

## ROMANTIC REPRESENTATION OF AMERICAN INDIANS IN NOVEL AND SCREENPLAY DANCES WITH WOLVES BY MICHAEL BLAKE

\*Samee Ullah, \*\*Dr. Ghulam Murtaza

\*MPhil English Literature

\*\*Associate Professor Department of English, GC University Faisalabad

### ABSTRACT

*The representation of American Indians in literature and film, delineating a history of cultural propaganda, has served to support the continued colonization of Natives. The both literature and film have played a critical role in creating easily digestible stereotypes of Indians for popular consumption. Literature about Indians was first written and published in order to provoke and sanctify warfare against them. Later, the focus changed to enlisting public support for "civilizing the savages," stripping them of their culture and assimilating them into the dominant society. Film, like any other form of art, reflects the culture of the society and at the same time, contributes to that culture; it embodies the society's values, beliefs, and social structure and assists in transmitting culture to mass audiences. Myths and stereotypes about Native Americans are alive today because television and film, as media with mass appeal, perpetuated misconceptions. This particular romantic image of the Indian has regained unprecedented popularity with late twentieth-century novel and screen play like *Dances with Wolves*. This article views the literary and media parameters of romanticizing indigenous peoples' physical and natural identity to present them subhuman who have not any social, political, and economic value where from the idea of dominant (white) and subordinate (indigenous) comes out.*

**Key Words:** *Stereotyping, Underrepresentation of Indians, and Popular Culture's Literature and Film*

### Introduction:

The image of Native Americans had been established long before film was invented, and with a few exceptions, it has remained the same since then. Film, because of its visual nature and mass appeal, played a major role in perpetuating the misconceptions about the Natives. Some of the most popular images were the bad Indian, the good Indian and the noble savage. One of the methods that white society employed in an effort to isolate the Native Americans and make them a weak minority in their own homeland, was stereotyping. Stereotypes were created for three main reasons: (a) to confirm the superiority of Western civilization, (b) to perpetuate the myths on which the American nation was built, and (c) to offer entertainment through literature, art, and film. Stereotypes were very entertaining, and therefore, profitable. The stereotypes simplified and standardized images shared by members of a collective group that remain unchanged in light of new data that persist as frames in modern media date back to the White man's first contact with Native Americans and have continued to infiltrate books, magazines, television and commercial advertising.<sup>1</sup> Stereotypes as frames in the media have always been determined by the dominant cultural view, in this case, white European settlers.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, the narratives allowed these early Americans make sense of the new world around them, confining the unfamiliar to one of two basic categories; the Good Indian and the Bad Indian.<sup>3</sup> Green writes, the earliest imagery of Natives was that of the wild savage, a concept with roots dating back to Aeschylus in ancient Greece, who portrayed the animalistic beings as senseless and lacking in culture.<sup>4</sup> To the Puritans, Native Americans, in their non-conformity to White civilization, were brutal, naked and promiscuous beings meant to be converted or exterminated.<sup>5</sup> West says, such stereotypes not only defined what Natives were to settlers, but also what they, as a civilized society, were not. Whether they viewed Indians as savages or as early environmentalists, the perception was dependent upon opinions toward their own society.<sup>6</sup> Bird (1999) cites Griffiths (1996) who owes much of the misconceptions that developed to the early work of anthropologists, which later served as the basis for museum exhibits, world fairs, Wild West shows, and silent films, perpetuating Indians as the "primitive other."<sup>7</sup> According to Bird, the anthropological convention of the timeless 'ethnographic present' placed native cultures into a time warp from which, in the White consciousness, they have not emerged.<sup>8</sup>

Stereotypes, according to Marger (1994), are erroneous, overgeneralized images of groups of people which serve as the basis for several prejudices. In multi-ethnic societies, stereotyping is one of the techniques employed by the dominant group in order to maintain its dominance over subordinate groups.<sup>9</sup> Lippmann (1961) defines stereotypes as "pictures in our heads".<sup>10</sup> Lippmann, further, claims that stereotypes serve as the defense of our status in society.

More specifically he postulated that stereotypes are "the projection upon the world of our own sense of our own value, our own position and our own rights .... They are the fortress of our tradition, and behind its defenses we can continue to feel ourselves safe in the position we occupy."<sup>11</sup> It means any fascist approach towards Natives' identical bases is like an attack on the foundations of their status in society, on values, and on whole belief system.

Slotkin (1973) argues that "printed literature has been from the first the most important vehicle of myth in America".<sup>12</sup> Themes of Whites fighting against the "red devils" and usually outperforming them were essential for confirming the superiority of white civilization. Native Americans have appeared in the American press since before the nation's birth in 1776. *Publick Occurrences, Both Forreign and Domestick*, considered to be the first paper published in the New England colonies, contained stories of Indians, often represented negatively in accounts of attacks and atrocities. Since those early days of American journalism, the presence of Native Americans in stories and photos has been fluctuated according to the culture and issues of the times. On a whole, Kopacz and Lawton depict Natives as, "they have remained marginalized and underrepresented".<sup>13</sup> And "no other ethnic minority of the United States has been subject to such a barrage of diverse visual representations at the hands of the White majority that has served to shape perception and understanding".<sup>14</sup> The frequency with which stories appear in the news affect the salience of issues in the media and in the minds of society, and, as Weston (1996) points out, "the repetition and patterns of stereotypes in the form of subtle indicators such as choice of stories written, form and organization, continue to inform readers' misconceptions about minorities".<sup>15</sup>

