Celebrating with *The Last of the Mohicans*: The Columbus Quincentenary and Neocolonialism in Hollywood Film

M. Elise Marubbio

Visually seductive, Michael Mann's 1992 version of James Fenimore Cooper's *The Last of the Mohicans* draws the viewer in with long panoramic landscape shots of mountainous wilderness and raging waters. The scenery and the love story position us in the turbulent world of the American frontier during the French and Indian Wars, and against the familiar backdrop of American expansionism, imperialism, and colonialism. Although not the original auteur of *The Last of theMohicans*, Mann's signature is evident in his specific use of cinematography and in his manipulation and development of certain traits from the original story and from Hollywood adaptations—specifically George Seitz's 1936 nation-building epic. While Mann's film reinforces the nationalist and racialist themes prevalent in Cooper's 1826 story, his film adaptation also reflects the legacy of Cooper's story in Hollywood and in American mythology. Mann's stylistic choices and narrative twists take on specific late twentieth century relevance in the United States particularly in the post-colonial and Quincentenary moment of its release—a time when Americans were questioning the historical accuracy of our foundational cultural myths.

The year of the Quincentenary—1992—marked a tumultuous moment in contemporary U.S. and world historical consciousness. It was a period when mainstream American culture was forced to re-evaluate its historical narratives, its political heroes, and its heritage on this continent. Debates abounded regarding whether the Quincentenary should celebrate Columbus and the "civilizing" of the Americas, the multicultural encounter, or 500 years of indigenous survival in the wake of colonialism and genocide. Summerhill and Williams' *Sinking Columbus*, Axtell's *Beyond 1492*, *Time*'s special issues (7 Oct. 1991 and Fall 1992), *Newsweek*'s Fall/Winter 1991 issue, and *Northeast Indian Quarterly*'s special edition (Fall 1990) illustrate the intense self-reflexivity that academia and the American public underwent during this time. Clearly, the Quincentenary offered a venue for a multiplicity of voices and opinions. This was particularly important for Native Americans who sought to educate mainstream Americans about their current economic, religious, and political positioning as colonized peoples within the United States. A positive result of these Quincentenary debates was that American myths surrounding the Columbus encounter, Western-European global expansion, and the civilizing of the American continent were confronted by and positioned against the realities of colonialism, invasion, slavery, and racism.

In respect to the post-Cold War global political positioning of the U.S. at this time, one is struck by the complexity of these debates in relation to American nationalism. During 1992, Americans witnessed President Bush's famous "New World Order" speech, the third greatest period of U.S. immigration,[1] a rise in anti-illegal immigration measures,[2] and a decline in employment opportunities. As Walter Zinn suggests, events such as rising unemployment, U.S. economic expansion overseas, and the U.S. military action in Iraq culminated in insecurity, even "alienation...in every part of the country," causing many Americans to question how they fit into their own country, and to question their role in global economic politics.[3] Within this milieu the Quincentenary was "[n]o longer an innocuous ethnic celebration of Columbus' discovery of America, it had become a battleground for our entire view of Western culture."[4]

In synchronization with more liberal voices during 1992, *The Last of the Mohicans* was promoted as a multicultural[5] film dedicated to a more sympathetic and authentic[6] rendering of Native American cultures than Cooper's original story or Hollywood's past productions. Indeed, its spectacular visuals, attention to costume and language, and references to inter-group conflicts could seduce the viewer into accepting such a billing. However, an analysis of the editing, camera work, and narrative structure reveal an alternative reality that reinforces the original

Anglo nation-building agenda of the novel and promotes a neocolonial theme constructed through the use of visual colonial rhetoric.[7] While neocolonialism generally refers to the economic activities of powerful nations, I propose that it is also applicable to the economically motivated Hollywood film industry that perpetuates a dominant U.S. colonial hegemony. Neocolonialism in film incorporates, as visual and verbal rhetoric, some of the elements of colonialism that create and sustain a dominant group's power over another group: surveillance, imposed point-of-view and privilege of voice, hierarchy of language and images, and stereotypes of the colonized group. These are seen most overtly in Hollywood period pieces set during the colonial era, which glorify the colonial-imperial process. Such is the case with Mann's *The Last of the Mohicans*.

As did Cooper's original colonial narrative, Mann's neocolonial discourse builds on a legacy of rhetorically positioning Native Americans as continually colonized peoples whose fate, history, and environment are manipulated and presented through the dominant culture's perspective. Mann's use of cinematography and narrative, in conjunction with point-of-view, dialogue, actors' screen-time, and specific character coupling, reinforces a hierarchy of white racial and political dominance reflective of a number of ongoing American myths: the Vanishing American, Manifest Destiny, and the American Frontier. The result is a film that effectively reduces Native Americans to stereotyped erotic and exotic accoutrements of the main subjects—the white American hero and heroine. Thus, Michael Mann's choice and representation of this particular story at the height of the Quincentenary debates suggests, not a multicultural endorsement of American history, but rather a glorification of the colonization process through a reinforcing of nationalist myths. The following article will explore the visual colonial rhetoric that emerges in Mann's film in order to demonstrate this thesis and to illustrate how the viewer is inculcated into the process.

Michael Mann's *The Last of the Mohicans* opens with a series of intertitles.[8] The first and second locate us in the American colonies in 1757 and inform us that it is "the third year of the war between England and France for the possession of the continent." The latter reads: "Three men, the last of a *vanishing people*, are on the *frontier* west of the Hudson River" (italics mine). The camera pans from a ridge-top out across an impressive view of the expansive wilderness; the cinematography in this brief moment does not penetrate the landscape but gazes on its untouched entirety. Mann has presented us with a variety of symbols: a colonial encounter, a war between imperial powers, a vanishing people (vanishing due to the encroachment of white civilization), a western frontier, and a virgin land as seen from above. In a manner reminiscent of Mary Louise Pratt and David Spurr's notion of the "colonial gaze,"[9] and visually portrayed as a *National Geographic*[10] spread, Mann seductively draws us into a context in which we, as an extension of the camera's eye, take on the role of external surveyor of this American Eden.[11] As the imperial eye, we take the first step in the colonial expansion process: We scout the seemingly untouched frontier wilderness—viewing its resources, its attributes—anticipating the cultivation of this Eden.

As both Spurr and Pratt's work explain, the colonizer's eye, its gaze and "the commanding view [make] possible an understanding of the non-Western world as an object of study, an area for development, a field of action."[12] Mann's style of cinematography does this by suggesting the wonder of the land to the viewer, and we as the camera stand on the ridge of this pristine landscape, noting the absence of civilization—roads, deforested settlements, and noise. Also included in the colonial/imperial surveillance of a land suitable for exploit is the purposeful disregard for its indigenous inhabitants—an avoidance of their presence. According to Pratt, "[t]he landscape is written as uninhabited, unpossessed, unhistoricized, unoccupied"[13] in order to justify the Imperialist's penetration of the land (an action reminiscent of rape) and his claiming of its fertile and abundant resources, both natural and human. We have knowledge of the "vanishing people" (the intertitle cards have given us this information) but because they are not yet visible, we disregard them, successfully establishing our distance from them.

Mann's peaceful introductory panoramic and the viewer's initial gaze over blue hazy mountains is suddenly shifted downward from the exterior to the voluptuous, dark, and sensual interior landscape of the colonial frontier. In the next few scenes, Mann's rhetorical strategies further define the colonial situation and the cultural division between the viewer, positioned with the camera as the neocolonial eye, and three of the primary characters. A long tracking sequence concentrates on three men—Hawkeye, Uncas, and Chingachgook—as they run through the forest in pursuit of a stag. They are handsome, physically fit, and attuned to each others' actions. The length of their run, the agility of their actions (Hawkeye throws his rifle to Uncas while removing his shirt and Uncas easily catches it—both in full run),

and their prowess (exhibited through Hawkeye's bare chest and their stamina) attest to their connection to each other and to their environment. The use of the Munsee Delaware language, clothing, and ritual establish these men as Native American.

