to promote the release of his newly published book. Seymour reads aloud from *All My Relations* in the front store window, as white patrons walk by and observe his performance. A sign outside the window states "National Indian month," as Seymour reads aloud from his book:

How to write the great American Indian novel? This is how to write the great American Indian novel: All the Indians must have tragic features, tragic eyes, arms. Their hands and fingers must be

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<sup>78</sup>Columpar, Corinn. *Unsettling Sights: The Fourth World on Film* Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois Press., 2010: 179. Print.

tragic when they reach for tragic food. The hero must be a half breed, half white, half Indian preferably from a horse culture. He should often weep alone...In the great American Indian novel, when it's finally written, all of the white people will be Indians, and all the Indians will be ghosts.<sup>79</sup>

While sporting a three piece suit and a new trendy hair style, Seymour's physical exterior marks the influence of his new urban surroundings. Throughout *Fancydancing* Seymour puts himself on display for white spectators through book signings, public readings, and speaking engagements. Seymour is in the business of selling Indigenous Seymour. Seymour embraces and adopts the urban space of Seattle as his new home. Seymour appropriates the lives of his Indigenous community, along with Mouse and Aristotle's identities through his poetry. While Seymour continues to read aloud from his book, Alexie cuts between intertitles of quotes from critical reviews of Seymour's poetry. The intertitles show the division between the white and Indigenous literary establishments through their critical reception of his work. The first intertitle quotes from the *New York Literature Quarterly*, a popular contemporary American poetry magazine established in 1933 by William M. Packard, "Seymour Polatkin's poetry is funny, angry, authentic, and ultimately redemptive." The second intertitle quotes from an Indigenous website, Indianz.com, "Seymour Polatkin is full of shit." While cutting between Seymour's reading, along with the critical reception of his work, Alexie presents the contrast between the acceptance of his poetry from his Indigenous and non-Indigenous critics. Seymour reaches white audiences seen from multiple sequences of Seymour speaking and reading to large groups of white spectators. Yet the absence of Indigenous spectators

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<sup>79</sup> *The Business of Fancydancing*. Dir. Sherman Alexie. FallsApart Production, 2002.

at his public readings, coupled with the critical reception of his poetry, presents the division between Seymour and his American Indian readers.

Mouse and Aristotle in particular find Seymour's poetry and his acceptance of white culture as an act of betrayal. While on the Spokane Indian Reservation, Mouse and Aristotle read from Seymour's book of poetry. They express animosity and resentment towards Seymour's work. Seymour and Mouse identify themselves and the Indigenous space of their reservation within Seymour's narrative. Mouse reads from Seymour's poetry and states, "They're all lies... They're all my stories. It's like I'm dead: Sing me a *Memorial Song*." With camcorder in hand, Mouse records their berating of Seymour's work. Mouse directs his look through his camcorder. Through Mouse's subjective POV, Mouse's camcorder captures Seymour's image on the back cover of his book. Mouse's look interrogates and confronts the image of his former friend, while Mouse and Aristotle conclude their male bonding with the burning of Seymour's work in their campfire. In Corinn Columpar's *Unsettling Sights: The Fourth World on Film*, Columpar examines *Fancydancing* and the relationship between Alexie's spectators and Mouse's look,

...the point of view that the spectator necessarily adopts is thoroughly fleshed out: it is identified with a single body, a particular voice, and a specific subject position, all of which are enveloped by the social context caught on camera. In short, the viewer's identification with Mouse is doubled...the moments in Mouse's footage wherein he both looks and is looked at produce a double identification that is compounded such that Mouse is, at least temporarily, the viewer's only point of reference.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> Columpar, Corinn. *Unsettling Sights: The Fourth World on Film* Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois Press., 2010: 80. Print.

Alexie's spectators are not only privileged to Mouse's look through his camcorder, but Mouse also turns the camcorder on himself. Mouse confronts his spectators through his look, while also allowing himself to be looked at. Columpar, referencing a quote from Joanne Hearne, argues Alexie "forges a collective identity based on narrative as well as on image."<sup>81</sup> While living within and outside the space of their reservation, Alexie shows these characters' interconnectedness to each other through the present and past revolving around the Spokane Indian Reservation. Alexie cuts between the lives of Seymour, Aristotle, and Mouse, revealing the contrast between the look of these characters and their personal engagement with the space in and outside their reservation. I argue that Alexie presents his narrative and Indigenous identity to the collective vision of his American Indian protagonists. *Fancydancing* uncovers the confrontation between space and identity to the vision of American Indians.

### *Conclusion*

*Fancydancing* and *The Exiles* represent the contrast of the Indigenous look once American Indians leave the space of their reservations. In *Fancydancing*, Alexie shows the division between Seymour and Mouse from their position within and outside of the Spokane Indian Reservation. Mouse's look illustrates the friction between his position within his Indigenous community and the space outside of his reservation borders. Mouse's camcorder represents his confrontation with Seymour on the Spokane Indian Reservation. While on the inside of their Indigenous community, Mouse and Aristotle reject Seymour's engagement with white culture by chastising and burning Seymour's

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<sup>81</sup> Ibid. 180.

book. Mouse and Aristotle also refuse to engage with the space outside their borders by continuing to eke out a living on their reservation, while criticizing Seymour for “selling out” his community to outsiders. Alexie depicts the division between the look of his Indigenous characters through their willingness or lack thereof to engage with the space outside of their reservation. Mouse’s camcorder is an extension of his vision and emotions in connection to the space in and outside of his community. While Mouse and Aristotle continue to engage with the space of Coeur d’Alene, Seymour turns his back on his former friends and community to embrace the comforts of Seattle. Alexie presents the confrontation between space and the Indigenous look of his American Indian protagonists to the position of their Indigenous communities.

Again in *The Exiles* the position of American Indians to their Indigenous communities shows the transition of Indigenous identity. Through voice-over narration and POV shots, the Indigenous look of Homer, Yvonne, and Tommy depicts the transition of Indigenous identity with their personal engagement with the space of Bunker Hill. Rock n’ roll, liquor, gambling, and window shopping represent the mixing of Indigenous and white cultures in Bunker Hill, and the transition of the Indigenous look to the acceptance of and participation with Americanization policy. The influence of the U.S. government from the space outside their reservation borders attempts to refashion Indigenous identity to the ideals and aspirations of the white middle class. American Indians of Bunker Hill define their engagement with white culture, whereas, at the climax of *The Exiles* at the gathering on “Hill X,” MacKenzie represents the mixing of Indigenous cultures of the United States rather than the vanishing of Indigenous identity.

Both Alexie and MacKenzie represent the contrast of American Indian identity through the vision of their Indigenous characters once they leave the space of their reservations. Native American cinema like *Fancydancing* and *The Exiles* counters Hollywood's representation of American Indians through the vision of its Indigenous protagonists.

Hollywood television like *Breaking Bad*, on the other hand, positions American Indians to the background of the modern Western, while the narrative structure of *Breaking Bad* revolves around the vision of white protagonists to American Indian characters. While some Indigenous characters are given access to their own personal look, the vision of American Indians continues to reveal the influence of white society in relation to white characters' actions rather than their own. American Indians are left to deal with the actions and consequences of white protagonists in the modern Western. Once again the position of Indigenous communities to white society comes from the outside, while American Indians now play a secondary role to their former colonizers instead of acting as their primary antagonists. Yet Hollywood continues to present the disruption of Indigenous communities through violence. Violence in Hollywood film and television relating to the death and destruction of interracial marriages and homes becomes a way of seeing American Indians in the domestic space of their domiciles. Hollywood's position to the domestic space of American Indian homes comes from the outside. Yet once the camera gains access to the interior of this familial space, Indigenous dwellings collapse under the pressure of violence, showing the instability of mixed blood families in America.

Native American cinema, however, presents a different way of seeing American Indians in the interior of their homes. In the following chapter, I will examine the relationship of Hollywood and Native American cinema to the domestic space of Indigenous homes. The position of the camera to the familial space of Indigenous dwellings defines the stark contrast between Hollywood and Native American cinema's presentation of this space. While Hollywood presents the destruction of American Indian homes as the result of interracial marriage, Native American cinema shows American Indian communities dealing with familial trauma in relation to social and economic issues within their reservation. Native American cinema like *Skins* and *Smoke Signals* shows the source of empowerment for American Indian characters comes from the domestic space of their homes through acts of Indigenous and Christian spiritualism, mourning, and fry bread.

## Chapter 2: Native American Cinema and the Domestic Space of Indigenous Homes

Throughout Chris Eyre's body of work, be it *Smoke Signals*, *Skins*, *Skinwalkers*,<sup>82</sup> *Edge of America*,<sup>83</sup> *A Thief of Time*,<sup>84</sup> *A Thousand Roads*,<sup>85</sup> or *We Shall Remain*<sup>86</sup> the political, social, and economic dichotomies between space and Indigenous characters on the inside and outside of the familial space of American Indian communities defines the political and physical position of Eyre's camera. For Eyre, the domestic space of Indigenous homes presents a way of seeing Indigenous characters. Eyre's Indigenous characters still see the effects of visual colonization through popular culture like the rebroadcasting of the Western from television sets inside their domiciles. Yet the Indigenous protagonists of *Smoke Signals* and *Skins* empower themselves and their communities in the familial space of their homes. Eyre reveals at the end of Victor and Thomas' journey in *Smoke Signals* that the source of their empowerment comes from the domestic space of their reservations. Indigenous and Christian spiritualism for these Indigenous characters presents a way of seeing American Indians in the interior of their Indigenous communities.

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<sup>82</sup> *Skinwalkers*. Dir. Chris Eyre. Carlton International Media, 2002.

<sup>83</sup> *Edge of America*. Dir. Chris Eyre. Showtime Networks, 2003.

<sup>84</sup> *A Thief of Time*. Dir. Chris Eyre. Granada Film Productions, 2004.

<sup>85</sup> *A Thousand Roads*. Dir. Chris Eyre. Mandalay Entertainment, 2005.

<sup>86</sup> *We Shall Remain*. Dir. Chris Eyre. Firelight Media Inc., 2009.

The opening intertitles to *Smoke Signals*<sup>87</sup> state “Coeur d’Alene Indian Reservation, Idaho 1976.” The opening sequence dissolves to a house fire. While celebrating “white people’s independence,” Thomas Builds-a-Fire explains in voice-over narration the familial trauma of a house fire at his mother and father’s home on the Coeur d’Alene Indian Reservation. According to Thomas, his mother and father hosted the largest house party in Coeur d’Alene Tribal history, when an unexplained house fire broke out inside their home. He explains that Arnold Joseph, father of Victor Joseph, saved Thomas from the house fire. Thomas’ mother and father were consumed in the fire. Thomas continues, “...And Victor Joseph was just a baby too, when his father saved me from that fire. You know, there are some children who aren’t really children at all. They’re just pillars of flame that burn everything they touch. And there are some children who are just pillars of ash...that fall apart if you touch’em. Me and Victor, we were children born of flame and ash.” Thomas goes on to detail the after effects of the house fire, when Arnold Joseph would eventually “vanish” from the reservation forever. This opening sequences of *Smoke Signals* shows the destabilization of the domestic space of Joseph’s and Builds-a-Fire’s households.

Throughout *Smoke Signals*, forgiveness, both within Indigenous and Christian spiritualism, presents a way of seeing American Indians in the domestic space of Indigenous communities. After twenty-two years, Arnold continues to influence the lives of Victor and Thomas. Arnold’s abrupt death prompts Victor and Thomas to take a journey to bring home Arnold’s ashes, a trip that results in the stabilization of the

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<sup>87</sup> *Smoke Signals* is based on the short story by Sherman Alexie, “This Is What It Means to Say Phoenix, Arizona,” from his book *Lone Ranger and Tonto Fistfight in Heaven*. Sherman Alexie also wrote the screenplay for *Smoke Signals*.

domestic space of their Indigenous dwellings through the process of healing, empowerment, and the forgiveness of Indigenous and Christian spiritualism.

Near the end of Thomas and Victor's journey, Suzy Song, a neighbor and friend of Arnold's, reveals to Victor his father's role in the house fire that killed Thomas' mother and father. Arnold's guilt prompts his exit from the reservation. Arnold's departure leaves a significant void in the lives of Victor and Thomas who remain forever linked through Arnold's mistake. Indigenous and Christian spiritualism fills the void left by Arnold's departure from the familial space. The power of familial connectedness and Indigenous spiritualism within and outside the reservation provides Victor and Thomas with a path to forgiveness. Eyre presents the domestic space of Indigenous homes as a sanctuary revolving around family relations, Indigenous and Christian spiritualism, the Oglala Sioux clan system, and forgiveness. Eyre's camera returns to the familial space of American Indian homes throughout *Smoke Signals* and *Skins*. The position of Eyre's camera within this space lingers from a short distance to his Indigenous protagonists, while still sharing in the intimacy of their conversations. Eyre also characterizes this space as a location of abuse revolving around alcohol, violence, and poverty. Arnold's guilt manifests itself in a drinking habit that results in the destruction of his marriage culminating in a violent confrontation with his wife Arlene within the domestic space of their living room. While this social crisis within Indigenous homes in *Smoke Signals* and *Skins* incites Eyre's Indigenous characters to exit the home, he also shows their return to the domestic space of their communities at the end of *Smoke Signals* and *Skins*. Eyre's American Indian characters continually return to the domestic space of their homes,

empowering themselves and finding forgiveness within the family. *Skins* defines this space as the Oglala Sioux clan system or *tiospaye*, "...a small group of persons who are related to each other."<sup>88</sup> In the film, Rudy Yellow Lodge honors the domestic code of Oglala Sioux revolving around his clan by caring for his alcoholic brother. Rudy's identity revolves around his clan. When one member of an Oglala family becomes ill, all family members must band together to care for and fill the role of that sick member. Eyre presents the domestic space of the Yellow Lodge family as home to compassion, abuse, poverty, and ultimately forgiveness.

The significance of "domestic space" varies from tribe to tribe. This term by no means has a set, singular, or definitive definition. The two films that I will examine in this chapter- *Smoke Signals* and *Skins*-deal with two different tribes in the United States. Each film represents the domestic space of Indigenous homes differently, in relation to that tribe's history, culture, and religion.

Native American cinema like *Smoke Signals* and *Skins* represent a way of seeing American Indians within the familial space of their communities. While chapter one discussed Native American cinema's narrative structure and its relationship to the gaze of American Indians, chapter two argues that one of the differences between Native American cinema and its Hollywood counterpart lies in the different presentation of the interior of Indigenous homes. Rather than seeing American Indians from the outside of their communities, from the point of view of white protagonists, Native American cinema

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<sup>88</sup> One Feather, Vivian. *Tiospaye*. Pine Ridge, South Dakota: Oglala Sioux Culture Center., 1974: 1. Print.

utilizes the familial space of the Indigenous homes as a place in which to see Indigenous characters.

Hollywood television and cinema like *Jonah Hex*, *Jeremiah Johnson*,<sup>89</sup> and *The Searchers* depict the destabilization of Indigenous communities and homes due to interracial marriage, genocide, and assimilation. Rather than showing the domestic spaces of Native communities from the interior, Hollywood positions the camera from the outside, as if to mark the political, social, and economic POV of the white protagonists. Once the camera and white protagonists gain access to the inside of Indigenous communities, white characters dismantle the homes through interracial marriage, violence, and assimilation. This chapter explores Hollywood and Native American cinema's representation of the domestic space of Indigenous homes.

*Smoke Signals: A New Kind of Indigenous Spiritualism*

Before their relocation to three separate reservations in Washington and Northern Idaho, the Spokane Indian Tribe, once a fishing and gathering community, presided over three million acres of land along the Spokane River, the Columbia River, and the Grand Spokane Falls in Washington and Northern Idaho.<sup>90</sup> The Spokane Indian Tribe used these rivers as a spiritual gathering place for the tribal members. The Spokane Indians at this time were made up of three bands known as the Upper, Middle, and Lower Spokane Indians.<sup>91</sup> The rivers and salmon were a central source of spiritual, economic, and natural

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<sup>89</sup> *Jeremiah Johnson*. Dir. Sydney Pollack. Warner Bros. Pictures, 1972.

<sup>90</sup> *Spokane Tribe Indians*. Web. 25 January 2013.