Since the invention of moving images in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, film has been a particularly powerful medium. Films have served as escapist fantasies, allowing audiences to enter astonishing worlds and encounter wild and colorful characters. Movies have also been used to convey truths about society that are more easily digested in a fictional format. Difficult topics such as the nature of humanity, love, and war have all been explored with film as the tool that disseminates these themes into the consciousness of the masses. With the rise of mass media and popular culture came the onset of a collective consciousness that could be shared by people all over the world, rather than people of a particular culture relying on their own ancestry and specific history. George Lipsitz writes in his book, *Time Passages: Collective Memory and American Popular Culture*, "Instead of relating to the past through a shared sense of place or ancestry, consumers of electronic mass media can experience a common heritage with people they have never seen".<sup>16</sup> Lipsitz continues to write, "...[consumers] can acquire memories of a past to which they have no geographic or biological connection".<sup>17</sup> His statement brings to mind the sharing of cultures through film, but in America, the culture most frequently depicted is that of the white majority. Many images of this segment of the population have been transmitted over the past century. Yet minority populations have been woefully underrepresented or misrepresented within the cultural sharing taking place in mass media. Furthermore, Ella Shohat and Robert Stam's book, *Unthinking Eurocentrism (1994)*, discusses the noble savage convention and elaborates on the habitually harmful practices of casting and portraying Native American characters. For example, "the Indian character may be portrayed in films as wise and peace loving, yet that same character would also be taught important skills by an Anglo hero".<sup>18</sup> The sympathetic film *A Man Called Horse*, in particular, points out the absurdity that the white character would teach the Indian about a bow and arrow, a weapon used by Native Americans for decades. Smoothly and continually, Indians and Indian culture are discounted in this manner and audiences learn nothing that is culturally accurate about this population. As Kilpatrick writes, the nineties were considered a time of "heightened sensitivity and new sensibilities" regarding race, yet the one dimensional depictions of Native people were still very much present.<sup>19</sup> In *Native Americans on Film: Conversations, Teaching, and Theory*, the author mentions, "Because the power of First Cinema drives the film market, imbuing viewers with perceptions of what Native film should look like, the need to refuse stereotypical representations of Native peoples still exists in North America".<sup>20</sup> Certainly in present day, the notion that Native Americans are either noble or evil savages has been shown to be inarguably false and a gross misrepresentation. Mass consciousness has evolved to the point where those stereotypes are not assumed.

In our consumption-oriented, mediated society, much of what comes to pass as important is based often on the stories produced and disseminated by media institutions. Much of what audiences know and care about is based on the images, symbols, and narratives in radio, television, film, music, and other media. Media, in short, are central to what ultimately come to represent our social realities. While sex differences are rooted in biology, how we come to understand and perform gender is based on culture. According to Byers and Dell, we view culture "as a process through which people circulate and struggle over the meanings of our social experiences, social relations, and therefore, our selves".<sup>21</sup> Just as gender is a social construct through which a society defines what it means to be masculine or feminine, race also is a social construction. Ashcroft views the reflection of imperial binary logic of

European (civilized) versus Other(uncivilized) as “The European idea that there exist specific categories of people, based on the transmittance of skin pigmentation and facial features...Caucasians were believed to be at the top of the race hierarchy, and everywhere outside of Europe was declared otherness”.<sup>22</sup> Anderson writes about the race-based construction of a nation as:

“Indigenous authenticity is racism and primitivism in disguise. The adoption of racial categories and the supposed authenticity that follows encourages dehumanization in its clearest form, because it denies the natural change in human identities and cultures. This dehumanization is perpetuated today because Canada and the United States are founded on this race-based construction”.<sup>23</sup>

Portman and Herring (2001) discuss the “Pocahontas paradox,” a historical movement that persists in romanticizing and vilifying Native American women. They argue that “Native American women are viewed in the media as either strong and powerful or beautiful, exotic, and lustful and that both images have merged together into one representation through the stereotype of Pocahontas.”<sup>24</sup> While Ono and Buescher’s (2001) study on Pocahontas examines the commodification of products and cultural discourses surrounding the popular Disney film, they also assert that new meanings have been ascribed to the animated figure, thus recasting the Native American woman in a Western, capitalist frame.<sup>25</sup> Ultimately, Pocahontas is no more than a sexualized Native American Barbie. Both Portman and Herring (2001) and Ono and Buescher (2001) agree that the Pocahontas mythos is particularly harmful to Native women because of the way this historical figure has been exoticized by media discourses that emphasize her relationship with her white lover, John Smith.

### Review of the Literature

Native Americans have played an integral, if often unrecognized, role in American cinema. Most obviously, Hollywood has conjured them as unreal images and ideological props, reflecting the preoccupations and politics of mainstream society. From the beginning of film history, there was already a large pre-existing body of images and stereotypes attached to the Native Americans. Filmmakers drew their material from the stereotypes that existed in popular culture. Native Americans appeared on the screen with the very beginning of film history. According to Bataille and Silet (1980), short films such as *Sioux Ghost Dance (1894)* and *the Parade of Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show (1898)* were shown by Edison's coin-operated machines. Great early American directors like D.W. Griffith, played a significant role in building and perpetuating the stereotypes of Native Americans. D.W. Griffith, who is regarded as one of the first greatest film directors, shot many films in which Indians were the protagonists. Occasionally, individual Natives were depicted as "good" but the group was always presented as "evil." Bataille and Silet, (1980) cite *The Redman and the Child (1908)*, *Ramona (1910)*, and *The Battle at Elderberry Gulch (1913)* as examples of such films.