Mann has already verified their status as a disappearing race ("Three men, the last of a vanishing people") and he has triggered the viewers' knowledge of American history, reminding us that the East Coast was colonial America's first frontier. Thus through this sequencing, Mann sets the stage for a meta-narrative about Native Americans as racially exotic, erotic, and ultimately at ease in and part of the wild landscape. In addition, the sequencing keeps us at a distance from them, excluded from their world, which effectively positions us as a surveying neocolonial presence attached to the camera eye. However, as does a *National Geographic*, Mann allows us to participate peripherally in their exotic world when Chingachgook, "speaking words of respect and sorrow in Munsee Delaware," blesses the dying stag as Uncas and Hawkeye look on.[14] The English subtitles give us knowledge and intimacy regarding their actions. This coupled with a close-up shot of Hawkeye as he positions us in his gun-sight during the stag-shooting scene, suggesting that he knows we are watching, completes the panoptic voyeurism[15] of this moment.

The viewer continues to participate in the narrative's colonial discourse by classifying the three men racially (a move referencing back to Cooper's original racial hierarchy that positioned the three primary races intermixing on the colonial frontier: White, Native American, and Black). While Mann alters Cooper's story by depicting all three men as culturally Native American, his overt focus on Hawkeye throughout the stag scene accentuates Hawkeye's whiteness and centers him as the main character differentiated from Uncas and Chingachgook through actions and skin-color. As Gary Edgerton has documented:

> Scene 1, the deer hunt, effectively establishes the film's cultural and ideological agenda.... All told, this first scene is composed of 34 shots, lasting 2 minutes and 34 seconds. Hawkeye dominates the proceedings, being in 21 of the shots for 106 seconds; Uncas is next with 16 shots for 77 seconds; Chingachgook is in 7 shots for 43 seconds.... More importantly, the deer hunt is photographed from Hawkeye's point-of-view. He leads the chase, and the 5 shots that picture the stag only appear when he looks towards the animal.[16]

Edgerton's analysis suggests that the cultural and ideological agenda of the film is Anglo-centric and presented from a "white patriarchal viewpoint,"[17] and that Mann's camera work underscores this. Indeed, the viewer's gaze is preoccupied with Hawkeye's actions—his running, stripping, and killing of the deer. Hawkeye's removal of his shirt forces the viewer to acknowledge his whiteness and to contrast it with Uncas' and Chingachgook's clothed, but darker, skin color. Through the camera's point-of-view shot from Hawkeye to the stag we are momentarily positioned as Hawkeye. A racial hierarchy supported by narrative and camera work is established in this scene that will continue throughout the film.[18] Hawkeye's identification as both white and Native American creates a niche for the viewer, and we are coded into this hierarchy through our identification with him. We are already conditioned to view him as the focal character but his hybridity and our shared viewpoint allow us to negotiate between the white world and the Native American world. From here on in, Mann's rhetorical tactics shift, positioning us as participants in the colonial "War for Empire" (to borrow from Schwartz) from the perspective of Hawkeye—the hybrid colonial Native.

Establishing Hawkeye's cultural hybridity in a frontier setting positions the primitive and natural environment we just witnessed within a *contact zone*.[19] According to Mary Louise Pratt, contact zones are "social spaces where disparate cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in highly asymmetrical relations of dominance and subordination."[20] Within these zones, there is disorder and chaos that must be ordered. In the case of *The Last of the Mohicans*, the "disparate cultures" include a variety of Native American tribes, the Anglo-colonials, and the French and British imperialists. The disorder revolves around land disputes, interracial mixing, and the interaction between "civilized" peoples and "savages" who need to be "ordered" through domination or elimination—something Mann's (as did Cooper's) narrative achieves by the end of the film by removing the most "savage" and unruly elements from the setting.

Classifying, according to both Spurr and Pratt, is a fundamental part of colonial strategy for ordering, regulating, and defining the unfamiliar, the untamed, and the uncivilized.[21] It remains a deeply ingrained bit of colonial rhetoric in contemporary discourse about marginal peoples in Third World nations and the U.S., and it is clearly prevalent in Hollywood film representations of the Other, especially Native

Americans. Hollywood's narrative film utilizes a stylized and reductive image of Native Americans based on a descriptive tradition that began with Christopher Columbus and Amerigo Vespucci's encounters with "Indians" in the Americas. These earliest descriptions reduced Native Americans within a dichotomous structure, positioning the positive image of the noble and beautiful Indian against the negative image of the savage and ignoble Indian. Hollywood's rendition of this binary adds the modifiers *assimilative* or *unassimilative*, further confining the Native American to the role of an interpolated Indian Other; a specific kind of signifier.[22] Through this representational history, the Native American signifies both the United States' iconic national symbol and its national Other,[23] resulting in an ambiguous relationship which is deeply inundated with issues of race and colonialism.

Following Cooper, Mann's film participates in such a discoursive legacy by positioning Native American characters into racializing classificatory systems that reduce them to stereotypes which either idealize or debase them. Adopting Cooper's structure and following the classic Hollywood binary, Mann reduces his Native characters to either the Noble Savage—Uncas and Chingachgook—who is acceptable to Anglo society because of his innate goodness or because of his dedication to protecting white society, or to the Vicious Savage—Magua and his followers—who, out of revenge or pure malice, wish to destroy Anglo society—to "wipe out [its] seed." Mann's caricatures are indicative of Hollywood cinematic narratives in which, according to Daniel Bernardi,

> people of color are generally represented as either deviant threats to white rule, whereby requiring civilizing or brutal punishment, or fetishized objects of exotic beauty, icons for a racist scopophilia.[24]

Uncas and Magua are Mann's primary focus for such racializing structures.

Uncas and Chincgachgook are Cooper's quintessential Noble Savages—innocent, loyal, and wise. Their primary role is to function as Hawkeye's adoptive family and as his companions. However, in a twist on Cooper borrowed from George Seitz's 1936 version, the narrative presents Hawkeye as a young man akin to Uncas rather than as the older companion and friend to Chingachgook. This change is significant both in Seitz's version and in Mann's because it positions Hawkeye as a believable love interest for the Anglo woman (Cora in the 1992 version and Alice in the 1936) and subsequently, his love gives him reason to cross back into white society. Mann adds his own personal touch of period authenticity through Chingachgook's adoption of Hawkeye as his Mohican son and through his foresight in educating both his sons at Reverend Wheeler's school. He creates an environment for the eventual crossing-over of Hawkeye from the Native community into the white community. Chingachgook and Uncas's presence accentuates the best of Native America, reflects an interracial American community (American colonists and Native Americans), and positions Hawkeye as the future American hero (a point I will discuss in more detail later). As Noble companions, they risk their lives repeatedly in response to Hawkeye's agendas, which revolve around Cora Munro and the American colonials who are fighting for the British. Uncas is drawn further than his father into the role of assimilated Native by taking on the function of Alice's valiant protector. And as does his brother, he will attempt to cross the cultural barrier and assimilate into white culture; unlike his brother, he will fail. Ironically, Chingachgook and Uncas both also represent the assimilative Noble Savage who acknowledges white superiority and eventual colonial rule, and sanctions it by participating in his own erasure.