<<http://www.spokanetribe.com/>

<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

resources for the tribe. In January 1881, President Rutherford B. Hayes declared 157,376 acres of land in Washington and Northern Idaho the new home for the Spokane Indians.<sup>92</sup>

Today the Spokane Indian Tribe has three reservations, the Coeur d'Alene Indian Reservation seen in *Smoke Signals*, the Flathead Indian Reservation, and the Colville Indian Reservation. The Spokane Indians of *Smoke Signals* must now rely on new economic and natural resources for their stability. Yet the destabilization of the familial space of the Builds-a-Fire and Joseph households leaves Thomas and Victor unconsciously searching for a solution to repair their homes from Arnold's mistake.

After Arnold leaves the reservation, memory and trauma are interwoven in the narrative structure of *Smoke Signals* through flashbacks. Thomas and Victor, on the road to recover Arnold's ashes from Arizona, attempt to piece together their past, engaging in oral storytelling that is a consistent feature of tribal culture throughout the film. Thomas' stories focus on Victor's mother and father. Thomas' stories are told within the domestic space of Indigenous homes, in voice-over narration, and in various locations on the road to Arizona. On the road, Thomas improvises. While at a diner, Victor listens to Thomas recount a past encounter with his father. Young Thomas observes the Spokane Falls River outside the Coeur d'Alene Indian Reservation from a bridge:

Thomas: I had this dream you know? And this dream told me to go to Spokane to stand by the falls...But I just watched the water. It was beautiful. I kept hopin' I'd see some salmon, but there ain't any salmon in that river no more. And then I heard this voice.

Arnold: Hey, what the hell you doin' here?

Thomas: It was your dad, yellin' at me. And he keeps yellin'.

Arnold: I asked you what the hell you're doin' here.

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<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

Thomas: So I told him I was waitin' for a vision, and he just laughed.

Arnold: All you're gonna get around here is mugged.

Thomas: So then he took me to Denny's. It was afternoon, you know, but I still had the grand slam breakfast... You know, sometimes it's a good day to die, sometimes it's a good day to have breakfast.

Throughout *Smoke Signals*, Thomas makes several references to Christian symbolism such as salmon, water, and the act of "rising" within his stories. Since the death of Thomas' mother and father, along with Arnold's departure, salmon from the local Coeur d'Alene Indian Reservation Rivers are absent. This tragedy revolving around the familial space of the Builds-a-Fire and Joseph homes has left a spiritual emptiness within the Coeur d'Alene Indian community. The absence of salmon from the Spokane Indian Rivers symbolizes an economic and social crisis within the Coeur d'Alene Reservation. After the expansion of the American West in the nineteenth century, Indigenous tribes like the Spokane were economically fractured and isolated from the nation. The reservation system, introduced after the failure of U.S. extermination policies, continued to cripple, undermine, and influence the sovereign rights of Indigenous communities. The former rivers of the Spokane Indians are now on the outside to the Coeur d'Alene Reservation. Spokane Indians like Thomas and Arnold must travel outside their communities to see their former rivers. The economic breakdown within the reservation is emphasized throughout *Smoke Signals*, where even leaving the reservation for Spokane Indians is nearly impossible through lack of funds, unemployment, or lack of mobile transportation. According to Thomas, if Indians leave, they never come back, suggesting the space outside the reservation borders are more economically livable. A young

Thomas waits for a “vision” that never arrives near a scared Spokane site that never comes. Ironically, the vision or answer Thomas seeks comes in the form of Arnold. Yet unbeknownst to Thomas and Arnold, the solution to the repairing of their households lies within themselves and the familial space of their homes. Throughout *Smoke Signals*, Eyre defines his Indigenous characters in relation to the domestic space of their dwellings. Eyre’s camera is located within the familial space of the Coeur d’Alene Indian Reservation, characterizing the economic and social crisis within Victor and Thomas’ households. Once the stabilization to the Builds-a-Fire and Joseph domiciles occurs at the end of *Smoke Signals*, during Arnold’s homecoming, the salmon of the Coeur d’Alene Indian Reservation “rises” again. The metaphorical Christ-like resurrection of the salmon to the Coeur d’Alene Rivers occurs once Victor releases Arnold’s ashes over the same bridge and river where Arnold and young Thomas met nearly twenty years prior to Arnold’s return.

After Thomas finishes his story, Victor retreats to the bathroom where he has a flashback. Thomas’ stories continually evoke Victor’s childhood trauma throughout *Smoke Signals*. Victor confronts the memory of his father’s dramatic exit from the reservation. While young Victor watches a Western in his living room, Victor’s mother and father fight over money relating to Arnold’s desire to buy alcohol. Arnold eventually gets physical with Arlene, and she responds by asking Arnold to leave. Arnold abruptly collects his things and walks out. Victor chases after his father, while Arnold drives off in his pickup truck forever. In “Indians Watching Indians on TV,” Joanne Hearne discusses the influence of white dominant culture on the domestic space of Indigenous

homes in reference to this particular sequence: “Victor’s parents, as they fight, share the frame with the television set, so that the young Victor witnesses both the mass-mediated images of the Western and the dissolution of his family at the same time. The film frame links these two scenes of conflict as a single traumatic spectacle, infusing the genocidal violence of the Western with the intimate psychic wounds of domestic violence and vice versa.”<sup>93</sup> The familial space of young Victor’s home revolves around Arnold’s abuse of alcohol, coupled with his guilt for the house fire. The house fire triggers not only the destabilization of the Build-a-Fire and Joseph homes, but also the disruption of the entire Coeur d’Alene Indian Reservation, as seen by the disappearance of the salmon from their rivers. The absence of any closure to the house fire and Arnold’s “vanishing” from the reservation leaves Victor and Thomas in limbo. Victor’s anger consumes his life up until the return of his father’s ashes to the Spokane Falls River. Yet Victor’s slow process of mourning, empowerment, and ultimately forgiveness rely on three simple ingredients: lard, flour, and oil.

*Smoke Signals: Fry Bread Power*

Throughout *Smoke Signals*, fry bread, especially when served within the home, has deep ties to Indigenous spirituality. For the Coeur d’Alene Tribe, fry bread provides a central source of food. The presentation of fry bread within the familial space of Indigenous dwellings symbolizes acts of healing, empowerment, mourning, and Indigenous and Christian spiritualism. Once news spreads on the reservation of Arnold’s

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<sup>93</sup> Ed. Denise Cummings. *Visualities: Perspectives on Contemporary American Indian Film*. Lansing, MI: University of Michigan State Press, 2011: 45. Print.

death, the Joseph and Builds-a-Fire households commence with the cooking of fry bread. In the same way, the production of fry bread within the domestic space of Indigenous dwellings serves as an act of mourning, as when Arnold shortens his hair after following the death of Thomas' parents. Fry bread shows the process of healing and mourning within Indigenous spiritualism. Once the news of Arnold's death spreads throughout the reservation, the commencing of fry bread making occurs within the Joseph's and Builds-the-Fire's homes. Here the mixing of Indigenous and Christian spiritualism within the familial space of Indigenous homes begins.

Fry bread mediates a long-standing relationship between the Spokane Indians and the U.S. government. The introduction of fry bread to American Indians came from the U.S. government in the nineteenth century. Through U.S. government treaties, the government provided subsidies such as lard and flour to Indigenous tribes in the United States for food and economic assistance. After American Indians were stripped of their lands and natural resources, American Indians were forced to improvise. The creation of fry bread within Indigenous communities arose amidst the turmoil of the U.S. government's extermination and removal policies. Fry bread in *Smoke Signals* continually appears in the domestic space of Indigenous homes, while evoking Indigenous oral storytelling, spirituality, and familial connectedness. Fry bread in American Indian communities transcends the limitations of U.S. Indian policies. Indigenous characters in *Smoke Signals* use the economic resources of the U.S. government to define the domestic space of their homes by the mixing of white and

Indigenous spiritualism. Fry bread also replaces salmon as their primary source of food since the Spokane Indians' removal to the Coeur d'Alene Indian Reservation.

Thomas, Arlene and Arnold share a unique relationship to Jesus Christ through images of fry bread and salmon. Once Thomas and Victor finally arrive at Arnold's Arizona trailer, Suzy Song, an American Indian, and a friend and neighbor of Arnold's, invites Thomas and Victor over for dinner. Suzy cooks and serves fry bread, while they watch a Western on her television set in her living room. Thomas comments: "the only thing more pathetic than Indians on TV is Indians watching Indians on TV." The Western triggers Thomas' remarks, igniting a debate between Victor and Thomas over who makes the best fry bread between Suzy and Victor's mom. According to Thomas, Arlene's fry bread is "...so good, they use it for communion back home. Arlene Joseph makes some Jesus Fry Bread. Fry bread that can walk across water. Fry bread risin' from the dead." The Western evokes a story from Thomas. Through oral storytelling, Thomas explains the history of Arlene's infamous fry bread. According to Thomas, Arlene miraculously fed 100 Indians with only 50 pieces of fry bread during a feast on their reservation. Thomas continues to tell his story as the Western plays in Suzy's living room accompanied by a flashback of Arlene preparing for the meal. Arlene must figure out how to feed 100 Indians with only 50 pieces of fry bread. In dramatic fashion, Arlene announces to everyone the dilemma, while offering a solution. Arlene raises a large piece of fry bread over her head, ripping it in half and tossing the pieces to the guests in off-screen space. Arlene performs as a Christ like figure within the Indigenous space of the reservation. Thomas retells a well known biblical story, in which Jesus Christ fed

4,000 of his disciples with only seven loaves of bread and a couple of fish, while giving a sermon for three days in the countryside. According to the Gospels of Mark and Matthew, “Jesus told the crowd to sit down on the ground. Then he took the seven loaves and the fish, and when he had given thanks, he broke them and gave them to the disciples, and they in turn to the people. They all ate and were satisfied...”<sup>94</sup>

Thomas repeatedly interweaves oral storytelling and Christian spirituality within his narrative. Thomas, Victor, and Suzy define themselves within the space of her living room through oral storytelling, coupled with Indigenous and Christian spiritualism. The Western represents the presence of white dominant culture within the domestic space of Suzy’s home, producing images of American Indians for the consumption of white spectators. This popular genre also presents the visual colonization of American Indians through its depiction of genocide, removal, and assimilation of Indigenous communities. The position of the camera in Westerns like the one playing in Suzy’s living room continually comes from outside the Indigenous communities. Native American cinema, on the other hand, positions the camera to the interior of Indigenous homes like Suzy, Thomas, and Victor’s. Eyre shows a way of seeing American Indians within a single frame by pairing two contrasting visions of Indigenous characters. Hollywood presents the destruction of Indigenous communities by violence and genocide, whereas Native American cinema promotes the interconnectedness of the familial space of Indigenous homes. Native American cinema presents American Indians in the present. Hollywood cinema, however, positions Indigenous characters in a past that revolves around the

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<sup>94</sup> *The Holy Bible*, King James Version.  
New York, New York: American Bible Society., 1999: 14:13-21. Print.

colonization of Indigenous communities. Hollywood cinema like the Western also presents the “vanishing” of American Indians from the American landscape.

Suzy has a hidden agenda with her fry bread. At this point, Thomas and Victor still remain at odds with their past and with Arnold. After twenty-two years, Suzy holds the secret to the cause of the house fire, along with Arnold’s motivation for “vanishing” from the reservation forever. Suzy reveals to Victor his father’s role and remorse for the fire. She challenges Victor to confront his father by entering Arnold’s trailer, saying: “He didn’t mean to die here, Victor. He wanted to go home. He always wanted to go home. He’s waiting for you, Victor.” Victor eventually concedes and enters Arnold’s trailer where he finds a photo of Arnold, Arlene and himself inside his father’s wallet, along with a one word inscription written on the back of the photo, “home.” Victor then proceeds to cut his hair with his father’s pocket knife. The following morning, Victor and Thomas begin their journey home in Arnold’s pickup truck. After an abrupt wreck and a brief run in with the local sheriff, Victor finally apologizes to Thomas for his anger and his father’s mistake. Yet Arnold’s pickup truck won’t start. Here Eyre connects the act of forgiveness to Victor, Thomas, and Arnold through parallel editing. While Victor unsuccessfully attempts to start his father’s truck, Eyre cuts to Suzy burning a bundle of dried sage in front of Arnold’s door way, tossing the bundle of herbs in to Arnold’s trailer, and setting his home aflame. While cutting to and from Suzy and Victor, Arnold’s pickup truck finally starts at the same time Suzy burns the sage. This act of Indigenous spiritualism, also known as “smudging,” attempts to purify the space of Arnold’s temporary home. Again Eyre links Indigenous and Christian spiritualism to the

familial space of Indigenous homes with the images of “smudging” and Victor and Thomas’ act of Christian forgiveness between one another and with Arnold. Aside from Arnold’s ashes, Arnold’s pickup truck represents an extension of Victor’s father. Once Suzy throws the bundle of sage into Arnold’s trailer, Victor, Thomas, and Arnold can now finish their journey home. The purification of Arnold’s former domestic space seen from the burning of Arnold’s trailer and the ignition of his truck symbolizes the act of moving forward for Victor and Thomas to forgiveness. Eyre cuts between Suzy, Victor, and Thomas, showing the link to her actions and the turning over of Arnold’s truck. Victor now expresses warmth and empathy for his father. Once Victor and Thomas arrive at their reservation, Victor tells Thomas: “He didn’t mean to, Thomas.” Throughout *Smoke Signals*, Victor expresses anger and animosity towards Arnold. Yet directly after the starting of Arnold’s truck and the burning of his trailer, Victor and Thomas re-connect their friendship, while sharing their love for Victor’s father. For Thomas and Victor, the stabilization of their homes now relies on the return of Arnold to the Coeur d’Alene Indian Reservation.

Once Victor and Thomas arrive at home, Victor proceeds to pour half of Arnold’s ashes into Thomas’ money jar. While overwhelmed with emotions, Thomas responds by stating, “Victor, I’m gonna travel to Spokane Falls for one last time...and toss these ashes into the river, and your father will rise like a salmon. He’ll rise!” Victor remarks, “...I never thought of my father as a salmon.” After Thomas returns to the domestic space of his grandmother’s home, Thomas’ grandmother embraces him, saying: “Tell me what’s going to happen.” Eyre then dissolves from this sequence to an aerial shot of the

Spokane Falls River, where his camera follows the river upstream. In voice-over narration, Thomas reads aloud from a Dick Lourie poem, “How do we forgive our fathers?” Eyre’s camera eventually finds Victor sitting on the same bridge where Arnold and Thomas once met. Victor proceeds to empty his father’s ashes in to the Spokane Falls River, where, symbolically, the “resurrection” of Arnold and the salmon of the Coeur d’Alene Indian Reservation finally return home.

Through Indigenous mourning, empowerment, and ultimately forgiveness, Victor’s final act stabilizes the familial space of the Coeur d’Alene Indian Reservation, connecting it to the rising of Arnold and the salmon in the Spokane Indian Rivers. Arnold not only shares a unique reference to a fish that carries spiritual power to the Coeur d’Alene community, but also with Jesus Christ. The fish is a well known Christian symbol. Throughout the Gospels, the association with fish and water to Christianity revolves around several stories involving Jesus. Yet Eyre combines two spiritual symbols of the Spokane Indians and Christianity. The Christ like “resurrection” in the domestic space of Indigenous homes occurs in the form of a Spokane Indian. The hybridity of these characters’ identities and spiritualism revolves around colonialism. For Indigenous tribes in the United States, Christianity was introduced through Indian boarding schools. After the attempted extermination of American Indians, along with the transition to assimilation policies by the U.S. government, American Indians were forced to abandon or conceal their traditional Indigenous spiritualism. American Indians were forced to accept white culture within their societies. Indigenous communities relied on their ability to adapt to their newly established social, political, and spiritual

environments for their survival. For the Spokane Tribe, post-modern Indigenous spiritualism is influenced by white and Indigenous cultures. In “Smoke Signals: Locating Sherman Alexie’s Narratives of American Indian Identity,” Leo Zonn and Dick Winchell argue the Indigenous and Christian influences within *Smoke Signals* revolve around Alexie’s personal relationship to pop culture and his reservation: “...[Alexie] grew up on a reservation in the Northwest, [he] is part of the TV generation and also schooled in the literary classics, [he] has a Catholic father and a Protestant mother, he has been just as influenced by the Western Civ tribal tradition as by the Spokane and Coeur d’Alene ones, just as shaped by pop culture as by reservation culture.”<sup>95</sup> Alexie put it quite simply by stating: “I’m the first practitioner of the Brady Bunch school of Native American literature. I’m a twenty-first century Indian who believes in the twenty-first century.”<sup>96</sup>

*Skins: Tiospaye*

In *Skins*,<sup>97</sup> two Oglala Sioux brothers, Rudy Yellow Lodge, a Pine Ridge Tribal police officer, and Mogie Yellow Lodge, an unemployed alcoholic, endure the social and economic conditions of Pine Ridge in their separate ways. Rudy secretly moonlights as a vigilante within and outside the borders of his reservation, while also desperately trying to take care of his alcoholic brother and his family. Mogie, a Vietnam veteran, father, and second generation alcoholic, escapes his childhood and battle trauma through excessive drinking and humor. Eyre presents the familial trauma of the Yellow Lodge

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<sup>95</sup> Ed. Tim Cresswell and Deborah Dixon. *Engaging Film: Geographies of Mobility and Identity*. New York, New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers: 155. Print.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid.