It is seen that very rarely did filmmakers use real Native Americans in their work. Because their "savagism," they have often been portrayed by stars of horror films like Bela Lugosi and Lon Chaney. Occasionally, when real Natives appeared in films, they were mainly used as props to help create the appropriate atmosphere. Examples of the few successful Native American actors are Willie Rogers, Chief Dan George, Willie Sampson, and Graham Greene. Aleiss (1991) views that one of the few films ever made about Native Americans which depicted them sympathetically was *The Vanishing American (1925)*. Although a silent film, *The Vanishing American* is one of the film industry's most powerful depictions on white society's exploitation of Native Americans. The film presented a very negative image of the missionaries. The importance of *The Vanishing American*, according to Aleiss (1991), "lies not so much in its accurate depiction of the misguided reservation system as in its ability to reveal the frustration of a society unable to resolve its Indian Problem".<sup>26</sup> From the time of WWI and on, the native's image became very popular in film, and for the next thirty years it remained unchanged.

Bataille and Silet argue that “Film images represent the Native American often as lazy, savage, drunken, heathen, usually male, with no specific tribal characteristics and with no family relationships.”<sup>27</sup> There was a serious reason for why most of the times the Native

American in the movies was male. As Deloria (1989) writes, Native American males have "too much of the aura of the savage warrior, the unknown primitive, the instinctive animal".<sup>28</sup>

This association of male Natives with savagism was very convenient for the Whites. It allowed the Native American's hostility towards Whites to be explained in terms of the Natives' animal instincts and only rarely in terms of a reaction to the white man's exploitation of the Natives.

Between 1951 and 1970 at least 86 Native American-Vs-U.S. cavalry films were produced and all of them were based on pre-existing stereotypical themes. For the last fifty years, most of the films produced are based on war theme and always has been a favorite subject. The United States government signed more than four hundred treaties and agreements with the Native Americans. However, none of those treaties was ever kept. Watt says, very rarely, were the issues of treaties dealt with by the film industry in a way that would shed light on U.S. government's dishonesty. The violence depicted in the Western was a great selling point. War themes evolved around the conflict between Whites and "savages" and had a strong appeal to audiences. By depicting human conflict at its utmost, war films are very emotional and engaging for the audience.<sup>29</sup> Therefore, war films are well liked and watched by the masses.

One of the most anti-Indian films ever made was John Ford's *The Searchers* (1956). The plot centers around the search for a little girl that was taken by Comanches, after they murdered her family. Ford portrayed the insanity that resulted from being captured by the Natives and he deliberately justified the killing of Natives. Actor Jeff Hunter played the role of Martin, the "half-breed" cousin of Debbie who was kidnapped. Martin, along with Debbie's uncle Ethan, played by John Wayne, spent most of the time in the film trying to rescue Debbie. In a very powerful scene, the hatred towards Native Americans is expressed by Ethan, who shoots a dead Native in both eyes. He then said that the Comanche warrior "will have to wander forever between the winds" and he will never be able to enter the spirit land. By using an actor with John Wayne's magnitude, Ford managed to justify the killing of the Natives.

In the movie *Duel in Diablo* (1966), directed by Ralph Nelson, the savagery of the Natives is also punished. One of the main ideas portrayed in the film was that there is nothing that can change the Native Americans from being savage. Therefore, they have to be killed. The movie postulated that there is no place for the Natives neither on the reservations nor in American society. Before the 1970s, there were only few films that treated Native Americans in a sympathetic way. One of these films was *Delmer Daves' Broken Arrow* which was released in 1949. The story was about an Apache Chief and an ex-army officer who were trying to bring peace among the Natives and the settlers. Spears writes, it was the "first picture that asked audiences to take the Indian's side," and for this reason the Association on American Indian Affairs "gave it a special award".<sup>30</sup> Although there was a more sympathetic depiction of the Native Americans in this film, *Broken Arrow* lacked authenticity. Spears (1959) argues that "the leader of the Apache was dignified in a way that "he resembled a Harvard graduate more than an illiterate savage".<sup>31</sup> Michael Mann's adaptation of the James Fenimore Cooper classic, *The Last of the Mohicans* (1992) and Kevin Costner's *Dances with Wolves* (1990), are some recent films that deal sympathetically with Native Americans. This does not mean that they are authentic. Commenting on *Dances with Wolves*, Seals (1991) argues that "the film presented Native Americans as being "very poetic and nature-loving".<sup>32</sup> Furthermore, he points out that the men in the film "speak Lakota in the feminine form," and this because the screenplay "was translated by a woman, who also served as the primary linguistic coach".<sup>33</sup> The documentary film *Incident at Oglala* (1991), and the feature *Thunderheart* (1992) are two examples of recent films that make strong political statements about the exploitation of Native Americans by the federal government. The *Incident at Oglala* centers around the uprising at Pine Ridge Reservation in 1975, during which two federal agents were killed. *Thunderheart* also deals with the events at Pine Ridge and presents an inside view of the reservation system. But these films did not receive the publicity that *Dances with Wolves* did, and its romantic and pictorial beauty attracted White community to cinema that indicates that white society refuses to deal with its Native American problem.