Mann adopts both the 1920 and the 1936 films' narrative strategy of depicting Uncas as a fetishized erotic Other. This objectification in addition to his already raced status marks him as doubly feminized in colonial discourse. As a raced figure, he is reduced to the position usually assigned to women in cinematic discourse. In Mann's version, his body is presented to us in tight close-up shots which either exhibit his desire for another (the white girl—Alice Munro) or isolate parts of his body—his buttocks and legs or his face—for our consuming pleasure. As feminist film theorists have argued, this type of cinematic approach effectively reduces the "woman" to a position as an object of desire for the viewer who derives scopophilic pleasure in "her" "to-be-looked-at-ness."[25] This multiple looking doubly objectifies Uncas who is reduced by his race to an exotic object and by his sexual positioning to an erotic object. The double power structure further reduces Uncas to both an object and a representational sign of his racial and sexual difference. Teresa de Lauretis' insight that cinema denies "women the status of subjects" by positing them "as at once object and the foundation of representation," and as object and sign of man's culture and creativity, is also applicable to this semiological and psychoanalytical discourse of Uncas' position in Mann's film narrative.[26] The result

of such a reading is that Uncas, as dissected object, is neither a full subject within the film narrative (his role is marginal) nor completely male.

Uncas' positioning is emblematic of the gender/race organization that inevitably feminizes the Native American male in film. In this colonial model, racism and violence render him an impotent Other to the male colonizer and an object of erotic lust for the colonial woman. Hollywood cinematic discourse is grounded in such white patriarchal narratives of dominance over women and non-whites of various genders and sexualities. The inscribed point of view is that of the white male or, in psychoanalytic terms, "the Father," whose self-image is defined through an oppressive fear of sexuality. As Mary Ann Doane's psychoanalytic feminist film approach explains, "sexuality is the realm where fear and desire find their most intimate connections, where notions of otherness and the exotic/erotic are often conflated."[27] Doane suggests that psychoanalytic theory (which studies the fear of sexuality, the fear of the Father, etc.) has often neglected issues of race, and that there is a tension between the two, deriving from Freud's project's link "to the colonial imagination and its structuring binarism."[28] Thus, from a psychoanalytic view, sexuality is deeply embedded in the fear of the Other (the woman) who embodies the exotic Other to the man. The colonialist translates this familiar fear of white women's sexuality onto all Others whose sexuality somehow threatens his secure positioning in the symbolic order of things. Mann, like his predecessors, perpetuates the symbolic order through his "white patriarchal viewpoint"[29] and through his feminizing of Uncas.

While both the Noble and the Vicious Indian are feminized in film, the former is much more likely to be subjected to this overtly through the female sexual gaze or fetishization. As in all preceding versions, Uncas is temporarily tolerated as a possible love interest for a white woman as long as he is infantilized and symbolically or physically eliminated in the end. Magua, in contrast, is not an erotic character. Rather he is always positioned as violent and, through his abduction of the women, a sexual threat to white purity. However, just as Uncas is positioned as sexually and racially inferior so also is Magua. In Mann's version, his emasculation is sealed when he is visually and verbally rejected by the white colonial men and women he desires to impress. His humiliation in front of his own people and his questionable character force him into self-exile where he dies (read castrated or eliminated as a sexual threat) at the hands of the other Noble Savage, Chingachgook.

Magua's portrayal fuels the assertion that Mann's neocolonial rhetoric is deeply ingrained in all aspects of the film. While presented as an intelligent and multilingual Indian, Magua's status as savage is ensured by Mann's editing. When General Montcalm asks Magua why he hates "the Grey Hair," Magua responds:

> When the Grey Hair is dead, Magua will eat his heart. Before he dies, Magua will put his children under the knife so the Grey Hair will know his seed is wiped out forever.

We are not privy to the causes of Magua's angst and hatred until many scenes later. Again through a conversation with General Montcalm, we learn that his blood vengeance against Colonel Munro stems from Munro's responsiblity for the wiping out of Magua's children, for the loss of his wife to another, and for his enslavement by the Mohawks. This moment of colonial truth—displacement of Native peoples, land loss, and genocide—is skillfully rendered powerless through Mann's editing which dampens our sensitivity towards Magua. Mann ensures that Magua's actions outweigh his justifications. For example, shortly after we finally hear Magua's story, we watch him yank the still breathing Colonel Munro's heart out with his bare hands. In this ambush scene, Magua attacks Colonel Munro, throwing him from his horse. He is filmed in a medium close-up shot standing over Munro and plunging a long dagger into his chest. Munro is visually represented as the prone white colonial order threatened and literally under the knife of the Vicious Savage. This positioning and his violent action negates the sympathy warranted by Magua's explanation and justifies his death in the end. In addition, Magua's death at the hands of another Native American is a subversive message in the colonial rhetoric of the narrative. Magua is positioned as the unassimilative savage and the representative of the militant faction, fighting for land and honor. His militancy threatens the progressing colonial order (something very familiar to pro-Columbus celebrators of the Quincentenary whose ideology and history were threatened by anti-Columbus backlash—both peaceful and militant—to the international Quincentenary celebration). By using the assimilative Chingachgook to kill the savage reactionary, Magua, the film signals approval of white colonial actions—assimilation, forced acculturation, and genocide—that will lead to the vanishing of the Native American race. Mann's editing and Magua's actions advocate this colonial action and the suppression of those who resist.

The Noble/Vicious Uncas/Magua binary represents the two most popular extremes of the Native American in white iconography. As a creation of five hundred years of white popular culture, the Noble/Vicious split also represents the extremes of the white psyche. The racialization of Magua as a demonic figure and Uncas as the Noble Savage creates a doubling[30] of the Native American male in which neither character exists without the other. There is no need for Uncas to rescue Alice (Cora in the 1832, 1920, and 1936 versions) or for their resulting love if there is no Magua to threaten her with life as a captive (itself a reference to white captivity narratives and the legacy of fear for white purity that they project). This doubling and the connection to Alice imply that Uncas cannot be far removed from Magua's personification of savagery. The events leading up to Uncas's death by Magua and Magua's death by Chingachgook (the latter is taken from Seitz's version and is a revision of Cooper's story which has Hawkeye killing Magua) reinforce the tribalness (read as primitiveness) of Native "blood vengeance" codes and underscores that they are all, as Hawkeye tells Cora, "a breed apart" from Anglo culture. By creating such a dichotomous split, white culture ensures a hierarchy and distance from the savage, the uncivilized. Native Americans are effectively incorporated into the binary creating a dichotomy between the outside pressure from white society for them to assimilate and progress towards a more civilized state, and white society's negation and fear of accepting them as part of its own.

Continuing within *The Last of the Mohicans* legacy, Mann's film works within the Noble/Vicious binary and also perpetuates a white desire for erotic mixing, scopophilia, racial violence, and redemption of white superiority. It does so by reducing the Native American to a system of visual and symbolic language that plays across the screen to be interpreted by a white audience.[31] While interpretations of the various narratives' and Mann's symbolic language may vary, certain themes prevail: the Native American characters are less civilized than the Anglo characters; they represent a threat of violence to white women and children; they are available for our erotic pleasure; and their resistance to colonialism must be eliminated. The rhetorical colonial policy towards the Native characters—classification and stereotyping, idealizing and eroticizing, and debasing—clearly mark Native Americans as culturally and racially Other to the European and American characters. And within the contact zone of the "frontier west," they are the fundamentally disparate and subordinated culture.

Throughout the film Mann positions the viewer as the neocolonial eye of the camera and incorporates us into the colonial strategies of the visual narrative. We have witnessed Mann's use of specific rhetorical tactics to position the Native American characters as stereotypically Other to the white colonial characters. In addition to these maneuvers, Mann (arguably less so than Cooper and other developers of the theme) minimizes the effects of the colonial/imperial mission on Native American cultures, further subordinating them culturally to the white mainstream. Issues such as sovereignty and land rights that were pertinent to Native Americans during the colonial period, and which remain relevant today, are reduced to peripheral or background staging for the plot's memorializing of the American battle for empire.