<sup>97</sup> Chris Eyre’s *Skins* is based on the novel of the same name by Adrian C. Louis, an Oglala Sioux Indian who grew up on the Pine Ridge Reservation.

family against the backdrop of the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation. The domestic problems in the Yellow Lodge home reflect the many social and economic issues within Pine Ridge. Pine Ridge endures systemic abuse relating to alcohol, violence, and poverty. Eyre positions his camera within the domestic space of the Yellow Lodge home to present some of the overall problems facing the Pine Ridge community today.

In the opening shot of *Skins*, Eyre introduces his spectators to one of his primary protagonists and antagonists, the Pine Ridge Reservation of South Dakota. Over a voice-over narration that states: “In the shadow of America’s most popular tourist attraction,” Eyre uses old news footage of Pine Ridge, and sequences taken from the documentary film *Incident at Oglala*<sup>98 99</sup> to establish the dichotomy between the Indigenous space of Pine Ridge and the space outside its borders. Eyre highlights the social, political, and economic landscape to Pine Ridge as desolate, barren, and economically fractured. He accompanies these images with reproduced news footage of journalists describing issues of poverty, alcohol abuse, and violence within Pine Ridge. According to Eyre’s voice-over, Pine Ridge is 81 miles south from the Mount Rushmore National Monument, and two miles north from the Nebraska state line and the town of White Clay.<sup>100</sup> Eyre’s voice-over continues, citing the extensive violence, high unemployment, low life expectancy, and drug and alcohol abuse on the reservation. These statistics define not

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<sup>98</sup> *Incident at Oglala*. Dir. Michael Apted. Spanish Fork Motion Picture, 1992.

<sup>99</sup> Directed by British filmmaker Michael Apted, *Incident at Oglala* examines the murder of two FBI agents on the Pine Ridge Reservation in the summer of 1975. The investigation of the murders led to the arrest of Leonard Peltier, an Oglala Sioux Indian and member of AIM, the American Indian Movement. Peltier is still currently incarcerated in the Leavenworth Penitentiary. Peltier is currently appealing his life sentence.

<sup>100</sup> Some of the social problems within Pine Ridge stem from White Clay, Nebraska. White Clay is the primary source of alcohol consumption on the reservation, because the buying and selling of alcohol are prohibited within Pine Ridge.

only the social and economic crisis in Pine Ridge, but also a crisis revolving around the familial space of the Oglala Sioux Nation. The final images present arrests of American Indians on Pine Ridge for public drunkenness, coupled with an interview of an American Indian man ascribing the current economic state of Pine Ridge to broken treaties by the U.S. government, “I believe America is big enough. It’s powerful enough. It’s rich enough. You know...to really deal with the American Indian the way it should be done.” Eyre opens *Skins* with reference to the social crisis within the domestic space of the Pine Ridge reservation community.

Throughout *Skins*, Eyre defines the domestic space of Oglala Sioux homes as full of abuse relating to alcohol, poverty, and domestic violence. While Rudy patrols in his tribal police car, he receives multiple dispatches referring to domestic violence, public drunkenness, and even murder on Pine Ridge. Eyre presents flashbacks to Rudy and Mogie’s childhood, while revealing systemic abuse within the Yellow Lodge home. Rudy and Mogie’s mother, Evangeline, and father, Sonny, succumb to the effects of alcohol and domestic abuse. While driving home, Rudy undergoes a flashback to his childhood trauma on Pine Ridge. Eyre cuts to Evangeline and Sonny watching their sons play a football game from the Pine Ridge High School football stands. Sonny and Evangeline drink from a bottle of liquor hidden in her purse, while Rudy and Mogie orchestrate a touchdown for their team. Sonny eventually becomes belligerent, proceeding to physically assault Evangeline. Mogie and Rudy rush to the scene, separating their mother and father. Later that evening, at the Yellow Lodge home, Sonny returns. While still wearing their football pads and jerseys, Mogie strikes his father over

the head, knocking him unconscious. Rudy and Mogie then throw their father in the back of their pickup truck, while Evangeline waits inside. Eyre lingers on young Rudy and Mogie, taking in the scene on their front lawn and porch. Eyre then transitions back to Rudy in his car. The familial space of the Yellow Lodge home endures domestic violence due to alcohol abuse. This “abuse” by no means characterizes all Indigenous homes of Pine Ridge, yet for the Yellow Lodge home, Eyre defines a portion of this domestic space by violence, alcohol, and abuse. The familial space of Rudy and Mogie’s childhood resembles many Oglala Sioux homes on Pine Ridge. The destabilization to the domestic space of the Pine Ridge community evolves over time as the result of the guidance and care of Rudy and his Aunt Helen. In adulthood, the Yellow Lodge home still deals with the effects of Mogie’s alcoholism. Rudy, Mogie, Aunt Helen, and Mogie’s son, Herbie Yellow Lodge, make up the Yellow Lodge family. Rudy and Aunt Helen take care of Herbie, while his father goes on lengthy drinking binges. Although abuse, poverty, and violence define one side of the Yellow Lodge dwelling, Rudy attempts to define his role and family through the Oglala Sioux clan system, also known as *tiospaye*.

After Mogie’s diagnosis of cirrhosis of the liver near the end of *Skins*, Aunt Helen hosts a family dinner. Rudy and Aunt Helen prepare the evening meal, while Mogie and Herbie watch a Western on TV. Aunt Helen and Herbie eventually excuse themselves to attend his football game. Rudy and Mogie then move to the living room. Rudy reveals his vigilante past to his brother, confessing his role in the accidental burning of Mogie in a White Clay liquor store. Rudy also acknowledges his part in the kneecapping of two

Lakota teenagers with an aluminum baseball bat for their part in the murder of Corky Red Tail. Once the initial shock sets in, Mogie questions his brother's motives. Rudy injects an ancient and traditional form of defining the familial space of his home, family, and actions to the Oglala Sioux clan system. According to Rudy, the motives behind his vigilante justice within and outside of Pine Ridge revolve around the Lakota concept of tiospaye:

Mogie: You said you had something you wanted to tell me.

Rudy: It doesn't matter now anyways.

Mogie: So then tell me...

Rudy: Ok...I'm a vigilante. (Mogie laughs uncontrollably)

Mogie: What? You mean like Rambo?

Rudy: No. I just do little things to help our people.

Mogie: Our people. Who's our people?

Rudy: Our tiospaye, our ospaye.

In Vivian One Feather's Tiospaye, a research project conducted in 1972 for the Oglala Sioux Culture Center and the Red Cloud Indian School in Pine Ridge, tiospaye not only defines the name of a Lakota person's relatives, but also the laws within the domestic setting of the Oglala Sioux family unit:

There is more than just the father and mother of a child. The Tiospaye includes grandparents, aunts, uncles, and all married and adopted relatives... When a person is acquainted with his relatives, he knows where he comes from and who he is. This is why the tiospaye is so important. The word in Lakota, TIOSPAYE, can be broken into two meaningful small words: Ti-a short form of Tipi, meaning house. Ospaye-group of people separated from a larger or the main body of people. The tiospaye is a small group of

persons who are related to each other... When Wooke, daughter of Mahpiyato, came before the people as White Buffalo Calf Woman, she brought two very important laws: Respect Your Elders and Take Care of Your Relatives. These laws were the basics for the tiospaye. In the tiospaye, each person has a particular relationship to each member of the group. He has a definite place.<sup>101</sup>

Eyre not only defines the familial space of Oglala Sioux homes through domestic abuse, but also through Rudy's concept of protecting, defending, and caring for the people of his clan or "relatives." For Rudy, the familial space of his home is under siege from the social and economic crisis within Pine Ridge. While victimizing his own people, Rudy attempts to assist his relatives by engaging in the Oglala Sioux domestic code of tiospaye. Eyre presents the domestic space of the Yellow Lodge home through acts of compassion, protection, and even violence. Rudy and Aunt Helen care for Herbie and Mogie by donating money, food, and familial support. While Mogie continues to engage in self-destructive behavior, Rudy and Aunt Helen fill the void left by his spiritual, and at times, physical absence. Since the absence of Sonny and Evangeline,<sup>102</sup> Aunt Helen also performs a parental role to Herbie, Rudy, and Mogie. The familial space of the Yellow Lodge dwelling presents an essential characteristic of Native American cinema. The domestic space or "tiospaye" shows a way of seeing Oglala Sioux characters as part of their clan system. Rudy attempts to balance the social injustice within Pine Ridge by performing as a poor man's Indigenous batman, while adhering to the ancient and domestic code of his tribe. Eyre positions his camera within the interior of Oglala Sioux

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<sup>101</sup> One Feather, Vivian. *Tiospaye*.

Pine Ridge, South Dakota: Oglala Sioux Culture Center., 1974: 1, 21, 22. Print.

<sup>102</sup> Aside from the one flashback to Rudy and Mogie's football game, Eyre never gives an explanation to Sonny and Evangeline's absence. Yet spectators are left to presume that Sonny and Evangeline's absence has something to do with their abuse to alcohol.

homes, revealing a social crisis within the Pine Ridge community, while the familial space of the Yellow Lodge residence depicts Rudy and his family as a distinct family unit within Pine Ridge. Yet, for Hollywood film and television, once white characters gain access to the domestic space of Indigenous homes, these films depict its destruction. Hollywood films like *Jonah Hex* position white characters initially outside the familial space of Indigenous dwellings, who then enter and remove themselves from those spaces, leaving a path of ruin behind once they exit.

*Hollywood and Indigenous Space: Jonah Hex, Jeremiah Johnson, and The Searchers*

While *Jonah Hex* lies unconscious and tied to a cross outside his home, Quentin Turnbull and his men prepare to burn Jonah's American Indian wife and half-blood American Indian son. Turnbull, Jonah's former commanding officer, runs a Confederate platoon during the American Civil War. Jonah double-crossed Turnbull and his own men by sabotaging his plans to destroy a Union hospital, while Jonah was forced to kill Turnbull's son, Jeb, in the process. Through vigilante justice and revenge, Turnbull seeks to settle a score with his former friend and ally. Once Jonah gains consciousness, Turnbull addresses Jonah and hands down his sentence. Turnbull's right hand man, Burke, ignites the Hex home by tossing a lantern into it. Left for dead, a local Crow Indian Tribe stumbles across Jonah's body near the brink of death. The Crow Indians take Jonah to their medicine man who resuscitates Jonah's body through Indigenous medicine and healing. Yet Jonah's brush with death leaves him teetering between two worlds. Jonah now speaks to the living and the dead. He occupies his time as a bounty

hunter serving justice for profit. Later in the film, Jonah returns to the Crow Indians after a violent confrontation with Turnbull's men at their hideout. Jonah, on the verge of death once again, attempts to recharge through Indigenous medicine. Jimmy Hayward, the director of *Jonah Hex*, cuts to and from the medicine man's tipi to Jonah's former home, as Jonah undergoes a flashback. The position of Hayward's camera transitions to the interior of the house rather than the exterior, seen previously. Here Jonah enjoys a "Taster's Choice" moment with his son and wife before the chaos ensues with the abrupt entrance of Turnbull's men. While in his living room with a fire burning, Jonah admires his wife knitting in a rocking chair. Jonah's son inquires about a character that resembles his father in a dime novel, while he reads from the living room floor. Jonah affectionately positions himself behind his son, responding to his inquiry with teasing. Jonah's wife looks on in admiration and satisfaction. Turnbull and his men then abruptly burst through the front door, while knocking Jonah unconscious. Jonah awakens from his flashback inside the medicine man's tipi. Once the healing of Jonah's body is complete, Jonah rides out from the Crow village seeking out Turnbull and his men once again.

*Jonah Hex* represents a large body of Hollywood film and television that shows the destabilization of the domestic space of Indigenous homes due to the presence and destruction brought about by white protagonists. Once white protagonists like Jonah Hex access this space, American Indian characters are left with the partial if not complete annihilation of their communities and homes. Hollywood film and television such as *The Searchers*, *Jeremiah Johnson*, *Dances with Wolves*, *Last of Mohicans*, *A River Runs*

*Through It*,<sup>103</sup> *Legends of the Fall*,<sup>104</sup> *Pocahontas*,<sup>105</sup> *The New World*, *Avatar*, *Jonah Hex*, and *Hell on Wheels* show the destruction of Indigenous communities and homes once white characters gain access to the familial space of Indigenous dwellings. The volatility of the presence of Indigenous women within the domestic space of white homes works around the miscegenation of whites and American Indians. The interracial relationships and marriages of white men to Indigenous women function as the catalyst for the ruin of white residences. White women's relationship to Indigenous men, on the other hand, leads to the eventual death of American Indian men, and the annihilation of their communities. This troubling pattern of destruction and mayhem to the domestic space of Indigenous homes comments on the continual "outsider" status of Indigenous characters. Hollywood positions American Indian characters within and outside the familial space of white residences. Gender decides the fate of individual homes or communities of American Indian and white characters. *Jonah Hex*, *Jeremiah Johnson*, and *The Searchers* cover various decades in Hollywood's extensive portrayal of American Indians' relationship to white characters. Yet, even though *The Searchers* and *Jeremiah Johnson* were released decades before *Jonah Hex*, little has changed.

The destruction of Jonah's family results not just through Turnbull's revenge, but also Hollywood's continual rejection of interracial marriages of white men and Indigenous women. Hollywood's presentation of the instability of mixed blood Indigenous families works to break up interracial marriages, leaving white men to

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<sup>103</sup> *A River Runs Through It*. Dir. Robert Redford. Allied Filmmakers, 1992.

<sup>104</sup> *Legends of the Fall*. Dir. Edward Zwick. TriStar Pictures, 1995.

<sup>105</sup> *Pocahontas*. Dir. Mike Gabriel and Eric Goldberg. Walt Disney Pictures, 1995.

journey alone. Regardless of their marriages or relationships with white characters, Indigenous characters are constantly positioned outside of white society. Once Jonah's family perishes in the fire, Jonah rides alone to capture fugitives from the law. The physical mark of Turnbull's branding iron leaves Jonah's face scarred for life, whereas Jonah's "otherness" revolves around his relationship to his former Indigenous family. Jonah never fully assimilates back into white society nor will he ever remarry. Jonah will forever be an outcast riding alone in search of revenge and redemption for his past.