## Research Methodology

Media frames are the ways in which news is presented by forming, "a central organizing idea or story line that provides meaning to an unfolding strip of events," to suggest the story significance".<sup>34</sup> This is the cultural product of the elite group that takes into consideration the individual and organizational routines of media outlets. At the organizational level this includes decisions in deadlines, story structure, editing and hierarchical influences that influence what and how news is produced".<sup>35</sup> The pursuit of objectivity is null and void through the choices that unintentionally, albeit directly, affect the outcome of keywords, phrases, images and information sources that contribute to the cultural themes of the dominant group".<sup>36</sup> The more readily available frames are those which become most salient in the processes of the newsroom and, subsequently, in the minds of the reader. Media frames are not only the emphasized attributes of stories presented in the news, they also include the journalists' work routine that allows them to quickly identify and classify information for the public, providing meaning to a set of meaningless occurrences".<sup>37</sup>

Thus, the personal, social and organizational pressures of individual journalists are reflected in the news stories they produce. The framing an American journalist brings to a story on minority health issues may greatly differ from the perspectives of the community on the same topic. Friedland and Zhong (1996) describe the linkage between individual and media frames as the “bridge between...larger social and cultural realms and everyday understandings of social interaction”.<sup>38</sup> This salience of issues in the media has been found to directly affect audience attitudes and behaviors to produce “framing effects,” depending upon the strength and repetition of the frame”.<sup>39</sup> Framing effects can also influence the journalist’s perception of the world because they too are a part of their own audience, which in turn shapes their interpretation of the events or issues they cover.”<sup>40</sup> This cycle is outlined by Scheufele (1999), who accounts for the schemes of both presenting and comprehending news through two dimensions of framing media and individual frames in his effort to conceptualize the term and categorize research. At the individual level, frames occur as concepts of the mind, mental frames that are the product of personal evaluations, categorizations and internalizations of the world around us.<sup>41</sup> It is what Entman (1993) described as “mentally stored clusters of the mind” that help process the external frames of the media.<sup>42</sup> Tied to the individual is the stage of group framing that occurs at a collective level.<sup>43</sup> These societal frames develop over time and are responsible for the transference of “myths, stereotypes, attitudes, beliefs, values and behaviors shared by a dominant social group or groups”.<sup>44</sup>

According to DeFleur & Dennis (1994), the stereotype theory “aids in understanding how the media help perpetuate certain clusters of belief about particular categories of people”.<sup>45</sup> The concept of stereotypes has been around for many years. One reason for this is because the media serves as a “channel” that passes stereotypes from generation to generation. Mass media act as “the foundation from which meanings leading to prejudices and biases toward various categories of people can be learned”.<sup>46</sup> By examining this theory, the author found that the media continuously perpetuate stereotypes of Native Americans by printing Native American athletic imagery. Because the media play a large role in society, as long as they continue to support Native American athletic imagery in news reports, society will consider this the norm. This will result in Native Americans being ostracized in society.

Representations refers to how meaning is constructed in our minds through language; be it words (e.g., writing, poetry), music (e.g., traditional, modern, or rap lyrics), storytelling (e.g., spoken words, traditional languages), or visual language (all forms of art, filmmaking, and performance). How Native Americans represent themselves or make meaning of their lives and cultures as Native peoples is very different from how the dominant culture has represented (mis-represented) them as “Indians” throughout history. As much as objectivity has been idealized within the field of journalism as well as among the public of readers and viewers, as Blaagaard writes, “the products of media organizations, images and text, are always communicated and understood through constructed meaning. The “framing” concept is one that has been rehashed throughout the years, and despite its wide recognition and use within research, it is an elusive, multilayered idea, with multiple definitions”.<sup>47</sup> Frames, according to Gamson, Croteau, Hoynes and Sasson (1992) create the storyline along which narratives in the news are structured”.<sup>48</sup> Though the concept is suggestive of a “picture frame,” researchers often characterize framing in terms of the structural frames that uphold a building.<sup>49</sup> Just as the whole of a building is upheld by its hidden, skeletal framework deep within its form, so too are media frames that provide shape and organization to news images and text.

Cinema, for example, provides a channel through which the five functions unfold: surveillance, correlation, transmission, economic, and entertainment. And, films do more than that. Such practices result from the nexus of cinema with culture: it is not only the film, but its relationship to culture that interests us. In Entrikin point of view, “as a form of narrative, cinema joins the objective with the subjective, merging the historical with the personal”.<sup>50</sup> According to Baird (1996) Cinema thus embraces a double-edged social constructionist frame: messages and meanings are constructed within film, and audiences actively sort, discard, and construct meaning in their interactions with film.<sup>51</sup> The thrust of the current discussion is the social construction of the native and the settler within place, for which Western movies transmit values, interpret history, and provide entertainment. Put another way, cinematic dramas have created a slice of entertainment that has become integral to a constructed reality that, in turn, serves to inform audiences how to think about cowboys and Indians.

While one perspective of cinema is that films generate and maintain a status quo and thus perpetuate a hegemonic harmony, Kilpatrick’s assessment is that popular culture maintains and reproduces symbols that serve to transmit and thus justify governmental policy, such as the appropriation of lands from the Indians:

“The West made a perfect crucible for the development of a mythology intrinsically American. The “frontier” provided a challenge against which Euro-Americans, particularly white males, could pit themselves. The natural environment supplied its own challenges, but it was the cultural frontier that established the identity of the American West and the settlers and the cowboys who pushed that frontier westward”.<sup>52</sup>

And by “pushing the frontier” in cinema, settlers’ land claims meant extermination and removal of the denizen, justified by Euro-American values regarding how place is felt and lived, and further warranted by scientific rationalities such as Manifest Destiny and social Darwinism concerning the “natural” superiority of the white race.