During the colonial period, Native American tribes made treaties with the imperial European nations as sovereign nations. As such, their participation in the French and Indian Wars signals not only their loyalty to treaty agreements, but also their willingness to fight to keep their quickly dwindling land. Many fought to defend what was left of their territorial homeland—a fundamental component of tribal identity. However, Mann's choice of narrative ignores their status as primary players and reduces the importance of these struggles. While Magua infers the loss of tribal land when he talks of losing his home and his family (an evasive reference to genocide), and the introductory intertitles indicate Native land loss by labeling it and them part of a vanishing frontier, Mann never directly discusses this. Rather, the viewer must deduce this from the few brief moments when land is mentioned. Hawkeye brings the land issue to our attention in a dialogue with Cora; ironically, however, he is not talking about Native land loss, rather, he is explaining to her that the frontier is the only affordable land left for poor, white colonials. Cora, in turn, expresses to her father (symbol of the British Empire) that the colonials "do not live by your leave but hack it out of the wilderness with their bare hands, burying their women and children along the way." Through these exchanges, Mann diverts attention from the Native struggle and repositions it onto the settlers, glossing over the Native American historical reality in favor of a colonial perspective. This maneuver, in connection with the film's backdrop—the "War for Empire"—disregards the tribes' sovereign right to the land and affirms a colonial right to the continent. In light of this, Mann's promotion of

the film as multicultural suggests a commodifying, romanticizing, and trivializing of Native American history and Native American struggles against dominant American political interests for the dominant society's viewing pleasure.[32]

Mann's ambiguity in promoting a film that represents a variety of cultures on an equal basis is also observable in his use of Native languages which are presented occasionally throughout the film to authenticate the differences between tribes and to accentuate the gap between Anglo and Native culture. Chingachgook and Uncas, for example, speak English and Munsee Delaware, and Magua speaks Huron, English, and French. These moments of authentication, coupled with the accurate use of hairstyles, clothing, and weaponry, suggest that Mann is promoting a more progressive and sympathetic rendering of the Native American in respect to past Hollywood depictions or even Cooper's. However, close analysis shows that Lakota is substituted for Munsee Delaware and Cherokee for Huron, suggesting that Mann's attention to language is superficial and that Native American language accuracy is less important than having the dialogue sound Native.[33] This along with Uncas's reduction to a sexual fetish and ultimate death undermine the positive aspects of the authentic moments. Chingachgook's switch to English in the final scene of the film is also troublesome. In this scene, Chingachgook and Hawkeye are sending Uncas off in prayer. Chingachgook, in a rare moment, speaks in English rather than Munsee Delaware—a jarring reversal of Mann's attempted authenticity. This sudden loss of language skills recalls, for the Native viewer especially, the ramifications of tribal language loss and forced assimilation.[34]

Both these enduring legacies of colonialism—loss of land and language—are issues that past film versions ignored and that Mann's film glosses over in favor of the colonial perspective. Likewise, Mann relegates the Native American characters to positions of lesser importance by minimizing their presence on screen. While they are presented as intelligent (knowing how to defeat the British in forest warfare), multilingual, and diverse (multiple tribes are presented), they are still confined to swarming the woods in camouflage, ambushing and slaughtering women and children, and coveting white women as sexual objects. These damaging representations (swarming, slaughtering, would-be rapists) are borrowed directly from Cooper and have become stock footage in film renditions of the story. Significantly however, the reification of these tropes in Mann's film forces one to move past his visual seduction and pro-Native authenticity back into the reality that this film is no more than a revival of the Vanishing American myth that allows the viewer to participate in colonial voyeurism, imperial nostalgia, and a re-vanishing of the Native American.

The vanishing of the Native American happens most subversively in the lack of screen time given to Native characters. As Gary Edgerton makes very clear, Mann's Native characters physically vanish from our view. They are rarely given full screen and they are most often positioned peripherally or adjacent to a white character that takes center screen. Gary Edgerton offers a succinct analysis of this:

> [O]f all 40 scenes in the movie, along with an overall rendering of which characters have primary and secondary focus in each, Hawkeye...is given...23 primary scenes of the 26 in which he appears.... Magua is third (7 primary and 3 secondary scenes)...Chingachgook (2 primary and 1 secondary scene) [and] Uncas (1 primary and 1 secondary scene). In terms of plot structure, Chingachgook and Uncas remain second-class citizens.[35]

Edgerton also points out that Chingachgook and Uncas's screen time is matched or surpassed by Heyward, Jack Winthrop (a very minor character), and Colonel Munro.[36] In effect Mann vanishes them in order to refocus the camera predominantly on the Anglo hero and heroine.

The quintessential example of this happens toward the end of the film after Uncas plunges to his death. We have risen out of the tumultious interior and are again positioned above the wilderness. A long panoramic shot of mountains and deep valleys, reminiscent of the opening sequence, pans right to focus on a tiny group of three: Chingachgook, Hawkeye, and Cora. The scene, a touching repetition of the first scene with the dead stag, situates the three as a microcosm in the wilderness, bidding farewell to one of their own. As the camera pans inward, we focus on Chingachgook who is giving his final eulogy to Uncas in English. Cora is positioned peripherally as Hawkeye's replacement for Uncas. Chingachgook's use of English during this important ritual moment symbolically eradicates his Native past (Edgerton). Mann reinforces this death of Chingachgook's history by rewriting Cooper and representing Chingachgook as the ''last of the Mohicans,''

> Great Spirit, maker of all life, a warrior goes to you swift and straight as an arrow shot into the sun. Welcome him and let him take his place at the council fire of my people. He is Uncas, my son. Tell them to be patient and ask death

for speed, for they are all there but one—I, Chingachgook, the last of the Mohicans.

Mann also erases an important cultural recognition that Hawkeye, as Chingachgook's adopted son (in this version), would be considered Native and, therefore, would be the last of the Mohicans.[37] In effect, Chingachgook's rewritten speech removes this aspect of native tradition and positions him as childless and futureless.

Mann's removal of the Native characters makes room for the emergence of a new breed of frontiersman—the hybrid Anglo-Native and the predecessor to the Western Hero[38]—who is more suited to the future of the Anglo-American West. As mentioned earlier, Mann clearly designed the plot to recognize Hawkeye as a Native American character, one of "three men, the last of a vanishing people," the adopted son of Chingachgook, "a breed apart" from Anglos, a skilled hunter, and a native speaker of Munsee Delaware. In every way except in his skin color, Hawkeye is presented as a Native American character, which raises the issues of the appropriation of Indianness and of the Western hero supplanting the Native American. Mann has already visually erased Cooper's Uncas and Cora love story and displaced it through a mimetic relationship to past *The Last of the Mohicans*' films and to Cooper's text onto Uncas's love for Alice.[39] According to Cooper's racial hierarchy, Uncas's love for Cora, whose tainted racial heritage positions her more closely to Uncas than to Heyward or any other white character, allows for the possibility of miscegination. By shifting Uncas's love to Alice who is a narrative referent to past ideals of white purity, Mann sets up a narrative that "erases Cooper's—and nineteenth century America's—racist understanding of savagery" and undermines the historical purpose of the original text.[40] Brantlinger's article, "Forgetting Genocide," suggests that Mann's version recycles the imperialist racism of Cooper's novel by rewriting the story into another type of sentimental narrative, one that erases the genocide and racism inscribed in Cooper's version. According to Richard Slotkin's introduction to the 1986 reprint of *The Last of the Mohicans*, Cooper's representation of "savagery" was proportional to psychological and spiritual darkeness and reflective of race and evolutionary status; thus, Native Americans were placed lower on the evolutionary scale and were, therefore, closer to primitive and "savage" man.[41] Thus, in Brantlinger's view, ignoring Cooper's racism by eliminating his miscegenation theme perpetuates an erasure of American and Native history that is in itself racist. He suggests that the sentimentalizing of white America's participation in genocidal history is equally racist.[42] Within the context of the film narrative, this shift from Uncas and Cora to Uncas and an unobtainable Alice effectively removes the possibility of an American future born of Anglo-Native blood and grounds America's mythic heritage in purely Anglo bloodlines.