In *Jeremiah Johnson*,<sup>106</sup> Jeremiah Johnson searches for a new home in the West. He takes up a life as a mountain man, where he earns his living as a trapper in the Rocky Mountains. During Jeremiah's many encounters and experiences with the white and Indigenous locals of the area, he stumbles across a recent widow and her son Caleb. The grieving widow asks Jeremiah to look after Caleb, and he reluctantly accepts. Jeremiah then encounters another trapper by the name of Del Gue buried beneath the ground from the neck down. Jeremiah unearths Del Gue, and they become traveling companions. Jeremiah, Del Gue, and Caleb run across a band of Flathead Indians. The Flatheads invite Jeremiah and Del Gue to their village. While negotiating with Chief Two-Tongues Lebeaux, Jeremiah's generosity leads him to an offer he can't refuse. Lebeaux gives Jeremiah his daughter's hand in marriage. Known as the "Swan," Jeremiah must marry Lebeaux's daughter or, according to Del Gue, face certain death if he refuses. Once the Flathead wedding ceremony is complete, Del Gue goes his separate

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<sup>106</sup> Jeremiah Johnson, played by Robert Redford, is loosely based on the life of Liver-Eating Johnson, a trapper and mountain man. The book *Crow Killer: The Saga of Liver-Eating Johnson* by Raymond Thorp and Robert Bunker was the primary source used for Jeremiah Johnson's character and life in the film.

way, and Jeremiah and his new family ride back into the Rocky Mountains. Together with his new family, Jeremiah builds a log home in the mountains. For a brief period of time, Jeremiah falls in love with his new lifestyle and family. The U.S. 3<sup>rd</sup> Calvary, however, arrive at Jeremiah's doorstep pleading for his assistance to lead a search party for a lost band of white Christians. Jeremiah eventually accepts, leading the U.S. Calvary to the Christians through the Crow Indian territory. While going against the wishes and advice of Jeremiah, the U.S. Calvary travel through an Indian burial ground of the Crow Indians. In retaliation, the Crow Indians destroy Jeremiah's home, killing his wife and son. After Jeremiah returns home from the search party, he discovers his wife and son dead inside his home. Jeremiah, much like Jonah Hex, tracks the Crow killers of his wife and son down. Jeremiah never returns to civilization or remarries.

*Jeremiah Johnson, Jonah Hex, and Legends of the Falls* present the death of Indigenous women once they enter the domestic space of white homes. *Dances with Wolves, Avatar, and Last of the Mohicans* show the annihilation of Indigenous communities when white men enter the domestic space of Indigenous homes. Whether white or Indigenous characters join the familial space of white and Indigenous homes, the result proves deadly. The presence of Indigenous characters with white characters marks the volatility of the familial space of white and Indigenous dwellings. The destruction of Indigenous and white dwellings comments on the alienation of interracial marriages from white society. Jeremiah's and Jonah's mixed blood families live on the outside of white civilization. Jeremiah lives in the isolation of the Rocky Mountains, while Jonah lives somewhere in the wilderness of America. These mixed blood families are never seen

interacting with white neighbors or communities, and are thus outside the social hierarchy of white society. White male characters' marriages to Indigenous women provide them with a quality of "otherness," leaving characters such as Jonah Hex and Jeremiah Johnson alone and on the outside of civilization. Jeremiah has chosen the life of a mountain man, rejecting white society for the isolation of the Rocky Mountains. Jeremiah's lifestyle positions within American Indian communities like the Crow and Flatheads. Jonah also lives a life beyond the confines of white society, where not only his involvement with the Confederate army brands him a "rebel," but his marriage and isolation with an American Indian woman also marks Jonah's behavior as "abnormal" according to the norms of white society.

The presentation of the domestic space of Indigenous homes in Hollywood results in its repeated destruction. *The Searchers*, however, shows the repercussions of a white female in the familial space of an Indigenous male's domicile. In *The Searchers*, the reuniting of the Edwards brothers symbolizes the stabilization of the American family three years after the end of the American Civil War. While sporting his Confederate jacket, revolver, and saber, Ethan Edwards, played by John Wayne, returns home reluctantly to the Edwards family. Ethan's presence in the Edwards home represents the reuniting of the American family across the regional division between north and south. The Indigenous communities of *The Searchers*, however, threaten to destabilize the domestic space of white homes. The Comanche Nation<sup>107</sup> that populates Monument

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<sup>107</sup> The Navajo Nation actually occupied the Monument Valley area during this time not the Comanche Nation as John Ford would have it. The Navajo Nation currently runs the Monument Valley State Park. *Monument Valley*. Web. 15 January 2013. <<http://navajonationparks.org/htm/monumentvalley.htm/>

Valley represents the threat to the nucleus of the national identity of the American family. Throughout *The Searchers*, Indigenous communities constantly threaten the progress of white settlers. Once Ethan arrives at the Edwards' homestead, a local Comanche tribe led by Chief Scar<sup>108</sup> steals cattle from Lars Jorgensen, a neighbor of the Edwards'. Ethan and the local ranchers assemble a posse to go after Scar's raiding party. Yet Scar uses the cattle as a diversion to lead the men away from their families and homes. Scar and his men then attack the Edwards homestead killing nearly everyone in the home, but taking Ethan's nieces Debbie and Lucy Edwards captive.

In John Ford's America, the greatest threat to the domestic space of the American home comes in the form of Indigenous men like Scar. The mixing of both races through sexual acts represents the destabilization of the familial space of white homes. The stability of America relies on the moral fiber of men like Ethan to cleanse the Indigenous space of "noble savages" for the expansion of the American frontier. Ethan must prevent the corruption of the white race by American Indians attempting to sexually mix with white women outside the Edwards' home. Yet, as *The Searchers* plays out, Ethan's vehement racism exposes the contradiction of America's Christian ideals. Ethan conceals his agenda to murder the Edwards' daughters in order to save them from the sexual corruption of the Indigenous "buck." Through his extensive journey with Martin Pawley, a mixed blood Indian, Ethan rediscovers the ideals and values of America. At the climax of *The Searchers*, Ethan forgives Debbie Edwards for her sexual relationship with Scar, while sparing her life and returning her home.

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<sup>108</sup> Henry Brandon, who played the role of Scar, was born in Germany. The majority of the leading roles for American Indians in Westerns like *The Searchers* were typically played by Mexican and European actors.

The way of life for American Indians in *The Searchers* reflects a nomadic existence. Indigenous characters move freely and unpredictably throughout the frontier. Ethan and Martin's journey lasts more than half a decade, while their search for Scar proves to be a nearly impossible task. Indigenous communities' "outsider" status positions American Indians on the periphery of white communities. Ford's camera comes from the inside of white communities or small bands of posses led by white characters like Ethan. White characters define the Indigenous communities as savages, invaders, and a strategic threat to the expansion of the American frontier. In Armando Prats' *Invisible Natives: Myth and Identity in the American Western*, Prats argues that Ethan becomes the primary source of knowledge on Indigenous cultures for white characters.<sup>109</sup> After discovering a lance inside one of the bulls slaughtered by Scar's men near the opening of *The Searchers*, Ethan's expertise on Indigenous cultures comes into focus:

...the scene commands our attention because it establishes Ethan's uncontested power to define that which the Western asks us to accept as authentically Indian. Henceforth, almost all that we learn about the Indians we learn from Ethan. And Ethan knows Indians because he hates them. His hatred authorizes his knowledge; and it is his knowledge, here as evidenced in the identification of the lance, that foreshadows an emergent Indianness of his own, and that thus prefigures the irony whereby he shall come to subvert his own heroic purposes.<sup>110</sup>

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<sup>109</sup>Prats, Armando. *Invisible Natives: Myth and Identity in the American Western*. Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press., 2002. Print.

<sup>110</sup>Prats, Armando. *Invisible Natives: Myth and Identity in the American Western*. Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press., 2002: 64, 65. Print.

Ethan not only defines Indigenous tribes like the Comanche through his vast knowledge and hatred for American Indians, but at the climax of *The Searchers*, Ethan's extensive experience within the Indigenous space outside the Edwards homestead marks his "otherness" to American Indians. Ethan is left on the outside of the domestic space of the Jorgensen farm once he returns Debbie home. He shares a unique characteristic with Jonah Hex and Jeremiah Johnson: their "outsider" status revolving around their relationships to Indigenous characters. At the end of all three films, Ethan,<sup>111</sup> Jonah, and Jeremiah are left on the outside of white society due to their experiences and intimate relationships with Indigenous women.

More than half a decade behind him, Ethan finally rescues Debbie from Scar, returning her to the Jorgensen home after the successful raid on Scar's Comanche village. The final shot of *The Searchers* mirrors the opening. Ethan dismounts from his horse, then cradles Debbie in his arms, while walking her to the front porch of the Jorgensen home. Ethan places Debbie on the porch where she is greeted by Lars Jorgenson and his wife. Posse member Mose Harper, Martin, and Martin's fiancé Laura Jorgenson follow behind, while leaving Ethan standing alone on the outside looking in. While staring forlornly into the Jorgenson home, Ethan eventually walks away from the entryway to the empty space of Monument Valley. The door then closes behind him. Ethan brings order

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<sup>111</sup> Although Ethan Edwards never had an intimate relationship with an American Indian woman like Jonah or Jeremiah, Ethan's extensive knowledge and experience with American Indian communities of the southwest provides Ethan with a sense of "otherness" in connection to his personal relationship with American Indians, whereas for the local white settler community's knowledge of American Indians is non-existent. Debbie Edwards, however, eventually marries Scar, and she occupies the domestic space of Scar's teepee. Debbie's presence within the familial space of Scar's teepee leaves him and his Comanche village vulnerable to its destruction by the hegemonic powers of the U.S. Calvary and Ethan's pursuit of Scar throughout *The Searchers*.

to the American West. Prats contends that the ending of *The Searchers* condemns Ethan to the wilderness of the frontier:

True to the pattern long before established by the Western, the hero has helped to create the new order of the ages only to be, if implicitly, that order's worst enemy. He is America's last remaining savage-Indian not by decent-as the eighth-Cherokee Martin is, or by force, as Debbie was-but by terribly ironic consent whereby he becomes Other to his own race and culture...outcast of the "fine good place to be," both the Indian's nemesis and the sole remnant of his being, ambiguous testament to the Indian's insistent presence, unequivocal decree of his absence.<sup>112</sup>

Through genocide and vigilante justice, Ethan restores Debbie's "whiteness" by killing and scalping Scar. Ethan and the U.S. Calvary annihilate Scar's Comanche village. Scar's violation of Debbie through their interracial marriage results in the destruction of his tribe and home. Scar and Debbie's relationship must end. Once again the denial of Indigenous men to form a familial space with white women comes at the price of complete annihilation for an Indigenous community. According to Prats, "...if the Western identifies one form of the heroic with the power to remove the white woman's racio-cultural taint, then *The Searchers* would seem to narrate an exalted heroism."<sup>113</sup>

### *Conclusion*

In Native American cinema, the domestic space of Indigenous homes presents the hegemonic control and influence from the space outside American Indian reservations from the rebroadcasting and continual circulation of Westerns like *The Searchers*. The circulation of these images, be it the Western or live news broadcasts, negotiates the

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<sup>112</sup> Ibid. 70.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid. 58.

power relations between the domestic space of American Indian homes and Hollywood's position to the outside of this familial space. For Eyre's Indigenous characters, the lack of control in the production, circulation, and presentation of these mediated images functions as a primary source of antagonism for his Indigenous characters. These iconographic images, whether circulated through television sets in the domestic space of Indigenous homes, or live news broadcasts produced outside of reservations, evokes vigilantism, mourning, and Indigenous spiritualism in contrast to these mediated images. Yet even when these Indigenous characters leave their reservations, and enter the space outside their borders, they reveal their cultural identities through oral storytelling, mourning, fry bread spiritualism, and vigilante justice. In *Smoke Signals* and *Skins* the influence of popular culture from film, television, or historical sites like Mt. Rushmore produce an overwhelming feeling of disempowerment for Eyre's Indigenous characters. For these Indigenous communities, the lack of control over the production, circulation, and representation of their own images elicits the historical trauma of the nineteenth century from the power relations of this historical dichotomy. Eyre's Indigenous characters use the space of their reservation to establish a new spiritual space that mixes Indigenous and Christian spirituality. Historical markers and media outlets represent the division and contrast between these spaces, as the Indigenous communities of Pine Ridge and Coeur d'Alene re-define their Indigenous identity through the evolution and representation of Indigenous spirituality within the domestic space of American Indian homes. These characters define a new spiritual space within and outside their

reservations through traditional oral storytelling, spiritualism, vigilante justice, and mourning.

While Native American cinema like *Smoke Signals* and *Skins* presents a way of seeing American Indians in the familial space of their homes, Hollywood presents its destruction. Once white male protagonists gain access to the domestic space of American Indian homes, the eventual destruction of this space proceeds. The presence of non-Indigenous characters within this space leaves its American Indian inhabitants dead, while permanently pushing white male protagonists on the outside of white society. Once American Indian women enter the domestic space of white homes, this also proves deadly for American Indian characters. Regardless of which domestic space is being accessed, Hollywood continues to depict this space to its destruction. In Hollywood film and television, the destruction of the domestic space of American Indian homes revolves around violence. Native American cinema, on the other hand, shows the continuation of this space in the present and future. Native American cinema also presents social and economic problems within this space relating to poverty, resulting in its disruption, while still showing its continuation. The continual presentation of violence in Hollywood film and television in relation to the domestic space of American Indian homes is a way of seeing American Indians. The position of the camera in Hollywood comes from the outside to mixed blood family homes. Yet once the camera gains access to this space, mixed blood homes are left vulnerable to violence. The instability of mixed blood homes shows white society's rejection of interracial marriage, while white male protagonists are isolated from white society due to their "otherness" relating to their intimate relationships

with American Indian women. Yet the position of the camera in Native American cinema and this familial space shares in the intimacy and comfort of Indigenous characters attempting to heal, mourn, and continue on. Again Native American cinema promotes a way of seeing American Indians in the domestic space of their dwellings.

Why does Hollywood film and television continue to fixate on American Indians' relationship to violence? The following chapter will explore the contrast between the representation of historical trauma in Hollywood and Native American cinema. The reenactment of historical trauma to American Indian communities from the past in Hollywood film and television shows not only the repeated annihilation of Indigenous communities, but also leaves American Indians absent from the present and future. Hollywood television like *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee*,<sup>114</sup> and *Into the West* presents historical trauma to American Indians through Western time, relating the chronological ordering of events in linear time. Yet American Indians such as the Oglala Sioux of the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation don't see historical trauma like the Wounded Knee Massacre as it is presented in historical reenactments. Native American cinema like *Skins* and *Imprint* presents historical trauma such as the Wounded Knee Massacre in Indigenous time. Indigenous time for American Indian tribes like the Oglala Sioux revolves around the circular world ordering of events in time and space.

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<sup>114</sup> *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee*. Dir. Yves Simoneau. HBO Films, 2007.

### Chapter 3: A way of seeing American Indians through Historical Trauma: Skins and Imprint

Discussed briefly in chapter two, *Skins* presents the spiritual center of the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation as the site of the historical trauma of the Wounded Knee Massacre and the Black Hills of South Dakota. While out on patrol, Rudy Yellow Lodge, a tribal police officer, receives a dispatch about a group of trespassers at an abandoned house in Pine Ridge. After further investigation, Rudy finds three teenagers inside. Entering the home, he discovers the dead body of Corky Red Tail. Rudy attempts to run down one of the teenagers outside, but falls and strikes his head on a large rock. On his back, he sees the night sky of Pine Ridge. Here Eyre reveals the first encounter with historical trauma in *Skins*. Through Rudy's gaze, the stars of Pine Ridge transform into several different images showing a group of Lakota elders from the nineteenth century, Leonard Peltier's extradition to the United States from Canada, Iktomi, the trickster spider, and members of the AIM movement sitting outside the Wounded Knee church during the Wounded Knee Incident in 1973. Throughout *Skins*, Eyre presents the historical trauma to Pine Ridge from the present. Eyre also takes a circular approach to his representation of historical events at Pine Ridge. Hollywood cinema and television, on the other hand, continually depict the reenactment of Indigenous trauma of historical events in linear time. Native American cinema, however, puts an emphasis on places and space rather than structuring historical events in chronological order.

In chapter three, I will finalize my argument concerning the three modes of representation within Native American cinema-and the relation of these modes to

representations of historical trauma. In *Skins* and *Imprint* the site of the Wounded Knee Massacre plays a significant role in the lives of its Indigenous protagonists. As I will discuss later in this chapter, the Wounded Knee Massacre evolves into the spiritual and religious center of Oglala life after the genocide of 145 Lakota men, women, and children (the Oglala argue more) by the U.S. 7<sup>th</sup> Cavalry near the Wounded Knee Creek on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation.<sup>115</sup> This event would define the Oglala Sioux for the next century.

Hollywood presents the Wounded Knee Massacre as a reenactment in films like *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee* and *Into the West*. Native American cinema like *Skins* and *Imprint* interweaves the lives of Oglala characters with the victims of the Wounded Knee Massacre in the present. Native American cinema de-emphasizes temporal structures like Western time. For Native American cinema, Western time relating to historical trauma is irrelevant. According to one Lakota medicine man in *Imprint*, “Past, present, and future all touch one another. Time doesn’t exist...For spirits, time doesn’t exist.”