## Data Analysis

### 1.1 Whites’ Attacks on Primitivism

The representation of Native Americans in films was mostly restricted to one genre, the Western because of which the structure of the Western was reasonable enough to stereotype Indians. Spears (1959) argues that the Western is a type of film that targets chiefly juvenile and unsophisticated minds. Hence, “it is natural that a stereotyped villain should have been the major representation of the Indian”.<sup>53</sup> When the settlers began moving west, one of the major obstacles they confronted were the indigenous people. European Civilization clashed with savagery on the west frontier. It provided a setting where the enjoyment of violent conflict would be justified without questioning the moral values of society. Actually Kevin Costner wants to paint a picture of western frontier, where he says no road, no trace that means the land is untouched to civilization. So, come and subdue its natural environment and change it into a civilized white culture. “Afternoon shadows are slanting across the rolling ocean of prairie. The wagon passes camera, headed towards an endless expanse of prairie. The sky is filled with stars. One suddenly catches fire and shoots across the heavens”. He describes the wild beauty of Indians’ prairie as, “Lieutenant Dunbar had fallen in love. He had fallen in love with this wild, beautiful country and everything it contained”.<sup>54</sup>

When Lieutenant Dunbar receives his orders to join Fort Sedgewick, Major Fambrough’s views about the Indian prairie as, “Your orders say you are to be posted on the frontier. The frontier is Indian country. I quickly deduced that you are an Indian fighter”. Dunbar replies, “I’m here at my own request... I want to see the frontier.... before it's gone”. Maj. Fambrough says, “Sir Knight, I am sending you on a knight's errand.....the furthestmost outpost of the realm. . . My personal seal will assure you safe passage through many miles of wild hostile country”.<sup>55</sup> It means the said area is as out of civilization as Conrad’s African Congo where life is ceased to move, where darkness prevails everywhere. So, we can say this novel is an American Heart of Darkness. Costner presents the western frontier as the world’s farthest and toughest frontier as, “Thirty-three men had gone over the hill, chancing whatever waited for them on the prairie. Cargill had sent a mounted patrol of seven men after the biggest batch of deserters. Maybe they were dead or maybe they had deserted too. They had never come back”.<sup>56</sup> Blake describes that it was much difficult to derive civilization on frontier prairie because it has no contact with the world of opportunity and prosperity (U.S.A); it is presented as one of the world’s unconquerable and brutal frontiers; but perhaps Blake is forgetting one thing that this wild and brutal frontier is also the part of that land of opportunity and prosperity (U.S.A). Here he writes about the situation that the U.S army was facing on the frontier as:

“And so abundant of the army’s most remote outpost, the spearhead of a grand scheme to drive civilization deep into the heart of the frontier, became complete. The army would regard it as merely a setback, a postponement of expansion that might have to wait until the Civil War had run its course, until the proper resources could be marshaled to supply a whole string of forts”.<sup>57</sup>

Blake, continually, creating suspense and threat among his readers wants to show that the U.S. army is facing a tough situation on the frontier of their own boundary. But at the same time, they claim that America has no boundary and it is the world’s most civilized and powerful state. He further writes, “Two steps were taken immediately... Fort Sedgewick be permanently abandoned, at least until further notice... And within days Fort Sdgewick ceased to be connected with the United States government. It became a nonplace”.<sup>58</sup> It looks like the world of no order and life as, “The only sign of life was the ragged piece of canvas flapping gently in the doorway of the collapsed supply house. The late afternoon breeze was up, but the only thing that moved was the shred of canvas”.<sup>59</sup> Here Blake’s repels his audience into the threats of frontier and its savage peoples, where survival of U.S. army is very difficult. It means Indians are sub-humans who are living on such an alien environment but white soldiers as being super-humans could not do so. The threats of this wild and brutal frontier are penetrated as in

readers' minds if this is a mysterious world that cannot be understood by the White adventurers that can be seen in following lines, "Everybody's run off... or got kilt. . .What had happened to Fort Sedgewick was something for finding out. . . And there was a deeper reason for his staying. . . Lieutenant Dunbar had wanted the frontier most of all".<sup>60</sup>

## 1.2 Misrepresentation of Native Culture

The remoteness, lifelessness, and culturelessness, this is the self painted picture of Indian prairie located on western frontier of United States, which is so called the land of fertility and opportunity. As Dunbar on his post has no means of communication to the US military except writing letters; that's why he keeps himself in contact through courier and shares every activity happened on the post and its surroundings. So he writes back to the authority of his first expedition on the prairie, "Made a short patrol yesterday p.m...discovered nothing. Will go further tomorrow".<sup>61</sup> After some days at the most remote and savage post Dunbar comes across to the Indians at Fort Sedgewick and writes to the US Military Authority and shares some self expected experiences with them about Indians, "Have made first contact with a wild Indian. One came to the fort and tried to steal my horse....Ten Bears' village is rising slowly, like a curtain going up. The smoke from many fires, the willow poles fanning against the sky, the conical houses covered with well -used hides, the horses along the river, the children, the women, the men. An ancient tableau, fully alive before his eyes".<sup>62</sup> After being acquainted with the Indians, Dunbar has to conduct some mutual meetings and has started conversation with them about his presence on the fort. As dialogue and mutual sharing of experiences between the both participants get started, Dunbar reports back about these activities, "I am learning the Kiowa words for head, hand, horse, fire, coffee, buffalo, hello and goodbye".<sup>63</sup> Here he tries to infer the incredibility of native language and culture which are going to disappear in near future. On the prairie scene, during the adventure of hunting buffalos Dunbar says,

"It's the first time we've seen the buffalo up close. They're fantastic creatures, powerful , brutish, untameable animals from another age....I had never been in a battle like this one. This had not been a fight for territory or riches or to make men free. This battle had no ego....It had been fought to preserve the food stores that would see us through winter, to protect the lives of women and children and loved ones only a few feet away".<sup>64</sup>