Mann's displacement and almost complete removal of the Native-Anglo love story suggests a desire to ignore the very real racist reactions in our country to the issues of interracial mixing and miscegenation. But as a narrative strategy, it makes Hawkeye's Nativeness disposable, as Chingachgook's final speech demonstrates, and his hybridity and Nativeness part of his erotic attraction. Cora is clearly attracted to Hawkeye because of his difference: his world "is more deeply stirring to my blood than any imagery possibly could be." But, I would suggest that she is drawn to his hybridity (part white, part Native) rather than to him solely as Native. Mann ensures this by reducing her conversations and contact with Uncas and Chingachgook to a minimum. In fact, she rarely speaks to any of the Native characters—Magua, Uncas, or Chingachgook—which suggests that her interest is not in Native American men, per se, but in Hawkeye's representation of both whiteness and Nativeness. The emphasis here is on the attraction of certain qualities of the Other—in this case, his mystery as the Native man, his sexuality and power illustrated by his often bare chest and running skills, and his dark and passionate soul which matches Cora's. Cora, like many Anglos throughout U.S. history, is attracted to the Noble Savage characteristics that Hawkeye represents, but whether she would take on the full responsibility of Nativeness—marrying into a Native community, accepting the encroaching Anglo culture and its threat of genocide, and the lifestyle of a Native American woman—is questionable.[43] In choosing Hawkeye, as opposed to Uncas or Magua, she underscores the tendency for superficial attraction to the exotic within the safety of whiteness.

Through their relationship, Hawkeye becomes the symbolic exotic Other who is more appealing than the "real" Indian (to white audiences) because of his partial link to the familiar white culture. For all Mann's equality in presenting Native Americans, this maneuver undermines the positive. He, like Seitz, consciously supplants Uncas and Chingachgook and their situation as part of a vanishing people with Hawkeye who chooses Cora (Seitz's Alice) and her whiteness over his Indian family. In addition, Hawkeye becomes the symbolic Uncas of the

historical Cora-Uncas relationship, suggesting that the erotic story of the mixed-blood relationship can exist within a surrogate mixed-blood Hawkeye as long as he is paired with Cora. This is concisely presented cinemagraphically in the last scene where Chingachgook visually and verbally separates from his adopted son. As described earlier, a long panning shot right across a vast valley comes to rest on Chingachgook spreading cornmeal into the wind. He is joined by Hawkeye who participates in the blessing ceremony for Uncas, while Cora stands off to one side. After Chingachkook releases Hawkeye, Cora walks into the frame, faces Hawkeye and embraces him in a long close-up shot. In so doing, she halts the ceremony and positions herself with Hawkeye as central to the frame, forcing Chingachgook to the periphery. The scene ends with a medium close-up shot framing all three in profile: Chingachgook closest to the viewer, Hawkeye, and Cora almost invisible to the far right—a representation of the pre-colonial order of things. The camera quickly pans one hundred and eighty degrees reframing the three in profile, Cora closest to the camera with Hawkeye at her side and Chingachgook farthest right and almost excluded from view—a representation of the new colonial order. Mann then cuts to a long shot of the three standing with their backs to the camera, gazing out across the wilderness. Hawkeye and Cora are positioned together as a couple and Chingachgook stands off alone to one side. The framing of these scenes combined with Chingachgook's declaration of himself as the last of the Mohicans, severs his connection to his white son, in effect giving Hawkeye permission to return to whiteness. Hawkeye is no longer one of three vanishing men. But, he is still Cooper's "Man-who-knows-Indians" and possesses qualities of both the frontier Western hero and of Nativeness. He is the metaphorical mixed-blood whose union with Cora represents the new future that, unlike Chingachgook, will not fade into history.

Hawkeye and Cora's union represents a future America built on the image of the Native American but through the hereditary blood of Anglo-heroes, a fundamental part of the Myth of the Frontier, the Myth of the West and Manifest Destiny,[44] and American nation-building. The myth of the frontier subscribes to the ideology that progress is associated with territorial expansion.[45] According to Richard Slotkin, this

> is our oldest and most characteristic myth, expressed in a body of literature, folklore, ritual, historiography, and polemics produced over a period of three centuries. According to this myth-historiography, the conquest of the wilderness and the subjugation or displacement of the Native Americans who originally inhabited it have been the means to our achievement of a national identity, a democratic polity, an ever-expanding economy, and a phenomenally dynamic and "progressive" civilization.[46]

The American frontier myth and the concept of progress are based on unavoidable violence to those who stand in the way—Native Americans most specifically. The frontier, like Pratt's contact zone, is a place of violence and conflict where the clashing and intermixing of peoples results in the subordination of one group by another. It is also, as Fredrick Jackson Turner's 1893 frontier thesis made clear, an economic, political, and psychological demarcation between the East and the West, civilization and savagery. Turner's thesis clarifies that the frontier represents free land and with it economic freedom built on the continual struggle of conquering the land and its inhabitants. The resulting, distinctly American, sense of nationalism or "American character" is based on democracy, liberalism, and individualism. This nationalism and the frontier character gain symbolic currency under the assumptions of racism, democracy, and Manifest Destiny. The myth of the frontier as it relates to progress then is linked to this particular form of violent action. The Indian, as a part of the symbolic language of the myth, takes on the role of representative surrogate for ideological and political struggles facing the American populace.

As Slotkin's *Gunfighter Nation* illustrates, there is a pattern of reciprocal influence in which politics shape the concerns and imagery of movies, and movies in turn question or promote current political and social attitudes. The early 1990s witnessed the ending of the Cold War, the fall of the Soviet system, the drawing to a close of the conservative Republican presidential reign, and the increase in American imperial behavior overseas in places such as Panama and Iraq. Also in the early nineties, Native Americans in both North and South America began to mobilize against the Quincentenary celebrations in Europe and the Americas.[47] Multiple voices were heard during the Quincentenary both questioning and defending the colonial past. For Ward Churchill, the celebration of "Columbus and the European conquest of the Western Hemisphere he set off is greatly analogous to celebrating the glories of nazism and Heinrich Himmler."[48] The Traditional Circle of American Indian Elders and Youth promoted it as a time for the United Nations to recognize the International Year of the World's Indigenous Peoples.[49] Many

Italian-Americans saw 1992 as a celebration of their historical roots, innovations, and heritage.[50]

Considering the turmoil of the early 1990s, which culminated in an intense questioning on the part of many Americans of their national past and their imperial and neocolonial present, Mann's film must be read as reflecting social and political concerns of the time. The regeneration of America's mythic frontier and its Noble/Vicious Savage in *The Last of the Mohicans* during the Quincentenary debates then is hardly surprising. Howard Zinn explains that internally in the United States

> [a] citizenry disillusioned with politics and with what pretended to be intelligent discussions of politics turned its attention (or had its attention turned) to entertainment, to gossip, to ten thousand schemes for self-help. Those at its margins became violent, finding scapegoats within one's group (as with poor-black on poor-black violence), or against other races, immigrants, demonized foreigners, welfare mothers, minor criminals (standing in for untouchable major criminals).[51]

Arguably, Mann's Native American characters, whose savagery, difference, and armed resistance may be read as taking on the role of symbolic scapegoats for mainstream fears of rising illegal immigration problems, joblessness, and loss of political, social, and economic positioning in American hierarchy. They, unarguably, also reflect the very real positioning of Native American cultures as internal Third World nations within the United States. In relation to this, their image in the film as a group that must be ordered and silenced—forced into assimilation—is readable as a reaction to the rising activism of Native Americans since the 1960s. I suggest this, not to isolate Mann, but to call attention to a trend in media to portray and treat the Third World (both internal and external) as "material for some mental human interest of melodramatic entertainment."[52] Thus, the reality of reissuing Cooper's story in 1992 was that it could not possibly, no matter how revised, have been anything but a neocolonial narrative. The historical memory of the story, its legacy in film and media, the point-of-view and cinematography of the film, and mythic themes of domination and subordination through vanishing make any other reading impossible.