While the Western defines Indigenous identity as American Indians’ visual colonization, Native American cinema shows the survival and continuation of Oglala identity in the present. Oglala identity also shares a unique relationship to Wounded Knee and the Black Hills. The Indigenous protagonists of *Skins* and *Imprint* live beyond the restrictions of the nineteenth century. Yet historical trauma more than a hundred years removed from Pine Ridge still plays a vital role in Oglala life. For the Lakota, the

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<sup>115</sup> Silvestro, Roger. *In the Shadow of Wounded Knee: The Untold Final Chapter of the Indian Wars*. New York, New York: Walker Publishing Company Inc., 2005. Print.

concept of “reenactments”<sup>116</sup> of historical events like the Wounded Knee Massacre is absurd. The Oglala protagonists of *Skins* and *Imprint* continue to share the space of Pine Ridge with their ancestors in the present. Later on in *Skins*, Rudy seeks out Ed Little Bald Eagle, an Oglala medicine man on Pine Ridge. Bald Eagle reveals the source of Rudy’s vision from earlier in the film. Bald Eagle links the spiritual power of rocks such as the one Rudy encountered outside the abandoned house to Lakota historical trauma: “Rocks can be very spiritual things Rudy. Our scared Black Hills, where America carved its presidents into the scared rocks...Skins have forgotten the forces that live around them...Remember human beings don’t control anything spirits do.” Rather than presenting a lengthy reenactment of the loss of the Black Hills, Eyre and Linn evoke Lakota history through a circular ordering of historical events, stressing the American Indians’ concept of time. Oglala identity and historical trauma are interwoven in the space of Pine Ridge. Oglala characters like Rudy and Bald Eagle evoke Lakota trauma through conversations within Pine Ridge. These conversations revolve around historical sites like the Wounded Knee Massacre, the Black Hills, and even the Western playing on television sets in the domestic space of Oglala homes. Native American cinema presents a way of seeing Indigenous characters enmeshed within their past. The endings of *Skins* and *Imprint* reveal the continuation of Oglala life in the future instead of their annihilation.

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<sup>116</sup> Reenactments of American history such as Civil War battles at Gettysburg, PA, and Pea Ridge, AR, are played out every year to the fanfare of American spectators. For the Lakota, reenactments of historical “events” like Wounded Knee or the Battle of Little Big Horn are non-existent.

By pairing *Skins* and *Imprint* together, I want to examine the recent popularity of the presentation of the Wounded Knee Massacre in Hollywood and Native American cinema. This allows me to focus on one specific tribe and their extensive history and culture in relation to this historical event. The Oglala Sioux<sup>117</sup> of the Great Sioux Nation in particular hold a significant place in both Hollywood and Native American cinema. In *We Shall Remain: Wounded Knee*, Robert Warrior, an Osage scholar, describes the notoriety of Lakota Indians for white America: “The Lakota, who Americans call the Sioux, are iconic in American history and the American imagination. These are buffalo hunters who lived in tepees. Who were at the battle with General Custer. Nearly everything about Lakota life is firmly implanted in the way America’s think about Indians.”<sup>118 119</sup> Hollywood’s images of Lakota Sioux on horseback, while hunting buffalo in the Great Plains, elicits the nostalgia of a non-Indigenous spectator for a past more than a century removed from Lakota life today. The immense popularity of films like *Dances with Wolves*, and even to an extent James Cameron’s recent success with *Avatar*,<sup>120</sup> attempts to universalize the American Indian experience. While reading from a passage in his book *All My Relations* in a Seattle bookstore, Seymour Polatkin in *The Business of Fancydancing* describes the characteristics of Indigenous characters in American literature: “...This is how to write the great American Indian novel: All the

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<sup>117</sup> The Oglala Sioux are one of seven “sub-tribes” of the Great Sioux Nation. The Oglala Sioux in the Lakota language means “They scatter their own.”

<sup>118</sup> *We Shall Remain: Wounded Knee*. Dir. Stanley Nelson. Firelight Media Inc., 2009.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid.

<sup>120</sup> The majority of the Na’vi characters in *Avatar* are played by American Indian actors like Wes Studi, a Cherokee Indian. An Indigenous tribe living on Pandora, the Na’vi possess a valuable mineral called “unobtainium” on their sacred lands. The U.S. government attempts to extract this mineral by force once the Na’vi refuses to give up their lands. This act of refusal results in the near annihilation of the Na’vi Tribe at the end of *Avatar*.

Indians must have tragic features, tragic eyes, arms. Their hands and fingers must be tragic when they reach for tragic food. The hero must be a half breed, half white, half Indian preferably from a horse culture<sup>121</sup> ...when it's finally written, all of the white people will be Indians, and all the Indians will be ghosts.”<sup>122</sup> Seymour comments on the appropriation of Indigenous identity by white popular culture through the publishing industry. Seymour's description of the “American Indian novel” resembles the characteristics of American Indians found in Hollywood films like *Dances with Wolves* and *Avatar*. Seymour lists the standard traits of Hollywood's narrative of Indigenous communities, where American Indians are constantly “vanishing” from the American frontier.

Since the release of *Powwow Highway*<sup>123</sup> several films and documentaries on the Oglala Sioux have attempted to uncover the social, political, and economic upheaval on Pine Ridge in the second half of the twentieth century. Films like *Powwow Highway*, *Incident at Oglala*, *Thunderheart*,<sup>124</sup> and *We Shall Remain* depict the extensive history of the Oglala Sioux through events such as the Wounded Knee Massacre, the Wounded Knee Incident of 1973, the trial of Leonard Peltier, and the Dick Wilson administration on Pine Ridge. Pine Ridge is well known to Indigenous communities throughout the

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<sup>121</sup> The Great Sioux Nation was a horse culture before their removal to reservations in the second half of nineteenth century. The economic infrastructure of Lakota life revolved around horses and buffalo. *We Shall Remain: Wounded Knee*. Dir. Stanley Nelson. Firelight Media Inc., 2009.

<sup>122</sup> *The Business of Fancydancing*. Dir. Sherman Alexie. FallsApart Production, 2002.

<sup>123</sup> *Powwow Highway*. Dir. Jonathan Wacks. HandMade Films, 1989.

<sup>124</sup> *Thunderheart*. Dir. Michael Apted. TriStar Pictures, 1992.

Americas for its polarized depictions in live news broadcasts, films, and the AIM movement.<sup>125</sup>

I will examine the presentation of the historical trauma of the Wounded Knee Massacre in *Skins* and *Imprint*. Lastly, I will transition to Hollywood television's representation of the Wounded Knee Massacre in *Into the West*. By comparing and contrasting Native American and Hollywood cinema I will examine the place of American Indians in Native American and Hollywood cinema today. The endings of *Skins*, *Imprint*, and *Into the West* also expose the position of American Indian characters in Hollywood and Native American cinema in the twenty-first century.

#### *A Circular World Ordering*

In *God is Red*, Vine Deloria argues that the concept of history for American Indians revolves around stories relating to past experiences in time.<sup>126 127</sup> According to Deloria, "...it has been the Christian contention that the experiences of mankind could be recorded in a linear fashion, and when this was done the whole purpose of the creation event became clear, explaining not only the history of man but revealing the nature of the end of the world and the existence of a further world to which the faithful would be

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<sup>125</sup> The AIM movement orchestrated the occupation of the town Wounded Knee on the Pine Ridge Reservation, resulting in a 73 day stand off from February 27 to May 5 in 1973 with the FBI, the U.S. Marshall Service, and the local Oglala Sioux Tribal authorities known as the GOONS. It was a major national news media event at the time. *We Shall Remain: Wounded Knee*. Dir. Stanley Nelson. Firelight Media Inc., 2009.

<sup>126</sup> Deloria, Vine. *God is Red*. New York, New York: Grosset & Dunlap Publishers., 1973. Print.

<sup>127</sup> Vine Deloria is an American Indian scholar, historian, and political activist. He is a member of the Standing Rock Sioux.

welcome... Time is regarded as all-important by Christians, and it has a casual importance, if any, among the tribal peoples.”<sup>128</sup> In post-Discovery times, the majority of tribal religions never based their existence on an event that divided time experience to a before and after like Christianity.<sup>129</sup> Indian tribes didn’t link historical events to a specific date and time. Put simply, “...salvation and religious participation in communal ceremonies did not depend on the event but on the ceremonies and powers used as a result of the event.”<sup>130</sup> Historical events like the Wounded Knee Massacre were distinct from history. Indian tribes didn’t depend on history for their verification. Historical events worked for the community in the present much like the Wounded Knee Massacre and the Black Hills works on a spiritual level for the Oglala Sioux characters of *Skins* and *Imprint*. The spiritual powers of those historical events were sufficient to prove their pure existence for American Indians.<sup>131</sup>

One of the many ideological differences between Western European colonizers and American Indian thought is the concept of places in space. According to Deloria, “...American Indians hold their lands-places-as having the highest possible meaning, and all their statements are made with this reference point in mind.”<sup>132</sup> Western European identity, on the other hand, revolves around time proceeding in a linear fashion, where “...the peoples of Western Europe became the guardians of mankind. The same ideology that sparked the Crusades, the Age of Exploration, the Age of Imperialism...all involve

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<sup>128</sup> Deloria, Vine. *God is Red*. New York, New York: Grosset & Dunlap Publishers., 1973: 111. Print.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid. 113.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid. 75.

the affirmation that time is peculiarly related to the destiny of the people of Western Europe. And later, of course, the United States.”<sup>133</sup> For American Indians, space rather than time distinguishes us from one another. Indian tribal religions revolve around a “center” to the Indigenous space of their communities. For Oglala Sioux, this center for tribal religions has ties to a specific location such as the site of the Wounded Knee Massacre and the Black Hills.

In The Dance of Person & Place, Thomas Norton-Smith argues that Western versions of history are framed by a linear ordering principal, while Native versions work around a circular ordering principle.<sup>134</sup> The center of religious and spiritual communities like Pine Ridge allows American Indians to orient themselves to lands, the cardinal directions, and spirits.<sup>135</sup> The Western preoccupation with the “scared event” counters Native traditional religious views of the “scared place.” The American Indian world is made up of circular patterns with ties to the natural world. According to Smith, “...indigenous peoples are very close observers of the natural world and all of the cycles in its workings-seasonal cycles, lunar phases, animal migrations, and the growth of various plants...As a result, American Indian traditions came to regard cycles and circles as the primary temporal and spatial ordering principle...”<sup>136</sup>

In Black Elk Speaks, Black Elk, an Oglala Sioux medicine man, describes one of the many visions throughout his life relating to his understanding of time, space, and the scared circle:

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<sup>133</sup> Ibid. 76.

<sup>134</sup> Smith-Norton, Thomas. *The Dance of Person and Place: One Interpretation of American Indian Philosophy*. Albany, New York: Suny Press., 2010: 119. Print.

<sup>135</sup> Ibid. 121.

<sup>136</sup> Ibid. 125.

I was standing on the highest mountain of them all, and round about beneath me was the whole hoop of the world. And while I stood there I saw more than I can tell and I understood more than I saw; for I was seeing in a sacred manner the shapes as they must live together like one being. And I saw that the sacred hoop of my people was one of many hoops that made one circle, wide as daylight and as starlight, and in the center grew one mighty flowering tree to shelter all the children of one mother and one father. And I saw that it was holly.<sup>137</sup>

The passing of knowledge from person to person through oral storytelling works in a circular fashion. While drawing from Donald Fixico's The American Indian Mind in a Linear World, Smith points out the continual repetitions in Indigenous storytelling as a teaching tool for listeners that revolves around circular patterns, "...But another person might say that numerous examples stress the same point as stories told with the same message in mind for teaching the listener. Even these written words may seem repetitious, but in the circular way the purpose is met to prevent misunderstanding. It is a teaching tool."<sup>138</sup> American Indians see the world and human life as circular. At the end of one's life everything comes full circle. Spirits and human beings are interconnected to each other in the present. The designs of American Indian ceremonial sites like sweat lodges, stomp grounds, and even storytelling are done in a circular fashion. American Indians focus on space, place, and nature, whereas Western thought works around time,

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<sup>137</sup> Neihardt, John. *Black Elk Speaks: Being the Life Story of a Holy Man of the Oglala Sioux*. New York, New York: University of New York Press., 2008: 33. Print.

<sup>138</sup> Fixico, Donald. *The American Mind in a Linear World: American Studies and Traditional Knowledge*. New York, New York: Routledge Publishing., 2003: 56. Print.

events, and history seen from Christianity's interpretations of linear time to world events.<sup>139</sup>

*Skins and Hollywood: Time and Spirits*

Eyre presents the trauma of Pine Ridge from the interior of Oglala Sioux homes in the present. The position of Eyre's camera not only works within the space of the Pine Ridge community, but Eyre returns to the spiritual source of all Lakota Sioux at the climax of *Skins*, showing the circular pattern to Oglala Sioux life. Death for Oglala Sioux is only the beginning. Lakota spirits and Oglala Sioux are interconnected beyond the confines of Western time. Eyre represents the Wounded Knee Massacre through Indigenous time. The historical reenactment of the Wounded Knee Massacre is absent from Eyre's narrative, represented only through oral retellings of this scared moment to Oglala Sioux characters in the present. The spirits of Wounded Knee continue to share the space of Pine Ridge with their "relations." Eyre presents the Yellow Lodge family as one of many Oglala Sioux homes forever linked to the space of Wounded Knee and the Black Hills of South Dakota.

Following the opening sequence to *Skins*, Rudy returns from a night of vigilante justice on Pine Ridge. While wiping black shoe polish from his face in his bathroom, Rudy encounters an old foe in the form of a spider crawling along his bathroom sink. In voice-over, Rudy recounts his past with this Lakota spirit, "Iktomi, the trickster spider, a Lakota spirit, had reappeared in my life. I was ten years old when we first met in an

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<sup>139</sup> Smith-Norton, Thomas. *The Dance of Person and Place: One Interpretation of American Indian Philosophy*. Albany, New York: Suny Press., 2010: 122. Print.

outhouse one spring morning.” This sequence follows a flashback to Rudy’s childhood on Pine Ridge. Iktomi evokes a familial memory to Rudy’s “Chia.”<sup>140</sup> Eyre interweaves Rudy’s relationship to his brother Mogie and Iktomi throughout *Skins*. While Rudy relieves himself in an outhouse on Pine Ridge, Rudy is bitten by a spider. Mogie then carries Rudy on his back to the local Pine Ridge hospital. Mogie explains to his younger brother that Iktomi “likes to sneak out and mess with people’s lives.” Throughout *Skins*, Eyre presents a cyclical pattern to Rudy, Iktomi, and Mogie revolving around Rudy’s actions and consequences over the course of *Skins*.

Iktomi in Lakota mythology is “...a spider-trickster spirit, and a culture hero for the Lakota people...Iktomi is the son of Inyan, rock. Inyan is a creator god similar in form to other male creator gods...Iktomi is a shapeshifter. He can use strings to control humans like puppets.”<sup>141</sup> In Lakota stories, Iktomi teaches the Lakota people lessons about his actions and consequences. Iktomi can be presented as both good and evil. At times Iktomi can also lend assistance and protection to the Lakota. Iktomi constantly involves himself in mischief, while playing tricks on animals and humans for his own personal amusement.

Rudy begins his vigilante career on Pine Ridge after striking his head on a rock outside the abandoned house, as described earlier in this chapter. When Rudy visits the Oglala medicine man, he informs Rudy that Iktomi can also take the form of rocks. According to the medicine man, Iktomi may have entered Rudy’s head through the rock.

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<sup>140</sup> Rudy refers to Mogie in this sequence as “My Chia.” Chia in the Lakota language means brother.

<sup>141</sup> *Iktomi*. Web. 2 February 2013.