Ward Churchill blamed Hollywood for reducing the Indian to a cartoon character. A distillation of his arguments follows: (1) cinema is objectively racist on all levels, linking fiction with fact, (2) scenes such as the stagecoach ambush are "so totally ingrained in the American consciousness as to be synonymous with the very concept of American Indian," (3) most films cover only a 50-year period with no context of a native past, (4) few films examine post allotment Indian life, (5) all Indians become an amalgamation of the pseudo Plains warrior, and (6) Indians are uniformly portrayed as irrational, cruel, vicious, crude, and primitive.<sup>65</sup> The factors like literature, cinema, and mass media which help in creating some stereotypes mainly based on mishandling of the cultures, traditions, behavior, nature of living of people and way of dealing with those people and relationship between the state and that particular ethnic group. The term "bloodthirsty savages" also has a special connection with the Native Indians that all the natives are much lower than human in both intelligence and appearance because according to the mainstream writers, they do not have some special traits which a normal man has; they are unattractive, foul smelling, and spoke in an unappealing gibberish tongue. They dressed themselves on every occasion in a special and unique ritual style like tattoos and face painting in battle which stood for a sign of fear, unholy and inhuman appearance that can be seen in Blake's following lines, "Their rich, dark skins, the lines of sinewy muscle standing out clearly. The gleaming braided hair, the bows and lances and rifles, the paint running in bold lines down their faces and arms".<sup>66</sup> This appearance signaled to their acts of merciless destruction and torture. The stereotype of "Bloodthirsty Indians" presented the natives as something lower than human in intelligence and action which fitted them with only animals. They were something to be feared but also conquered. Lt. John Dunbar's desire to be posted on the western frontier is itself a mystery. Kevin Costner needs an eye witness to hit the Indians' culture, nature and prairie life that he himself acting as the main character names Lt. John J. Dunbar performs quite significantly. Dunbar was very anxious to see wild Indians and buffalos because white narratives about Indians were full of romance and myths and he, like other American children, had been listening since his childhood. Blake writes about Lt. Dunbar's aspiration of confronting Indians as, "Lieutenant Dunbar had never seen an Indian, much less fought one".<sup>67</sup> Dunbar's first contact with Indian is presented as, "A hatchet with hair hanging from it. A

breastplate of gleaming bone. The heavy, shining hair spilling halfway down his back. The black, deep-set eyes. The great nose. Skin the color of clay. The feather bobbing in the breeze at the back of his head. He knew it was an Indian, but he had never expected anything so wild, and the shock of it had stunned him as surely as a blow to the head”.<sup>68</sup> Dunbar on his way to Fort Sedgwick signals the nativity as, “We have been gone four days now and still we have seen no signs of life. Only earth and sky... There is nothing for miles”. As Dunbar’s life’s aim is to enjoy the primitivism and savagism of the Indians as the people of alien race describes them as, “First look of Indians Four fantastic faces fill the screen, three together, one a little apart. They are tired, frustrated faces, and also very fierce. They are painted. Several wear their hair in spiked roaches, one has brightly-colored eagle feathers jutting out of his scalp at all angles. The four warriors are naked from the waist up”.<sup>69</sup>

After a long pause on an isolated and ceased frontier post, lieutenant decides to go out to find Indians. On his way to Indian Prairie, Dunbar finds an Indian woman injured and decides to bring her to Indians’ camp, where he sees Indian community and tells, “There were fifty or sixty conical, hide covered houses pitched along the stream. They looked warm and peaceful in the late afternoon sun, but the shadows they cast also made them look larger than life, like ancient, still-living monuments... Lieutenant Dunbar sat on Cisco, holding the woman he had found, his senses crushed by the power of the ageless tableau spread out before him, spread out like the unraveling of a living canvas. A primal, completely untouched civilization”.<sup>70</sup> Blake’s main purpose of writing this romantic piece of writing is to stereotype Indians as uncivilized, ill-cultured and savage people. He doesn’t pursue them as human beings as, “It was a dream of wild people, clothed in skins and colored fabric, a whole separate race of humans watching him breathlessly not a hundred yards away”.<sup>71</sup>

Now the Lieutenant has merged himself into the savage communal life and started participating in expedition of buffalo hunting and other festivities on this savage prairie. Here Blake misrepresents not only savage people but also their way of living, food, dress and language. “They were draped in all kinds of finery and their bodies were painted with loud designs. Each man’s head was covered with the head of a buffalo, complete with curly hair and horns. Only the dark eyes and prominent noses were visible beneath the strange helmets”.<sup>72</sup> Buffalo, which occupies central place in Indian culture and is the major source of food for the whole community; Blake doesn’t even feel hesitation in romanticizing buffalos as, “It was then that Dunbar got his first look at the buffalo trail: a gigantic swath of torn-up ground a half-mile wide, sweeping over the prairie like some immense, dung-littered highway”.<sup>73</sup> According to Blake, “It was a magnificent dish of valley, four or five miles wide and ten miles across. Even the sky, now building with clouds, and the sinking sun, with its miraculous display of cathedral rays, could not compare with the great, living blanket of buffalo that covered the valley floor”.<sup>74</sup> At one hand Blake admires Indians’ religion which is connected to the local environment, while on the other hand he invites white soldiers and investors to control and civilize the Indian prairie. As he writes, “The Comanche religion was simple, based as it was on the natural environment of the animals and elements that surrounded them. The practice of the religion was complex, however. It was rife with ritual and taboo, covering this subject alone kept the men busy”.<sup>75</sup>