What the film's reincarnation does illuminate is, as Spurr points out, an alarming trend evident in contemporary media of

> distantiation, transformation, privilege, displacement, consumption, and alienation. Taken together, these terms imply a certain possession of social reality which holds it at arm's length and makes it into the object of beauty, horror, pleasure, and pity. When this act of possession becomes a mode of representation by which a powerful culture *takes* possession of a less powerful one, it can be understood quite literally as colonization. In this sense, aestheticization does not so much falsify as it takes hold of and commodifies reality, securing it for the expansion of the observer's sensibility.[53]

Mann's film reduces a poignant and violent moment in American history to a romantic revitalization of the birth of America and the all-American hero whose emergence is through and over the bodies of dying Native Americans. The insensitivity to the effect this might have on Native American viewers is balanced by the equally disturbing realization that Mann is objectifying and commodifing our colonial past in a celebratory manner.

In so doing, Mann, like other Hollywood producers before him, revives the romantic rhetoric of expansionism, imperialism, and racial homogeneity that informs our greatest national myths. His revitalization of the American frontier and the frontier hero whose expansionist dreams and actions are promoted by Manifest Destiny trivializes the very real concerns and problems voiced by Native Americans today. His film becomes, especially in 1992, as Jaimes suggests about literature, "an insidious political force, disinforming people who might otherwise develop a clearer understanding of the struggles for survival faced by an indigenous population."[54] This is not to suggest that Mann is himself racist or intended his film to have this effect, but in context of what was happening in 1992 and in context of the film's narrative myths, one cannot avoid the neocolonial implications.

Mann's *The Last of the Mohicans* offers a lens through which to understand the depth to which racism and colonialism are embedded in our culture. This example from popular culture illustrates that even those attempting to deconstruct America's foundational myths end up reconstructing or validating them. The insidiousness of colonialism and racism ensures its inscription into our language, our cultural and political structures, and our myths. As the work of Albert Memmi, Franz Fanon, and Robert K. Thomas continually remind us, the legacy of colonialism is the interpolation of both the colonized and colonizing subject into the continual validation of the system.[55] Thus, while Michael Mann may very well have intended a film that celebrated a multicultural American heritage, the results are a neocolonial

sanctioning of white American supremacy that the viewer, including the Native American viewer, participates in reinforcing.

A special thank you to Natanya Sell for her editing skills.

Notes

[1]Stephen J. Summerhill and John Alexander Williams, *Sinking Columbus: Contested History, Cultural Politics, and Mythmaking during the Quincentenary* (Gainseville: UP of Florida, 2000): 114.

[2]K. R. Dark and A. L. Harris, *The New World and the New World Order: U.S. Relative Decline, Domestic Instability in the Americas and the End of the Cold War* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Macmillian P; New York: St. Martin's P, 1996): 58.

[3]Howard Zinn, *A People's History of the United States 1492-Present*. (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1995): 600.

[4]Summerhill and Williams, *Sinking Columbus*, 119.

[5]*Multiculturalism* is a problematic term that has come to mean different things to different groups of people. It is overtly political and is often used to commodify and pay token tribute to the growing demand by minority groups in the United States for greater recognition of the multiple histories, cultures, languages, and viewpoints that make up this country. In academia, the term has, unfortunately, often come to represent a trend towards a superficial inclusion of history, literature, music, and language from "other" cultural groups than the dominant mainstream. See Clara Martínez's quote in note 32. For a comprehensive look at the issues that fall under the rubric of *multiculturalism* see David Theo Goldberg, ed., *Multiculturalism: A Critical Reader* (Cambridge, MA and Oxford, England: Blackwell Publishers Ltd., 1995).

[6] According to Appleford,

> audiences increasingly desire fictional films to 'feel like knowledge' and thus appear to be somehow more realistic than their counterparts, film companies and publicity departments make authenticity a vague but emphatic selling point for their films. (Robert Appleford, "Coming out from behind the Rocks: Constructs of the Indian in Recent U.S. and Canadian Cinema," *American Indian Culture and Research Journal* 19.1 [1995] 98).

This clearly seems the case with Mann's film, which is based on a fictional tale by James Fenimore Cooper and also loosely references the French and Indian Wars. In an interview, Mann states that he

> wanted to have the scale of a geopolitical conflict—the ethnic and religious conflicts, the struggle of white imperialism on a grassroots level...and the struggle between the Euroamerican and European powers and the American Indian population. (Gavin Smith, "Interview with Michael Mann," *Sight and Sound* 2.7 [Nov. 1992]: 10)

Expanding on this authenticity, his 400 foot replica of Fort Henry (Gary Edgerton, "'A Breed Apart': Hollywood, Racial Stereotyping, and the Promise of Revisionism in *The Last of the Mohicans*," *Journal of American Culture* 17.2 [Summer 1994]: 7), the accuracy of colonial and tribal dress, weaponry, and language convey the idea that the film is based on reality not on fiction.

[7]Neocolonialism, as an extension of colonialism, is the controlling of underdeveloped nations' social, political, and economic systems through the industrial and financial capital of an external and more powerful nation. In other words, neocolonialism is based on outside economic manipulations which also affect the internal class, political, and social constructions of the dominated country (*The Dictionary of Human Geography*, 3rd ed. [Cambridge, MA and Oxford, England: Blackwell Publishers Ltd., 1994], 415). The United States is a dominant nation which, in addition to its external global neocolonial activity, continues to have a complicated colonial/neocolonial relationship internally with its indigenous tribal populations. It seems to me that if one looks closely at the trends of the Federal Government in relation to Native American tribes over the last thirty years, one sees that "Self-Determination and Self-Governance" are moves away from outright paternal/colonial rule and towards an internal neocolonial approach to governance. While the Federal Government gives more autonomy to tribes and recognizes greater levels of sovereignty for Native American people, it continues to control their economic, political, and cultural resources from a position slightly removed. As does the powerful neocolonial State with underdeveloped nations, the United States has a controlling economic and political interest in the nations that reside within its borders.

[8]These informative texts preceded the credits and the title of the film in such a way as to be removed from the viewer's mind by the time the actual film images begin. Without this information, the viewer is situated within the film as the "sole surveyor" for the first minute or so of the entire entry scene.