<<http://www.princeton.edu/~achaney/tmve/wiki100k/docs/Iktomi.html/>

Later in the film, it's revealed that the scene near the opening of *Skins* occurred sometime in the middle of Eyre's narrative. Aside from this sequence and two flashbacks, Eyre follows a linear narrative structure in *Skins*. Yet the displacement of this sequence to Rudy's first encounter with Iktomi reveals the power and influence of this Lakota spirit for Rudy. Iktomi reappears throughout *Skins*, including during its climax on top of Mt. Rushmore when he leads Rudy on a journey while teaching him a lesson. Rudy discovers that his empowerment within Pine Ridge doesn't come in the form of vigilante justice as a response to the victimization of his own people, but rather through the familial and spiritual source of all Lakota people. In the Lakota language, the translation of "Mitakuye Oyasin" is also known as All My Relations.<sup>142</sup> Rudy's relationship to his brother Mogie, the Yellow Lodge family, and his ancestors shows one of the many spiritual sources within Pine Ridge for Oglala families. Yet near the end of *Skins*, Iktomi brings the Yellow Lodge family full circle to another spiritual source of Pine Ridge, the Wounded Knee Massacre.

As discussed in chapter two, a central scene in the film occurs when Aunt Helen hosts a dinner for the Yellow Lodge family at her home. While watching a Western with his son Herbie before dinner, Mogie identifies an American Indian extra on horseback as Joe Thunderboots. According to Mogie, Joe Thunderboots is a direct descendent of American Horse. While at the dinner table, Herbie inquires about the history of American Horse. The Western ironically evokes a heated discussion between Rudy and

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<sup>142</sup> "Mitakuye Oyasin" is an ancient Lakota prayer. This statement is typically said after prayers or even spiritual ceremonies. For the Lakota, everything is connected, including humans, animals, and spirits. *Mitakuye Oyasin: We Are All Related*. Dir. Jody Marriott Bar-Lev. David Russel, 2009.

Mogie over Lakota history. Rudy explains to Herbie that American Horse testified to the U.S. congress about his eye witness account of the Wounded Knee Massacre. According to Rudy, a spiritual revival led by Big Foot ignited the encounter between the U.S. 7<sup>th</sup> Cavalry and Big Foot's band of Miniconjou Lakota near the Wounded Knee Creek on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation.<sup>143</sup>

More than fourteen years prior to the Wounded Knee Massacre, in 1874, gold was discovered in the Black Hills during an expedition lead by General George Armstrong Custer on behalf of the U.S. government. At the time, the Treaty of Fort Laramie in 1868 granted the Black Hills to the Lakota. Yet once gold was discovered in the Black Hills in 1874, President Ulysses S. Grant promptly revised The Treaty of Fort Laramie and ordered all Lakota Sioux to reservations outside of the Black Hills by January 31, 1876. The northern Lakota, lead by Chief Sitting Bull and Crazy Horse, adamantly refused to recognize the U.S. government's power over the Lakota Nation. This resulted in an attack by General Custer and 400 of his men on a Lakota and Cheyenne village in southeastern Montana known as the Battle of Little Bighorn. The Lakota and Cheyenne village harbored more than 1,800 warriors, and ended in the near annihilation of Custer's regiment, including Custer himself.<sup>144</sup> By 1877, aside from Chief Sitting Bull and his band of Lakota, all Lakota Sioux would be removed to reservations. Chief Sitting Bull and his people then retreated to Canada, where they avoided extradition for four years.

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<sup>143</sup> Big Foot's spiritual revival revolved around the practice of the Ghost Dance Religion. The Ghost Dance movement was founded by a Paiute Indian by the name of Wovoka, also known as Jack Wilson.

<sup>144</sup> Silvestro, Roger. *In the Shadow of Wounded Knee: The Untold Final Chapter of the Indian Wars*. New York, New York: Walker Publishing Company Inc., 2005: 54-56. Print.

However, abandoned by most of his people, starving, and suffering from a serious eye infection, Chief Sitting Bull surrendered to the U.S. and tribal authorities at Fort Buford, Montana, on July 20, 1881.

Ironically, fourteen years after the Battle of the Little Bighorn, the U.S. 7<sup>th</sup> Cavalry was sent in to disarm Big Foot's band of Lakota. The U.S. government believed they were carrying an extensive arsenal of rifles. Fifteen days prior to this confrontation, reservation authorities sent a small group of Indian police officers to arrest Sitting Bull at his compound on the Standing Rock Indian Reservation in Grand River, South Dakota. Once the police officers apprehended Sitting Bull, Sitting Bull's followers, including his fourteen year old son Crow Foot, confronted the officers outside his father's home. Gun fire was eventually exchanged between both sides, leaving Sitting Bull and Crow Foot dead, along with fourteen other Lakota. Once Big Foot received word of Sitting Bull's death, he and his followers attempted to find protection on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation. To this day disputes over what set off the deadly altercation between Big Foot's band of Lakota and the U.S. 7<sup>th</sup> Cavalry remain. What is known is that an exchange, or a "miscommunication," with Big Foot's men, while handing over their rifles to Custer's old regiment, resulted in the massacre of an estimated 145 Lakota men, women, and children (the Oglala Sioux argue 350).<sup>145</sup> Rudy and Mogie also explain that the U.S. government believed the spiritual revival of the Ghost Dance represented a strategic threat to the local authority on the reservation due to the possibility of an Indigenous rebellion lead by Big Foot. Rudy and Mogie go on to state that the U.S.

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<sup>145</sup> *In the Shadow of Wounded Knee*. Web. 5 March 2013.  
<<http://ngm.nationalgeographic.com/2012/08/pine-ridge/ful/>

government's investigation into the massacre resulted in the U.S. 7<sup>th</sup> Calvary being rewarded the Congressional Medal of Honor, the highest honor by the U.S. military bestowed on any active duty service member.

Rather than re-enacting the Wounded Knee Massacre, Eyre shows the interior of the domestic space of an Oglala home and presents this historical trauma as an oral history. Following Mogie's diagnosis of cirrhosis of the liver, his life is slowly coming to an end. Rudy and Mogie's discussion of the Wounded Knee Massacre doesn't revolve around a date or time, but rather an "experience" that occupies the spiritual space of the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation. The site of the Wounded Knee Massacre now holds a sacred meaning for Oglala identity and culture. The victims at Wounded Knee now come full circle toward the end of Mogie's life. The spirits of Big Foot's band of Lakota are one and the same as the Yellow Lodge family and the Oglala Sioux. Past, present and future for Oglala life are interlinked through the Lakota spirits like Iktomi and the victims of Wounded Knee. In The American Indian Mind in a Linear World, Donald Fixico argues that traditional Indigenous families like the Yellow Lodges see the world from two perspectives: "Indian Thinking" is "seeing" things from a perspective emphasizing that circles and cycles are central to the world and that all things are related within the universe...they think within a native reality consisting of a physical and metaphysical world."<sup>146</sup> Thus, *Skins* shows a return of the experience of the Wounded Knee Massacre within the present. The Yellow Lodge family shares in the pain of their Lakota ancestors by returning once again to the spiritual power of oral storytelling.

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<sup>146</sup> Fixico, Donald. *The American Mind in a Linear World: American Studies and Traditional Knowledge*. New York, New York: Routledge Publishing., 2003: 1, 2. Print.

The opening sequence of *Skins* presents a social crisis within Pine Ridge revolving around poverty. Throughout *Skins*, Rudy engages in violence to correct the social and economic injustice within Pine Ridge. Aside from the influence of Iktomi, Rudy's motivation for vigilante justice within and outside the space of Pine Ridge revolves around his television screen in the domestic space of his home. For Rudy, the television set is a primary source of antagonism. Joanna Hearne's essay "Indians Watching Indians on TV" discusses the influence of American Indian images circulated through the domestic space of Indian homes.<sup>147</sup> According to Hearne, the television rebroadcasting of the Western shares an antagonistic relationship with Indigenous characters in films such as *Skins*, *Smoke Signals*, *The Exiles*, and *The History of the Luiseno People*.<sup>148</sup> <sup>149</sup> Hearne argues Mogie's reading of the Western articulates the contrast between white and Indigenous spectators of the Western:

Among the Indians coded in the Western, Mogie sees friends. Significantly, Mogie recognizes and appreciates the Western on TV not for its myth-making fabrications of frontier history—the function the Western is said to have in much criticism of the genre—but rather in terms of his community networks. That is, the unaccredited actor who, along with other anonymous extras, signals a generalized Indian threat in the Hollywood Western is, for Mogie, a named individual with a specific genealogy that links him to the events of this period of history (the second half of the nineteenth century) that the Western typically represents. The Lakota lineage embedded in the very same media that denies the presence of Native families becomes for certain audiences both a coded history and corroboration of survival...<sup>150</sup>

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<sup>147</sup> Ed. Denise Cummings. *Visualities: Perspectives on Contemporary American Indian Film*. Lansing, MI: University of Michigan State Press, 2011. Print.

<sup>148</sup> Ibid.

<sup>149</sup> *The History of the Luiseno People*. Dir. Isaac Arntstein. Arntstein, 1990.

<sup>150</sup> Ed. Denise Cummings. *Visualities: Perspectives on Contemporary American Indian Film*. Lansing, MI: University of Michigan State Press, 2011: 55. Print.

The Western for Mogie elicits the historical trauma of Lakota history. Mogie's reading of the Western shows the division between white and Indigenous spectators' understanding of American Indian history. The Western presents white dominant culture's presence within the domestic space of Indigenous homes. The Western seen through the gaze of an American Indian like Mogie signifies the genealogy of Lakota history, whereas for white spectators Joe Thunderboots is a nameless American Indian actor filling the background of another Hollywood film. The production of the Western is primarily made for non-Indigenous spectators. Westerns like *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee* and *Into the West* introduce non-Indigenous spectators to a piece of American Indian history more than a century removed from white homes. For the majority of white America, the Wounded Knee Massacre is unknown. The presentation of the Wounded Knee Massacre in Hollywood films like *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee* and *Into the West* revolves around its articulation within the chronological ordering of events leading up to the massacre.

After their discussion at dinner, Rudy and Mogie return to Aunt Helen's living room. Mogie proposes to his brother one last adventure, where together they will avenge their Lakota ancestors by blowing George Washington's nose off Mt. Rushmore. Rudy adamantly refuses his request. Once Mogie succumbs to cirrhosis, Rudy hikes on top of Mt. Rushmore with a bucket of red paint.<sup>151</sup> While on Mt. Rushmore, Rudy begins to doubt his plan. Here Iktomi reveals himself for the final time. As the sun begins to rise

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<sup>151</sup> Cirrhosis is a chronic liver disease that is terminal. In Mogie's case his extensive abuse of alcohol led to his affliction and downfall.

on the horizon, Iktomi crawls across the bucket. Rudy sees Iktomi's appearance as a sign giving him the go ahead to hurl the bucket of paint over the top of George Washington's head, while bellowing out his love for Mogie. Rudy mixes vigilante justice and Indigenous mourning by marking George Washington's nose with the bucket of red paint. Once Rudy stops victimizing his own people, and channels his anger at the space outside of Pine Ridge, Rudy uses the national site of Mt. Rushmore to mark the Black Hills on behalf of his brother and the Oglala Sioux Nation. While on the road back to Pine Ridge, Rudy spots a young Mogie walking in the opposite direction towards the Black Hills. Rudy's gaze signifies a moment of redemption for the Yellow Lodge brothers. Rudy marks a path for Mogie's spirit to return to his ancestors in the scared Black Hills. In the short documentary *Mitakuye Oyasin*,<sup>152</sup> Arvol Looking Horse, a Lakota elder, states the origins of Lakota Sioux revolve around their creation within the Black Hills. The Black Hills represent the beginning for the Oglala Sioux. Eyre presents their return to the scared space of the Black Hills as Mogie's spirit coming full circle to the source of its creation. Rudy empowers himself and his community by staining the hegemonic presence of the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation on a national historical site like Mt. Rushmore. Rudy also returns on the road back to Pine Ridge, while leaving behind his violent past seen from his final act of vigilante justice. The community of Pine Ridge continues on in the present, while Pine Ridge's future still has a place beyond the restrictions of the nineteenth century. Instead of presenting the destruction of the Lakota Nation in historical reenactments seen in Hollywood films like *Bury My Heart at*

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<sup>152</sup> *Mitakuye Oyasin: We Are All Related*. Dir. Jody Marriott Bar-Lev. David Russel, 2009.

*Wounded Knee* and *Into the West*, Eyre presents the continuation of Oglala life in the present.

*Constructing the Invisible: Allegory and Hollywood*

Hollywood cinema such as *The Amityville Horror*,<sup>153</sup> *The Shining*, *Sweet Sixteen*,<sup>154</sup> *Eyes of Fire*,<sup>155</sup> *Pet Sematary*,<sup>156</sup> and *The New Daughter*<sup>157</sup> represent American Indians by their absence, while also showing their ghostly return to the American landscape. Stanley Kubrick's *The Shining* presents American Indians as historical allegory: as a historical return to their ghostly haunting. The ghostly presence of American Indians in *The Shining* evokes their physical absence. In *The Shining*, Jack Torrance, played by Jack Nicholson, accepts a position as caretaker of the Overlook hotel during its winter offseason, where he will be joined by his wife Wendy and son Danny. Jack desires the isolation of the Colorado Mountains to begin his writing career. Over the course of the film, the ghostly spirits of the Overlook persuade Jack to murder his family. However, Jack's son Danny possesses a unique power of telepathy known as the "Shining." Danny can see the ghosts of the Overlook. Danny can also communicate telepathically with Dick Hallorann, the Overlook's African-American cook.

My own views on historical allegory are similar to the arguments presented by Bliss Lim in *Spectral Time, Heterogeneous Space*.<sup>158</sup> Lim argues that historical allegory

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<sup>153</sup> *The Amityville Horror*. Dir. Stuart Rosenberg. American International Pictures, 1979.

<sup>154</sup> *Sweet Sixteen*. Dir. Jim Sotos. Century International, 1983.

<sup>155</sup> *Eyes of Fire*. Dir. Avery Crouse. Elysian Pictures, 1983.

<sup>156</sup> *Pet Sematary*. Dir. Mary Lambert. Paramount Pictures, 1989.

<sup>157</sup> *The New Daughter*. Dir. Luiso Berdejo. God Circle Films, 2010.

<sup>158</sup> Lim, Bliss Cua. *Translating Time: Cinema, the Fantastic, and Temporal Critique*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press., 2009. Print.

redeems the past by way of the present, rescuing from oblivion. Using Hong Kong and Filipino cinema as her primary examples, Lim argues that nostalgia and allegory are structured around locations or allegorical objects in the present. Ghosts then gather around these objects, giving them new meaning. Lim discusses the idea of ruined history, referencing Walter Benjamin's theory of the decay of history that absorbs into cinema's setting:

In the ruin history has physically merged into the setting. And in this guise history does not assume the form of the process of an eternal life so much as that of irresistible decay...In the process of decay, and in it alone, the events of history shrivel up and become absorbed in the setting...The allegorical imprint of history on setting is realized in the fantastic *mise-en-scene* of both *Haplos* and *Rouge*, so that seemingly opaque spaces reveal themselves to be underwritten by transience, traces, remains. Allegory reveals the knowledge that has "settled" in obsolete artifacts, which is why Benjamin described allegorical interpretation as a "mortification of works," a deciphering of history in what is necrosed or buried under the new.<sup>159</sup>

Stuart Ullman, the manager of the Overlook, explains the hotel's historical background to the Torrance family. While giving a tour of the hotel's grounds, Ullman explains the Overlook was built in 1907 and completed in 1909. Ullman states that the construction of the hotel was violently contested by the American Indian tribes of the area. According to Ullman, the site of the Overlook was an Indian burial ground. Later in the tour, Dick Hallorann explains the hotel's history to Danny. Hallorann believes the violent past of the Overlook left behind traces of its trauma in the hotel's interior. According to Hallorann, historical sites like the Overlook are like people possessing a personal memory of its past. Like a living entity, the Overlook's historical trauma left behind a

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<sup>159</sup> Ibid. 158.

psychological wound to the hotel's interior. The Overlook's historical past symbolizes an allegorical object evoking the hotel's ghostly haunting.

The physical absence of American Indians in *The Shining* comments on the Overlook's troubled past for American Indians. The Overlook was founded on violence and genocide. The Overlook established a temporary residency for the bourgeoisie to accommodate their excessive lifestyles. Ullman explains during his tour that the Overlook's previous guests were "all the best people," such as movie stars and U.S. presidents. The interior design of the Overlook, such as floor patterns, tapestries, rugs, and decorative art, were patterned after Apache and Navajo schemes, suggesting these American Indian tribes were the original caretakers of the Overlook property. The ruin of history physically merges into the setting of the Overlook seen from the hotel's interior. The Indian burial ground also plays an important role in *The Shining*. This Indigenous burial site establishes a curse over the Overlook, while also functioning as the catalyst for the ghostly haunting of American Indians. The Indian burial ground is directly under the foundation of the Overlook, creating a ghostly disruption threatening the nucleus of the American family. The effects of the Indian burial ground in American horror films like *The Amityville Horror*, *The Shining*, and *Pet Sematary* revolve around three primary elements: the absence of American Indians, the spiritual possession of bodies, and the near annihilation of the family unit.