While natives claim that their existence is physically, traditionally, emotionally and spiritually attached with nature and land and they refer land as sacred as a religious belief and nature as mother. That is why their food, dress and life style is pure natural and they don’t want to change them at any cost. On the other hand exposes them as sub-humans, who are totally unaware of culture and civilization. Blake paints a Indians’ prairie culture as, “A temporary camp of fires on a distant plain, peopled by two hundred aborigines whose skin was different than his, whose language was a tangle of grunts and shouts, whose beliefs were yet a mystery and probably always would be”.<sup>76</sup> “He did not belong to the Indians. He did not belong to the whites. And it was not time for him to belong to the stars. He belonged right where he was now. He belonged nowhere”.<sup>77</sup> It means living with savage Indians’ means to live nowhere. Their hunting and storing food system is also romanticized as, “The hunters were hanging about their kills, waiting as the women and children and elderly poured onto the plains, hauling their butchering equipment along with them. Their voices were ringing with excitement, and Dunbar was struck by the idea that some kind of festival had begun”.<sup>78</sup> The Indians who have been living there for thousands of years, now are considered as primitive and alien to their ancestral land; their camping for hunting buffalos and clothing are also misinterpreted like, they were primitive people. They lived in big, lonely, alien world that was written off by his own people as nothing more than hundreds of worthless miles to be crossed. . . The butchering was a colossal enterprise. There were perhaps seventy dead buffalo, scattered like chocolate drops across a great earthen floor, and at each body families set up portable factories that worked with amazing speed and precision in transforming animals into usable products. . . They took everything: hides, meat, guts, hooves, tails, heads. In the space of a few hours it was all gone, leaving the prairie with the appearance of a gigantic, recently cleared banquet table”.<sup>79</sup> When Dunbar decides to go out with the native hunters to have an adventure of hunting buffalos, he describes the killing ground as, “The entire column is stretched



along the killing ground...The buffalo has been split open and Wind In His Hair, kneeling at the bull's side, is feeling around in the cavity It's the liver, still warm and steaming. He offers it to Dunbar. A sizable crowd has gathered to watch this ritual"<sup>80</sup>.

### Conclusion

The portrayal of Native people in stereotypical roles continues to be a successful and lucrative formula for the writers and filmmakers as well. In this novel and screenplay the both Native people and their prairie culture are frozen either in cooperation or in conflict with the white hero where they are portrayed both negatively and inaccurately. White filmmakers to film Native people as contemporary peoples within the context of their own white cultures and communities persistently create misconception about the nativity among the audiences. As ambassadors of Native peoples the key role of these characters is to fix the stereotypes of Native people what the audiences think of. Blake's ultimate goal is to present the whites as super-humans, whose language, food, dress, and shelter are far better than these savage Indians. Native Americans, with few exceptions, were never dealt as humans, people with their own history, civilization, and problems what is approved in this screen play and novel very beautifully. The impact of the Western on American culture is tremendous because it is widely viewed; as the images of the Natives presented in *Dances With Wolves* are dominant in popular culture and they shape many other forms of representation. Consequently, images of the Native Americans in Westerns play a significant role in perpetuating the preconceptions about North America's first inhabitants. Literature and art crafted by the dominant culture are an insidious political force, disinforming people who might otherwise develop a clearer understanding of indigenous struggles for justice and freedom. The representation of Native Americans in film and literature is mostly restricted to one genre, the Western which has multidimensional objectives like:

1. Michael Blake's mission is the attainment of international favor through the provision of goal oriented portraits of Indians.
2. He tries to maintain the uneasy and terrifying environment on the frontier so that he can gather sympathy for the US Military.
3. He bears great skills of presenting west frontier as he has competitive information and knowledge about Indians based on real experiences.
4. He praises the beauty of wilderness of the Native people and also laments upon the inhuman and savage traits of the Natives.

### References

1. Miller, Autumn & Susan Dente Ross. (2004). They are not us: Framing of American Indians by the Boston Globe. Howard Journal of Communications.
2. Bird, E. (1999). Gendered construction of the American Indian in popular media. P.62
3. Berkhofer, R. (1978). The White man's Indian. New York: Vintage Books.
4. Green, Michael K. (1993). Images of Native Americans in advertising: Some moral issues. Journal of Business Ethics. p.336
5. Hanson, J.R., & Rouse, L.P. (1987). Dimensions of Native American stereotyping. American Indian Culture and Research Journal.
6. Ibid. p.36
7. Bird, E. (1999). Gendered construction of the American Indian in popular media. p.62
8. Ibid. p. 62
9. Marger, M. N. (1994). Race and ethnic relations. (3rd ed.). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing Company
10. Lippmann, W. (1961). Public opinion. NY: The Macmillan Company. p.3
11. Ibid. p.96
12. Slotkin, Richard. Regeneration Through Violence: The Mythology of the American Frontier. Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1973. p. 19
13. Kopacz, Maria and Bessie Lee Lawton. (2011). The YouTube Indian: Portrayals of Native Americans on a viral video site. New Media and Society.p.333
14. Bush, Alfred L. and Lee Clark Mitchell. (1994). The photograph and the American Indian. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
15. Weston, Mary Ann. (1996). Native Americans in the News: Images of Indians in the Twentieth Century Press. Westport, Conn: Greenwood Press. p.3