[9]I utilize the term *gaze* as suggested by Mary Louise Pratt and David Spurr to isolate the particular imperial and colonial action of surveying a land or territory under conquest. As both Spurr and Pratt's work explain, the colonizer's eye, its gaze and "the commanding view [make] possible an understanding of the non-Western world as an object of study, an area for development, a field of action" (Spurr 25). According to Pratt, "[t]he landscape is written as uninhabited, unpossessed, unhistoricized, unoccupied" (51) in order to justify the Imperialist's penetration of the land

(an action reminiscent of rape) and his claiming of its fertile and abundant resources, both natural and human. Pratt's work concentrates on how the classifying systems utilized by the explorers, scientists, historical travel writers, and the bourgeoisie travelers informed one another to create a system of writing that ordered the unknown worlds for the European public. Likewise, Spurr analyzes how colonial discourse found in travel writing, journalism, and governmental writing all utilized common basic rhetorical features. Both theorists suggest that these modes of identification and recording are ingrained in colonial language and colonial ideology to the point that they still exist today. See Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992) and David Spurr, *The Rhetoric of Empire: Colonial Discourse in Journalism, Travel Writing, and Imperial Administration* (Durham and London: Duke UP, 1996).

[10]I refer the reader to Catherine Lutz and Jane Collins' work which traces how American identity is formed against an exotic "Other" drawn from images of Third World peoples as they are presented in cultural productions such as *National Geographic*. The seemingly non-political agendas of the magazine actually work to reinforce narratives of cultural supremacy where those depicted are "either cut off from the flow of world events or involved in a singular story of progress from tradition to modernity" (13). See Catherine A. Lutz and Jane L. Collins, *Reading National Geographic* (Chicago and London: The U of Chicago P, 1993).

[11]The myth of America as an Edenic garden is deeply rooted in Western culture extending back to the colonial period. In this construct the American continent is constructed as an American Eden waiting to be populated by the offspring of the American Adam and Eve. The American Adam incorporates the qualities of Hawkeye—a truly all-American man whose connection to Nature and individualism is a rejection of European corruption. This mythic garden scenario sets the stage for American nationalism and expansionism. See Annette Kolodny, *The Land Before Her: Fantasy and Experience of the American Frontiers, 1630-1860* (Chapel Hill and London: The U of North Carolina P, 1984) and *Lay of the Land: Metaphor as Experience and History in American Life and Letters* (Chapel Hill: The U of North Carolina P, 1975), and Leslie A. Fiedler, *The Return of the Vanishing American* (New York: Stein and Day, 1968).

[12]Spurr 25.

[13]Ibid. 51.

[14]Gary Edgerton, " 'A Breed Apart': Hollywood, Racial Stereotyping, and the Promise of Revisionism in The Last of the Mohicans," *Journal of American Culture* 17.2 (Summer 1994): 9.

[15] I utilize the term *panoptic voyeurism* in a way that melds Pratt's colonial gaze with Foucault's panopticon. It seems to me that the way in which Mann situates the viewer in these first scenes is as a colonialist perpetrator of surveillance, and as an informed and latent participatory colonial agent. Because we are positioned as the eyes of the colonial power structure, the act of surveillance does become one of authority and power over a confined and contained population—a population that knows we are watching as Hawkeye's catching us in his gun-sight suggests.

[16]Edgerton, *A Breed Apart*, 8-9.

[17]Ibid. 9.

[18] Such a racializing practice is by no means new to *The Last of the Mohicans* story. The original story positioned three distinct races on American soil—White, Native American, and Black—who intermix socially and sexually (represented initially through Cora's mixed-blood heritage [Mulatta], and later through her possible union with Uncas), but who are confined to specific social and cultural boundaries because of their skin color. Further, Cooper's narrative privileges the white race over all others but suggests that Native Americans are somehow closer to the purity inherent in whiteness than Africans because of their noble character. In many of the Hollywood renditions of Cooper's story, the African blood of Cora is extinguished as a narrative element and the racial hierarchy is reduced to its Native American and Anglo components. For example, Tourneur and Brown's 1920 silent film version hints at Cora's mixed-blood heritage through her dark-hair and her brooding nature while Seitz's 1936 remake completely erases Cora's "darkness" by recasting her as a very white-skinned blond. Hawkeye also is lightened in this version. In the 1920 film he (like Cooper's Natty Bumpo) is an older, dark-haired man whose reticence towards white culture is portrayed in his minimal interplay in the story and with the other white characters. By 1936 Hawkeye is a young, light-haired and carefree woodsman who draws the viewer and the other characters to him, making him the focal point of the film. Mann's version borrows much from Seitz—Hawkeye's youth and centralization as a main character—but moves back towards Cooper's darker-haired Hawkeye and Cora. See James Fenimore Cooper, *The Last of the Mohicans*, 1826, Intro. Richard Slotkin (New York: Penguin, 1986); *The Last of the Mohicans*, Dir. Maurice Tourneur and Clarence Brown, Perf. Harry Lorraine, Theodore Lerch, Albert Roscoe, Wallace Beere (Associated Producers, 1920); and *The Last of the Mohicans*, Dir. George Seitz, Perf. Randolph Scott, Phillip Reed, Bruce Cabot, Robert Barrat (United Artists, 1936).

[19]Pratt uses *contact zone* in two important ways. In her work it "is often synonymous with 'colonial frontier'... grounded within a European expansionist perspective (the

frontier is a frontier only with respect to Europe)" (6-7). But *contact zone* is also

> an attempt to invoke the spatial and temporal copresence of subjects previously separated by geographic and historic disjunctures, and whose trajectories now intersect. (6)

[20]Ibid. 4.

[21]Pratt concentrates on how the classifying systems utilized by the explorers, scientists, historical travel writers, and the bourgeoisie travelers informed one another to create a system of writing that ordered the unknown worlds for the European public. Likewise, Spurr analyzes how colonial discourse found in travel writing, journalism, and governmental writing all utilized common basic rhetorical features. Both theorists suggest that these modes of identification and recording are ingrained in colonial language and colonial ideology to the point that they still exist today.

[22]I think that Bonnie Duran sums up the controversy that many Native Americans find themselves in daily in reference to being signified as Indian

> [T]he struggle is over the sign "Indian" as a signifier of ethnicity, ancestry, cultural tradition, geography, and historical experience versus a stage in a social evolutionary ladder, the embodiment of a genetic wholism or degeneracy, a psychological archetype or a shadow projection of an entire continent. This overdetermined and overloaded sign was, and is, always more or less than real tribal people could ever hope or dread to be. Within American popular and elite culture, Indianness is more than an ethnic assignment (like being Italian or Irish). To be a real "Indian," one is compelled to fit one of the binary oppositions or cease to be.

See Bonnie Duran, "Indigenous Versus Colonial Discourse: Alcohol and American Indian Identity," *Dressing in Feathers: The Construction of the Indian in American Popular Culture*, Ed. S. Elizabeth Bird (Boulder, CO: Westview P, 1996), 111-12.

[23]I will discuss this further later in the article, however, I take my cues from authors Leslie Fiedler, Gretchen Bataille and Charles Silet, and Robert Berkhofer who discuss in their respective works how the image of the Native American has become an ideological construct to represent Americanness. Refer to Gretchen Bataille and Charles Silet, *The Pretend Indian: Images of Native Americans in the Movies* (Ames: Iowa State UP, 1980), Robert Berkhofer, *The White Man's Indian: Images of the American Indian From Columbus to the Present* (New York: Random House, 1979), and Leslie Fiedler, *The Return of the Vanishing American* (New York: Stein and Day, 1968).

[24]Daniel Bernardi, *Introduction in the Birth of Whiteness: Race and the Emergence of U.S. Cinema*, Ed. Daniel Bernardi (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers UP, 1996), 5.

[25]In "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," Mulvey argues that the image of woman is only a creation for men's viewing pleasure.