Once the Torrance family settles into the Overlook, Jack begins working on his manuscript. The American Indian haunting of the Overlook begins directly after Jack strikes a Navajo sandpainting in the hotel's lounge with a yellow ball. Rather than

working on his manuscript, Jack occupies his time by unconsciously igniting the ghosts of the Overlook by his pounding of the Navajo sandpainting. The Navajo sandpainting represents an allegorical object with ties to the supernatural. The role of Navajo sandpaintings is similar to a ritual altar. The Navajo construct these paintings for medical treatment to ward off attacks from evil spirits and sickness. In Navajo Sandpainting, Nancy Parezo explains their significance:

The Navajo word for sandpainting (‘iikaah) means “place where the gods come and go.”...They are essential parts of curing ceremonies whose purpose is to attract the Holy People so that they will help with the complex curing process. The supernatural power sandpaintings contain is considered dangerous, and they can be safely used only in the proper controlled context...They are not “art” in the western sense of the term for they are not spontaneous creations...they are always destroyed at the end of the ritual.<sup>160</sup>

In its proper setting, Navajo sandpaintings effectively evoke supernatural powers, driving out evil spirits, while also cleansing the body of sickness. Yet under the improper setting, as Parezo explains, “The paintings would draw the Holy People who, because of the principle of reciprocity, would have to come, but they would be displeased because their rules had been disobeyed and they would bring sickness and possibly death to the offender.”<sup>161</sup> The following sequence shows Jack in the lounge. While in close-up, Jack stands alone gazing in off-screen space. In the background, the Navajo sandpainting and black and white photos of the Overlook’s former residents hang on the wall directly behind Jack. A large fire burns directly below the sandpainting. Jack now undergoes a psychological change as seen by his physical exterior and his psychotic stare. From this

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<sup>160</sup> Parezo, Nancy. *Navajo Sandpainting: From Religious Act to Commercial Art*. Tucson, AZ: University of Arizona Press., 1983: 1. Print.

<sup>161</sup> Ibid. 20.

point, Jack will see and interact with the ghosts of the Overlook. The ghosts of the Overlook appear before Jack on a regular basis, while eventually convincing him to murder his family. Jack's repeated pounding of the Navajo sandpainting has awakened the spirits of the Overlook. Yet the physical presence of American Indians is absent throughout *The Shining*.

*Imprint: Returning to Wounded Knee*

Where Hollywood films show the physical absence of American Indians even as they haunt the sites of the bourgeois family, Native American cinema like *Imprint* presents the ghostly return of American Indians with their presence. Lin shows the reuniting of Shayla Stonefeather with the Pine Ridge community, while connecting the historical trauma of the Wounded Knee Massacre by the physical presence and absence of Oglala Sioux Indians on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation. Lin's presentation of the Wounded Knee Massacre in *Imprint* revolves around Indigenous time. Shayla's absence from Pine Ridge leaves a void within her community. The spirits of Wounded Knee and the Oglala Sioux of Pine Ridge live beyond the confines of Western time, embedded instead with the spirits and the historical trauma of their "relations." Like Chris Eyre's *Skins*, the past, present, and future to Oglala Sioux and Lakota spirits are one and the same. The spirits of Wounded Knee are interconnected with the community of Pine Ridge. Lin elicits the historical trauma of the Wounded Knee Massacre through the ghostly haunting of an Oglala Sioux family. Instead of representing the Wounded Knee Massacre as a reenactment, Lin shows the ghostly return of Wounded Knee in the

present. By examining *Imprint* in contrast to Hollywood films like *The Shining*, I will reveal the ghostly return of Wounded Knee, while also showing a thriving Lakota community in the present rather than its vanishing from the American landscape in the past.

In *Imprint*, Shayla Stonefeather, an American Indian attorney, returns home to Pine Ridge after her controversial conviction of an Oglala teen in the murder of a U.S. Senator's wife. Shayla returns to assist her mother in the caring of her sick and dying father. After Robbie Whiteshirt's conviction, he attempts to escape from the Denver authorities, where he is promptly shot and killed. After Robbie's death, Shayla begins to see ghosts and visions inside of her family's home on Pine Ridge. Shayla then tries to unravel the mystery surrounding her ghostly haunting. During Shayla's investigation, she re-discovers her Oglala culture. Shayla also locates the ghostly source of her haunting in the Wounded Knee Massacre. In *Visual Prophecies: Imprint and It Starts with a Whisper*, Michelle Raheja argues the appearance of Indigenous ghosts in American cinema reminds the nation of its genocidal past, while also showing a national effort to present American Indian communities as extinct.<sup>162</sup> Yet *Imprint* invokes the violent past of Pine Ridge through a ghostly haunting revolving around the Wounded Knee Massacre. According to Raheja, "*Imprint* offers a reading of the horrors of events at Wounded Knee in South Dakota in 1890 as an allegory for a vibrant Lakota future, rather than only as a melancholic elegy of the past."<sup>163</sup>

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<sup>162</sup> Ed. Denise Cummings. *Visualities: Perspectives on Contemporary American Indian Film*. Lansing, MI: University of Michigan State Press, 2011: 3. Print.

<sup>163</sup> *Ibid.* 4.

Shayla's extensive absence from Pine Ridge has left a spiritual void within her life. Shayla's career as an attorney for a prominent law firm in Denver positions her on the inside of white society, but outside of Pine Ridge. Shayla's involvement in the prosecution of an Oglala teen from Pine Ridge labels her a traitor to her own community as seen by American Indian protestors outside the Denver courtroom during the opening of *Imprint*, along with someone spray painting the phrase "go home apple" on the side of Shayla's car once she returns to Pine Ridge.<sup>164</sup> Yet when Shayla begins to see ghosts in Pine Ridge, her family believes the source of Shayla's haunting involves Lakota spirits. Shayla adamantly rejects the notion of superstition revolving around Oglala spirits, smudging, and sweat lodges as a solution to her problem.

Tom Greyhorse, a Pine Ridge tribal police officer, and Shayla's former love interest, believes Shayla's haunting has ties to the death of Robbie Whiteshirt. Shayla, however, admits her atheism to Tom: "Sometimes I wish I still believed in that sort of thing. It'd be great to think that we could live on." Tom then explains to Shayla the power of Lakota spirits through a past experience of his own, "About a year ago I was in the sweat and this elderly man kept looking at this empty space next to me...I asked him...why were you staring at me? And he told me my friend Ben died...grandpa said he was looking at me like he wanted something from me. I started praying. I asked Ogashala to help me so I could talk to him. And I asked him to forgive me for that fight a long a time ago and for all the pain that I caused. [After that] I never caught anybody staring over my shoulder again." The Indigenous spirits or "ghosts" of Pine Ridge are

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<sup>164</sup> "Apple" is a derogatory term referring to American Indians as red on the outside, white on the inside. This term applies to American Indians that have embraced white culture over their own traditional Indigenous culture.

visible to Oglala Sioux characters like Tom and Shayla. Shayla's haunting begins with a series of loud noises coming from her upstairs bedroom. She eventually confronts the spirits one evening in her family's home. The Lakota spirits then reveal themselves to Shayla: "At night, she glimpses a ghostly figure (a wispy shimmer achieved by low-tech special effects that is nevertheless spooky) accompanied by aural intimations of violence, and a spectral handprint on a wall that quickly disappears...The spectral figure does not scare Shayla as much as it activates her need to investigate its cause and purpose."<sup>165</sup>

The Lakota spirits of Pine Ridge are absent and present to their ghostly haunting.

While American horror films like *The Shining* show an American Indian haunting through the former white patrons of the Overlook Hotel, Lin presents the visible presence of Lakota spirits in a manner similar to Eyre's use of Iktomi as the body of a spider. In Lakota, Tom passionately counters Shayla's remarks about her atheism stating: "we live on...we do." For traditionalists like Tom, the idea of American Indians' "absence" to their ghostly haunting is non-existent. Lakota spirits present themselves to Oglala characters to assist, teach, and help their family relations through life and death. Death is only the beginning for Oglala Sioux, where Lakota spirits and their human relations like Tom share in the physical and metaphysical world of Pine Ridge.

While taking on several visible forms, Lakota spirits interact with Oglala characters revealing their motives with ties to historical trauma like the Wounded Knee Massacre and the loss of the Black Hills. Once Shayla draws closer to the source of her haunting, an Oglala medicine man reveals to Shayla an explanation for her problem

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<sup>165</sup> Ed. Denise Cummings. *Visualities: Perspectives on Contemporary American Indian Film*. Lansing, MI: University of Michigan State Press, 2011: 14-15. Print.

involving the Wounded Knee Massacre. When Shayla returns a stranded horse to her neighbors, a local wolf of Pine Ridge leads Shayla to the site and cemetery of Wounded Knee. At Wounded Knee, Shayla encounters the Oglala medicine man from earlier who smudged Shayla's home at the request of her mother. The medicine man explains to Shayla the relationship between Lakota spirits, time, and historical trauma:

Shayla: Why are you here?

Medicine Man: ...I listen to the screams of the wounded and dying...carried on the wind across the prairie. It was about this time when the white men attacked...They slaughtered them...They slaughtered defenseless men, women, and children. Their blood spilled here on this ground. We forget about these things, but...the trees-they remember. The rocks...and the earth...They remember when we forget. The story forever imprinted...imprinted on this land. If we listen they will guide us...give us visions, tell us stories. Past, present, and future all touch one another. Time doesn't exist...For spirits, time doesn't exist. Can you hear them? Can you hear the cries?

The medicine man attempts to convince Shayla to see beyond the restrictions of Western rationality relating to her haunting. Yet Shayla still isn't convinced the Lakota spirits of Pine Ridge are attempting to reveal a message to her. At the climax of *Imprint*, Shayla and Tom are confronted in her upstairs bedroom by her boyfriend Jonathan Freeman, also an attorney with the Denver law firm. Earlier Shayla confronted Jonathan at her father's funeral, where she revealed information linking Jonathan to the corruption of their star witness that led to the conviction of Robbie Whiteshirt. Shayla demands that Jonathan turn himself in to the Denver authorities, while he refuses to accept her request. Once the violent confrontation between Jonathan, Shayla, and Tom begins, Shayla then understands the vision she witnessed earlier. Shayla's vision revealed the reenactment of

her future encounter with Jonathan. The reenactment of Shayla's vision revealed the violent confrontation between Shayla and Jonathan resulting in the death of Tom and Shayla. Yet Shayla's vision allows her to anticipate Jonathan's actions and thus save herself and Tom.

Instead of the historical reenactment of the Wounded Knee Massacre through its presentation in linear time, Lin presents the relationship of Lakota spirits of Wounded Knee and Oglala characters in the present tense of Indigenous time. While at the Wounded Knee cemetery, the medicine man tells Shayla "about this time" the U.S. 7<sup>th</sup> Calvary massacred Big Foot's band of Miniconjou Lakota. Shayla's haunting and confrontation with Jonathan revolves around the anniversary of the Wounded Knee Massacre. Lin not only presents Shayla's reuniting with Pine Ridge, but as a result, Shayla unconsciously finds herself immersed in historical trauma relating to the Wounded Knee Massacre. The medicine man also estimates the anniversary of Wounded Knee instead of giving a specific date and time. Western time and its chronological ordering of events in linear time is absent from *Imprint* and its Oglala characters' understanding of Wounded Knee. The site of the Wounded Knee Massacre is a sacred space that shares in a unique relationship with its natural environment. According to the medicine man, the rocks, trees, and Oglala Sioux themselves are connected to the victims of Wounded Knee. The tragic "experience" of the Wounded Knee Massacre relating to the traumatic emotions of its victims has left an imprint on the space of Pine Ridge.

This historic "imprint" marks the annihilation of Big Foot's band of Lakota, while also presenting a new beginning for Oglala Sioux through their survival beyond the

genocide of the U.S. 7<sup>th</sup> Calvary. Shayla's life now comes full circle to Wounded Knee. The Wounded Knee Massacre represented the end of major conflicts of U.S. extermination policies between American Indian tribes and the U.S. government. The Wounded Knee Massacre also symbolizes a new beginning for the Oglala Sioux, where the adjustments to reservation life, coupled with the introduction of U.S. government "Americanization" policies like Indian boarding schools, introduced Oglala Sioux to the twentieth century. For Shayla and Pine Ridge, the Wounded Knee Massacre represents the beginning and return to a spiritual space created during the aftermath of genocide and removal. Yet Oglala Sioux characters like Shayla, Tom, and the medicine man return to Wounded Knee for guidance, spiritual connectedness, and empowerment. At the end of *Imprint*, Lin shows Shayla standing on a hillside overlooking the Pine Ridge community with both arms open. Shayla rejoins her community to assist in her people's future, while at the same time leaving behind her legal career in Denver. Lin presents the continuation of Oglala life rather than its destruction. While the future of Pine Ridge is uncertain, Oglala Sioux like Shayla now use the resources and experiences gained from the world outside of Pine Ridge to bring her legal expertise back to her community. The future of Pine Ridge now relies on the power of individuals like Shayla to re-engage with her community to provide social and economic stability to Pine Ridge. Regardless of the economic outcome of Pine Ridge's financial issues, Oglala Sioux life will continue on in the future. The victims of Wounded Knee not only share in the space of Pine Ridge, but also "live on" with their relations in the present. Native American cinema like *Imprint* presents a way of seeing American Indians through historical trauma such as the

Wounded Knee Massacre. The spiritual center of Pine Ridge revolves around Wounded Knee, which enables the continuation of traditional Oglala identity and culture.

### *Conclusion*

Native American cinema presents a way of seeing American Indians through historical trauma like the Wounded Knee Massacre. Native American cinema also shows the unique temporal experience of American Indians' relation to historical trauma. Wounded Knee represents the survival and continuation of Oglala culture in the present and future, whereas Hollywood cinema and television shows the repeated annihilation of Oglala Sioux at Wounded Knee from the past. The resurfacing of a ghostly haunting from Lakota spirits of Wounded Knee shows the interconnectedness of Oglala Sioux and Lakota spirits in the presentation of historical trauma from the present. The past, present, and future are one and the same to Oglala Sioux and Lakota spirits on Pine Ridge. The Oglala characters of *Skins* and *Imprint* return to the space of Wounded Knee and the Black Hills. This theme of "returning home" in Native American cinema represents the imprint of the past on the present, while also presenting the continuation of Indigenous communities in the present and future. The spiritual center of Pine Ridge revolves around the space of Wounded Knee and the Black Hills. Oglala Sioux identity shares a spiritual relationship to these spaces, along with the historical trauma revolving around these sacred sites. Again Native American cinema continues to promote a way of seeing American Indians through historical trauma.

Hollywood, however, presents American Indians through Indigenous community's destruction, absence, and vanishing from the American landscape. Hollywood cinema and television like *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee*, *Into the West*, *Deadwood*,<sup>166</sup> *The Shining*, *Dances with Wolves*, *The New World*, and *Avatar* present the absence and annihilation of American Indian communities. Hollywood's fixation on American Indians' position in the nineteenth century attempts to uncover the troubling past between non-Indigenous America and American Indian tribes through their destruction and absence as result of historical trauma. At the same time, Hollywood continues to ignore American Indians in the present, while constructing a narrative that revolves around the salvation of Indigenous communities through the humanity of white colonizers in the past and future. *Avatar* in particular represents a long standing tradition of Hollywood's presentation of American Indians through their destruction and salvation by a white protagonist. In Visual Difference: Postcolonial Studies and Intercultural Cinema, Elizabeth Heffelfinger and Laura Wright argue that James Cameron, the director of *Avatar*, presents a composite of "otherness" in the Na'vi, an alien life form and Indigenous community of Pandora in the distant future.<sup>167</sup> According to Heffelfinger and Wright, the Na'vi embody an array of minorities sharing a relationship to colonization: "In *Avatar* we see, within the context of a major commercial success, the familiar and, we would like to believe, outdated tropes of both the white man going native and of serving as the salvation to a culture over which he gains immediate mastery... In creating a

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<sup>166</sup> *Deadwood*. Dir. David Milch. Home Box Office (HBO), 2004.

<sup>167</sup> Heffelfinger, Elizabeth. *Visual Difference : Postcolonial Studies and Intercultural Studies*. New York, New York: Peter Lang Publishing Inc., 2011. Print.

completely fictional culture and landscape to colonize, Cameron is still utilizing familiar and highly essentializing notions of real peoples and cultures in order to generate a composite Other; one can assume that, in the global era, it is no longer acceptable to assign Otherness to extant peoples, that now we must, in order to avoid charges of racism, create them.”<sup>168</sup>

Like *Dances with Wolves* the white male protagonist of *Avatar*, Jack Sully, is sent by the U.S. government to explore, contact, and convince an Indigenous tribe to surrender their lands and resources to the U.S. government. Yet Sully retracts his loyalty to his commanding officer, while attempting to save the Na’vi from near annihilation. At the end of *Avatar*, the Na’vi village is wiped out, along with more than half of the Na’vi. Sully, the Na’vi, and his white companions fend off the U.S. military, while eventually pushing out U.S. forces from Pandora. The Na’vi’s salvation relies on Sully’s guidance. Without Sully’s assistance, the Na’vi would perish under the pressure of the U.S. government. In the end, Sully becomes the savior of the Na’vi and their way of life. In Hollywood film and television, American Indians are not only absent from the future, but now American Indians take the form of an “Avatar” rather than their own. The position of American Indians in Hollywood to the future is absent. The extinction of Indigenous communities from the American landscape as the result of historical trauma like the Wounded Knee Massacre or historical trauma in the distant future shows the instability of Indigenous communities in the past, present, and future. Science fiction and the Western share a common representation of American Indians as “vanishing” from the past and future frontiers of America.

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<sup>168</sup> Ibid. 84.

Yet Native American cinema attempts to uncover a long standing division among American Indians relating to tribalism. Tribalism presents a contrast with the vision, history, and the domestic space of American Indian homes. From here I will finalize my argument on a way of seeing American Indians in Native American cinema's presentation of the Indigenous look, the domestic space of American Indian homes, and historical trauma. Tribalism also presents a way of seeing American Indians.

## Thesis Conclusion

Native American cinema personalizes the American Indian experience of each tribe's own specific social, cultural, and economic issues. In Native American cinema, tribalism is a way of seeing American Indians. While Hollywood attempts to confine Indigenous identity to the nineteenth century, revolving around American Indian tribes associated with horse cultures like the Lakota, Cheyenne, and Comanche Nation, Native American cinema works through distinct social and cultural issues pertaining to individual tribes such as interracial marriage, the conflicts between anthropologists and Hopi ceremonialism, reservation poverty, and urban relocation. Native American cinema defines Indigenous identity through individual tribes like the Oglala Sioux, Coeur d'Alene, and Cherokee, while Hollywood attempts to bundle American Indians into tribes revolving around horses, buffalo, and cowboys. Native American cinema such as *Barking Water*,<sup>169</sup> *The Doe Boy*,<sup>170</sup> *Ritual Clowns*,<sup>171</sup> and *Sun Kissed*<sup>172</sup> revolve around the vision of American Indian protagonists, the familial space of American Indian homes, presenting historical trauma in Indigenous time, and tribalism. Tribalism is not only relevant for Indigenous communities today, but also represents the difference among American Indians in how they define their own personal cultural identities within their communities. Without excavating the complications of intertribal identity and history, Hollywood will always be left on the outside of the American Indian experience. Native American cinema presents a retelling of Indigenous history through the point of view of

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<sup>169</sup> *Barking Water*. Dir. Sterlin Harjo. Dirt Road Productions, 2009.

<sup>170</sup> *The Doe Boy*. Dir. Randy Redroad. Anthony J. Vozza Productions, 2001.

<sup>171</sup> *Ritual Clowns*. Dir. Victor Masayesva. Masayesva, 1988.

<sup>172</sup> *Sun Kissed*. Dir. Adi Lavy and Maya Stark. Independent Filmmaker Project, 2012.

American Indian characters. Indigenous and non-Indigenous filmmakers have given significant time and space for their Indigenous protagonists to tell their own story in connection to their personal American Indian experience revolving around their individual tribes.

In 1887, the Dawes Act established the creation of tribal memberships based on blood quantum<sup>173</sup> for tribes such as the Cherokee Nation, including the disbursement of their communally owned reservation lands into individual allotments, ranging from 90 to 180 acres of land that would be disbursed to each tribal member. The tribally owned lands of the Indian Territories in what is now known as present day Oklahoma were broken up and dispersed amongst the heads of each American Indian family depending on the individuals age, gender, and status in their family household. After the disbursement of tribal lands, any land left over from tribal allotments was auctioned off to white settlers. Nearly all American Indian reservations throughout the United States would be dismantled, along with their tribal governments and schools. The U.S. government believed that this policy would assist American Indians on the path to U.S. citizenship. The Dawes Act attempted to assimilate American Indians to the white middle class through the repositioning and control of Indigenous' lands through the U.S. government and the BIA, along with the reeducation of Indigenous children in Indian boarding schools. One of the primary motivations for the Dawes Act was to transition American Indians into private property owners and farmers, thus establishing the first stage of their assimilation into the white middle class. Local white settlers and

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<sup>173</sup> "Blood quantum" describes the degree of ancestry for American Indians. The majority of American Indians at this time didn't base their racial identities on blood quantum. Tribes typically defined their racial identities based on their clan system.

landowners in the area put pressure on local politicians to open up the Indian Territories through public auctions, and placing the Indian Territories on the path to statehood that would allow for the non-violent hand over of Indigenous' lands to white settlers.

For the tribes of Eastern and Central Oklahoma, such as the Cherokee Nation represented in *The Doe Boy*, the complications of Indigenous identity are connected to blood politics in rural Oklahoma. Hunter, a young half-blood Cherokee Indian must deal with a white blood disorder passed down from his white father, Hank. Hunter lives in a community made up of white and Cherokee Indians in Eastern Oklahoma. This film deals with social and cultural issues relating to interracial marriage. The complications of interracial marriage within the Cherokee Nation revolve around the impact of U.S. Indian policies such as the Dawes Act that opened up reservation lands to local white settlers such as Hank's white ancestors. Once white settlers migrated to the Cherokee reservation, including the eighteen tribal reservations in the surrounding area, this exposed American Indians to the influence of white culture such as interracial marriage. Yet for the Cherokee Nation, interracial marriage with whites dates back in further than 1887. In *Mankiller: A Chief and Her People*, Wilma Mankiller, the first elected female chief of the Cherokee Nation, discusses the impact of interracial marriage on the Cherokee people in the 1700s:

Although some historians have argued otherwise, it is generally held that the first white trader to marry a Cherokee was Cornelious Dougherty (sometimes called Alexander Dougherty), a stalwart Irishman from Virginia who apparently settled among our people and spent the rest of his life with the tribe... These traders established what were undoubtedly some of the first of the many old Cherokee mixed-blood families. Mingling and intermarriage

with the whites had a critical effect on tribal development. The consequences would be felt for generations to come.<sup>174</sup>

Interracial marriage for the Cherokee Nation before removal in 1838-1839 had a deep impact on Cherokee society. The evolution of mixed blood families within the Cherokee Nation created complications within the domestic space of Cherokee homes during the eighteenth century. According to Mankiller: “Marrying white traders, for example, disturbed the traditional Cherokee social organization because many of the wives went to live with their husbands...Cherokee society began to erode as many of the mixed-blood youths, swayed by their fathers’ religion, decided the old ways were heathen and bad.”<sup>175</sup> In *The Doe Boy*, Hank is the head of their mixed blood family household. Hunter frequently clashes with his Hank throughout *The Doe Boy* revolving around Hunter’s health problems that prevent him from physically participating in sports such as hunting. Hunter’s inability to physically perform in sports like the other children of the area alienates Hunter from his father. Moreover, as Hunter grows into adolescence, Hunter and his father clash over his approach to hunting deer in the local forests. While Hunter’s grandfather, Marvin, a full-blood traditionalist, attempts to influence his grandson in the “old-ways” of hunting, Hank scolds his efforts as “stupid.” Hunter’s racial identity shares a dual existence with his white and Cherokee parents in the same way many Cherokee “youths” experienced interracial marriage in the 1700s. The familial space of Hunter’s home is defined by the contrast and conflict to interracial marriage. Throughout *The Doe Boy*, Hank and Marvin clash over Hunter’s spirituality. Interracial marriage

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<sup>174</sup> Mankiller, Wilma. *Mankiller: A Chief and Her People*. New York, New York: St. Martin’s Press., 1993: 25. Print.

<sup>175</sup> Ibid. 26.

creates disruptions within the domestic space of mixed blood Cherokee homes with traditionalists like Marvin and whites like Hank. Native American cinema such as *The Doe Boy* revolves around specific social and cultural problems relating to individual tribes and their history, whereas Hollywood cinema continues to alienate tribes such as the Cherokee for American Indian tribes affiliated with horse cultures from its narrative. Hollywood films such as *Cold Mountain*<sup>176</sup> and *The Outlaw Josey Wales*<sup>177</sup> position Cherokee characters to secondary roles with white protagonists, while presenting Cherokee identity in the nineteenth century and absent from the twentieth and twenty first centuries.

Hollywood cinema has encapsulated Native identity in a universal and singular understanding of American Indian identity in relation to time, history, and colonization. With an estimated budget of \$250,000,000, Walt Disney Pictures is hedging its bets on the revitalization of the *The Lone Ranger* television series with the upcoming 2013 summer blockbuster release of *The Lone Ranger*.<sup>178 179</sup> In *The Lone Ranger*, the American Indian spirit warrior Tonto, played by Johnny Depp, recounts the story of John Reid, a man of law, justice, and legend of the American West. This unlikely duo must fight against corrupt railroad barons attempting to pillage the American frontier at the turn of the twentieth century. Again the salvation of Indigenous communities in the

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<sup>176</sup> *Cold Mountain*. Dir. Anthony Minghella. Miramax Films, 2003.

<sup>177</sup> *The Outlaw Josey Wales*. Dir. Clint Eastwood. Warner Bros, 1976.

<sup>178</sup> *The Lone Ranger*. Web. 24 March 2013.

<<http://www.imdb.com/>

<sup>179</sup> *The Lone Ranger*. Dir. Gore Verbinski. Silver Bullet Productions, 2013.

American West relies on a white protagonist, coupled with his trusty Indigenous “sidekick.”

While at the time of this writing I have only had access to the official trailer of *The Lone Ranger*, one only needs a minute and half clip to understand Gore Verbinski’s version of the Hollywood Indian. As in John Ford’s *The Searchers*, Monument Valley serves as the backdrop in *The Lone Ranger* for the clash between good and evil. While the Western continues to establish binaries in relation to white characters like the Lone Ranger and corrupt railroad barons, American Indians are once again left on the outside of white society, attempting to push through Indigenous communities for more land and natural resources. American Indians are also encapsulated in a time period that continues to represent them solely in relation to their vanishing from the American landscape due to genocide. While *The Searchers* and *The Lone Ranger* are being released more than 57 years apart, the place of the American Indian remains static: to fill in the background of the Western, rather than occupy the foreground. Hollywood now sees American Indians as victims rather than the primary antagonists for white communities, while at the same time tethering Indigenous communities to a past more than 100 years removed from American Indians’ contemporary experiences.

The future, however, holds a much different place for American Indians in Hollywood film and television. Science Fiction films present absence of American Indians as an accomplished inevitability in its imaginings of the future. In the recent and anticipated releases of films like *Star Trek*,<sup>180</sup> *Star Trek Into Darkness*,<sup>181</sup> *Avatar*, and

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<sup>180</sup> *Star Trek*. Dir. J.J. Abrams. Paramount Pictures, 2009.

<sup>181</sup> *Star Trek Into Darkness*. J.J. Abrams. Paramount Pictures, 2013.

*Prometheus*<sup>182</sup> American Indians are shown only through their complete extinction.

While they share this unique fate with the CGI dinosaurs, American Indians will have to wait for Hollywood to create a rich white CEO to build them a theme park, where scientists can clone American Indians and charge top dollar for white spectators to see Indigenous communities still using bows and arrows on herds of buffalo. With the disappearance of American Indians at the frontiers of space, Hollywood reveals the extensive colonization of new Indigenous subjects like aliens. While the absence of American Indians in Hollywood's future imaginary shows the vanishing of Indigenous communities, Captain James T. Kirk of the Starship Enterprise leads new expeditions for the U.S. government in the new frontiers of space and intergalactic travel. Instead of Comanche Indians on horseback, aliens in *Star Trek*, like Captain Nero, a Romulan miner seeking revenge for the destruction of his planet Romulus, attempt to fight off invaders like Captain Kirk. Throughout the *Star Trek* series, Romulans are the primary antagonists for the United Federation of Planets. Rather than American Indians performing the role of villains, aliens like the Romulans present a new obstacle for the conquest of space. Hollywood film and television continue to present American Indian communities solely through their destruction and absence, while ignoring American Indians in the present. Hollywood represents Indigenous identity through the look of white protagonists, the destruction of the domestic space of American Indian homes through interracial marriage, and shows historical trauma in American Indian history in Western time.

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<sup>182</sup>*Prometheus*. Dir. Ridley Scott. Twentieth Century Fox, 2012.

Native American cinema, however, presents three modes of representation of Indigenous identity through the vision of American Indian protagonists, the domestic space of American Indian homes, and the presentation of historical trauma in Indigenous time. While Hollywood constructs Indigenous identity through the vision of white protagonists, coupled with its absence and destruction, Native American cinema shows American Indians in the present and continuation in the future. Native American cinema also revolves around tribalism. Specifically, in *The Exiles* the clash between Indigenous tribes in the cityscape of Los Angeles not only mixes American Indians within the urban space of L.A., but urban relocation also mixes a variety of American Indian tribes within Bunker Hill. Yvonne, Homer, and Tommy in particular all hail from different reservations and tribes throughout the U.S. Yet without the Federal Urban Relocation Program, these Indigenous characters never would have met or interacted with each other. Yvonne and Homer also present the potential of filling the domestic space of their apartment with children: the mixing of their Apache and Hualapai cultural backgrounds presents the refashioning of the American Indian family through the implementation of Federal Urban Location Program. This “refashioning” of the American Indian family evolves as the result of the hegemonic influence of the U.S. government and the BIA.

Through the temptation of economic incentives by the U.S. government’s Urban Relocation Program, Indigenous mobility grants American Indians access to the space outside their reservation, while also forcing American Indians to mix within the space of Los Angeles. While at the same time the birth of an Indigenous community within the space of Bunker Hill ironically stems from an Indian policy that aims to Americanize

Indigenous people, it is also attempting to eradicate the American Indian reservation system. Through urban relocation, the U.S. government aims to transition American Indians into white society. According to Rosenthal, the U.S. government had a particular interest in discouraging the congregation of American Indians within the urban space of American cities:

The relocation program also discouraged the kinds of activities that might have facilitated the maintenance of Indian identity in the city as part of its Americanization program. Relocation was based on the idea that a separation from extended kinship networks and Indian communities was necessary to facilitate the assimilation of Indian people, much like the off-reservation boarding schools of the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Many relocation participants made trips back to area reservations to attend family, tribal, or intertribal events or simply to visit family and friends. Officials rarely excused such visits and added them to the individual's list of infractions or expelled the individual from the program.<sup>183</sup>

Yet *The Exiles* shows the evolution of Bunker Hill through American Indian engagement with an Indian policy that ironically attempts to “evolve” Indigenous identities into consumers, Christians, and the nuclear family. American Indians of Bunker Hill show the hybridity of their identities through their relationship with white dominant culture, while at the same time sharing a relationship with their cultural past. At the climax of *The Exiles* at the gathering on “Hill X” overlooking the nightscape of Los Angeles, MacKenzie represents the mixing of Indigenous cultures and tribes of the United States rather than the vanishing of American Indians from the American landscape.

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<sup>183</sup> Rosenthal, Nicolas. *Reimagining Indian Country: Native American Migration & Identity in Twentieth-Century Los Angeles*. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press., 2012: 62. Print.

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