> The image of woman as spectacle and fetish sets in motion another chain of metonymies, linking together various sites in which femininity is produced in advanced capitalist society: woman as consumed and woman as consumer of commodities, women exchanged in image and women transforming themselves into image through commodity consumption. (xii)

Cinema allows for the visually violating scopophilic, voyeuristic, and sadistic desires of men. See Laura Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," *Visual and Other Pleasures* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana UP, 1989), 14-28.

[26]Teresa de Lauretis, *Alice Doesn't: Feminism, Semiotics, Cinema* (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1984), 8.

[27]Mary Ann Doane, "Dark Continents: Epistemologies of Racial and Sexual Difference in Psychoanalysis and the Cinema," *Femmes Fatales: Feminism, Film Theory, Psychoanalysis* (New York and London: Routledge, 1991), 217.

[28]Ibid. 216.

[29]Ibid. 9.

[30]I use the term "double" in reference to the psychological relationship often shared between two characters: the good one and the bad one. Generally, one must kill the other in order to survive, but in the process one takes on the characteristics of the other.

[31]The remarkable legacy of some of this "language" is shocking: the Noble/Ignoble Savage, the mixed-race lover's fall from a cliff, the violent massacre scenes outside Ft. Henry, and the Noble Savage's fetishized body. Cooper's original narrative incorporates most of these, which may be a justification for Hollywood and Mann's retention of them. However, the Noble/Vicious glyph remains a reductive signifier of the Native American in Hollywood's discourse of racism.

[32]I would like to thank Clara Martínez for pointing out a similarly disturbing trend in elementary education. According to Martínez, there is a

> phenomenon in elementary education, whereby the curriculum is called multicultural even if it does not offer disparate points of view from "other" cultural members, and even when the literature, history, and music of the culture are presented superficially and infrequently.

[33]I would like to thank Tom Holm, Professor of Native American Studies, University of Arizona, and Sam Robertson, Lakota Sioux, for their information on some of the languages spoken in the film. According to Tom Holm, Magua—played by Cherokee actor Wes Studi—actually speaks Cherokee throughout the film rather than Huron.

Sam Robertson confirmed that Chingachkook—Sioux actor Russel Means—speaks Lakota rather than Munsee Delaware. It is unknown to me what other Native languages might be in use by the Native actors in the film.

[34]One of the main concerns for Native Americans today is language retention. Many elders feel that it is through their language that traditions, world views, histories, and ways of being are expressed; therefore, the loss of language is the loss of one's identity as a group, and a killing off of Native Americans as unique peoples.

[35]Edgerton, 13.

[36]Ibid., 13.

[37]Again, thank you to Tom Holm for this important insight.

[38]I would argue that *The Last of the Mohicans* is a Western set on one of our country's earliest frontiers, and that Hawkeye is the prototype for the emerging Western hero. I agree with John Harkness's conclusion that "without Cooper, there is no *Shane*, no *The Virginian*, no *My Darling Clementine*, no *The Searchers*, no *Unforgiven*" (John Harkness, "White Noise," *Sight and Sound* 2.7 [Nov. 1992]: 15); but I would also extrapolate and add that the emergence of Hawkeye as the young hybrid frontiersman is a visual link to the filmic youth and star qualities of Alan Ladd's Shane, the Lone Ranger, and a young John Wayne's Ringo Kid. Hawkeye's union with Cora also reflects the settling theme prominent in such Westerns as *Hell's Hinges*, *Stagecoach*, *Winchester 73*, and *My Darling Clementine*. A few of the articles in Ian Cameron and Douglas Pye's collection, *The Book of Western*, Ed., Cameron, Ian and Douglas Pye (New York: Continuum, 1996), also refer to Cooper's *Leatherstocking* series and the *The Last of the Mohicans*, making similar historical connections between Hawkeye and the Western Hero. See for example Pye's "Introduction," "Genre and History: Fort Apache and The Man Who Shot Liberty Valence," and "Double Vision: Miscegenation and Point of View in *The Searchers*," and Richard Maltby's "A Better Sense of History: John Ford and the Indians" in *The Book of Westerns*.

[39]As did George Seitz in his 1936 version, Mann rewrites Cooper's tale and the preceding films by situating a light-haired Alice with Uncas and a dark, sensual Cora with Hawkeye. Mann's Alice is a visual reminder of the 1936 Cora and she incorporates some personality traits from Tourneur and Brown's 1920 Alice and Cooper's Alice. Mann's redefinition of Alice de-emphasizes the racializing narrative of purity and whiteness created in the earlier films but retains Alice's characteristics of an innocent and wounded child. Mann's Cora, on the other hand, has the more somber personality of the 1920 Cora, the spunk and vitality of the 1936 Alice, and the dark hair of both; but, like the Alice of the 1936 film, there are no visual references connecting her to "tainted blood."

[40]Patrick Brantlinger, "Forgetting Genocide: Or, The Last of *The Last of the Mohicans*," *Cultural Studies* 12.1 (1998): 24-25.

[41]See Richard Slotkin, Introduction to The Last of the Mohicans, 1826, James Fenimore Cooper (New York: Penguin, 1986), xxiv.

[42]Brantlinger 24.

[43]It should be noted that Mann does not portray the lifestyle of Native women in a positive light. They are shown occasionally at British outposts carrying baskets and working, and in the Delaware camp they are portrayed as positioned behind Native men. It would seem unlikely that the outgoing and self-sufficient Cora would allow herself to become such a woman. It is more likely that she and Hawkeye would take on the lifestyle illustrated by the dead Camerons—as a pioneer family.

[44]*Manifest Destiny* is a term perhaps first utilized in 1846 by William Gilpin, the first territorial govenor of Colorado, who declared that "the untransacted destiny of the American people is to subdue the continent" (Stephen Daniels, "Frances Palmer and the Incorporation of the Continent," *Fields of Vision* [Cambridge: Polity, 1993], 180). However, the ideological underpinnings of Manifest Destiny were deeply ingrained in the initial colonization of the East Coast.

[45]Slotkin 10.

[46]Ibid. 10.

[47]Zinn 582-613.

[48]Ward Churchill, *Fantasies of the Master Race: Literature, Cinema and the Colonization of the American Indians*, Ed. M. Annette Jaimes (Monroe, ME: Common Courage P, 1992), 81.

[49]Alexander Ewen, ed, *Voices of Indigenous Peoples: Native People Address the United Nations, With the United Nations Draft Declaration of Indigenous Peoples Rights* (Santa Fe, NM: Clear Light Publishers, 1994), 21.

[50]See Summerhill and Williams.

[51]Zinn 552.

[52]Spurr 54.

[53]Ibid. 59.

[54]Annette Jaimes, "Introduction" in Churchill, Ward, *Fantasies of the Master Race: Literature, Cinema and the Colonization of the American Indians*, Ed. M. Annette Jaimes (Monroe, ME: Common Courage P, 1992), 1.

[55]Memmi, Thomas, and Fanon all discuss the ramifications of colonialism on the colonized subject. Thomas in particular focuses on how colonialism in the United States has affected Native Americans, specifically, how the process has been internalized by Native Americans, resulting in a vicious circle of internal and external racism that is very difficult to escape. For more information see Albert Memmi, *The Colonizer and the Colonized* (Boston: Beacon P, 1965, 1991), Franz Fanon, *Black Skin White Masks,* Trans. Charles Lam Markman (New York: Grove P, 1967), and

Robert K. Thomas, "Colonialism: Domestic and Foreign." *New University Thought* IV.4.

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M. Elise Marubbio is a Ph.D. candidate (ABD) in the Comparative Cultural and Literary Studies Program at the University of Arizona. Her dissertation, *Death of the Celluloid Maiden: The Image of Native American Women in Film*, analyzes specific tropic images of the Native American woman in Hollywood film in terms of their colonialist and nationalist rhetoric.