16. Lipsitz, George. *Time Passages: Collective Memory and American Popular Culture*. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota, 1990. Print. p.5
17. Ibid. p.5
18. Shohat, Ella, and Robert Stam. *Unthinking Eurocentrism: Multiculturalism and the Media*. London; New York: Routledge, 1994. Print.
19. Kilpatrick, Jacquelyn. *Celluloid Indians*. N.p.: U of Nebraska, 1999. Print.
20. Marubbio, M. Elise, and Eric L. Buffalohead. *Native Americans on Film: Conversations, Teaching, and Theory*. Lexington: U of Kentucky, 2013. Print.
21. Byers, J., & Dell, C. (1992). Big differences on the small screen: Race, class, gender, feminine beauty, and the characters at "Frank's Place." In Lana F. Rakow (Ed.), *Women making meaning: New feminist directions in communication* (pp. 191). New York: Routledge.
22. Ashcroft, B., Griffiths, G., and Tiffin, H. (2007). *Post-Colonial Studies: The Key Concepts* (2nd ed.). London and New York: Routledge. Pp.181-182
23. Andersen, C. (2011). *Mixed Ancestry or Métis?* In B. Hokowhitu, N. Kermoal, C. Andersen, A. p.96
24. Portman, T. A., & Herring, R. (2001). Debunking the Pocahontas paradox: The need for a humanistic perspective. *Journal of Humanistic Counseling, Education and Development*.
25. Ono, K. A., & Buescher, D. T. (2001). Deciphering Pocahontas: Unpackaging the commodification of a Native American woman. *Critical Studies in Media Communication*.p.25
26. Aleiss, A. (1991). The Vanishing American: Hollywood's compromise to Indian Reform. *Journal of American studies*,(25)3, p. 468.
27. Bataille, G. M. & Silet, C. L. P. (1980). Introduction. In G.M. Bataille & C. L. P. Silet (Eds.), *The pretend Indians: Images of Native Americans in the movies* (pp. xix-xxix). Ames: Iowa State University Press.
28. Deloria, V. J. (1989). *Custer died for your sins. An Indian manifesto*. Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press. p.3.
29. Watt, D. (1988). History on the Public screen, I. In Rosenthal, A. (Ed.), *New challenges for documentary* (p. 43)-443). Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
30. Spears, J. (Jan., 1959). The Indian on the screen. *Films in Review*,(10), Pp.25-26
31. Ibid. p.31
32. Seals, David. "The New Custerism." *The Nation* 13 May 1991 p.634
33. Ibid. p. 637
34. Gamson, W.A., & Modigliani, A. (1987). The Changing Culture of Affirmative Action. In R.G. Braungart & M.M. Braungart (Eds.), *Research in Political Sociology* (Vol. 3 p.143) Greenwich, CT: JAI Press.
35. Miller, Autumn & Susan Dente Ross. (2004). They are not us: Framing of American Indians by the Boston Globe. *Howard Journal of Communications*. p.247
36. Scheufele, Dietram A. (1999). Framing as a theory of media effects. *Journal of Communication*. Pp.105-106
37. Gitlin, T. (1980). Mesomobilization: Organizing and framing in two protest campaigns in West Germany. *American Journal of Sociology*. p.7
38. Friedland, Lewis & Mengbai Zhong. (1996). International television coverage of Beijing spring 1989: A comparative approach. *Journalism & Mass Communication Monographs*. p.13
39. Chong, Dennis, and James N. Druckman. (2007). Framing theory. *Annual Review of Political Science*. Pp.109-111.
40. Scheufele, Dietram A. (1999). Framing as a theory of media effects. *Journal of Communication*. p.117
41. ibid. p.106
42. ibid. p.107
43. Miller, Autumn & Susan Dente Ross. (2004). They are not us: Framing of American Indians by the Boston Globe. *Howard Journal of Communications*. p.247
44. Ibid. p.247
45. DeFleur, M. L., & Dennis, E. E. (1994). *Understanding mass communication: A liberal arts perspective*. (5th ed.). Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Company. p. 606
46. ibid. p. 598

47. Blaagaard, Bollette, B. Shifting boundaries: Objectivity, citizen journalism and tomorrow's journalists. *Journalism*. p.1079
48. Gamson et al. (1992). Media images and the social construction of reality. *Annual Review of Sociology*. P.385
49. *ibid.* p. 385
50. Entrikin, J. Nicholas. 1991. *The Betweenness of Place: Towards Geography of Modernity*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press
51. Baird, Robert. 1996. "Going Indian: Discovery, Adoption, and Renaming Toward a True American, from Deerslayer to Dances with Wolves." In *Dressing in Feathers*, edited by L. Elizabeth Bird, 195-209. Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press.
52. Kilpatrick, Jacquelyn. *Celluloid Indians*. N.p.: U of Nebraska, 1999. Print. Pp. 5-6
53. Spears, J. (Jan., 1959). The Indian on the screen. *Films in Review*,(10). p. 18
54. Blake, Micheal. (1988). *Dances With Wolves*. London: Penguin Books. p. 2
55. *Ibid.* p.5
56. *ibid.* p.9
57. *ibid.* p.10
58. *ibid.* p.14
59. *ibid.* p.16
60. *ibid.* p.17
61. *ibid.* p.42
62. *ibid.* p.46
63. *ibid.* p.119
64. *ibid.* p.159
65. Churchill, Ward. *Fantasies of the Master Race: Literature, Cinema and the Colonization of the American Indians*. San Francisco, CA: City Lights, 1998. Print.
66. Blake, Micheal. (1988). *Dances With Wolves*. London: Penguin Books. p. 63
67. *ibid.* p.4
68. *ibid.* p.54
69. *ibid.* p.99
70. *ibid.* p.101
71. *ibid.* Pp. 150-151
72. *ibid.* p.159
73. *ibid.* p.164
74. *ibid.* p. 281
75. *ibid.* p. 165
76. *ibid.* p. 168
77. *ibid.* p. 173
78. *ibid.* p. 177
79. *ibid.* p. 178
80. *Dances with Wolves*. Produced by Jim Wilson and Kevin Costner, and directed by Kevin Costner. Image Studio, 1990. Videocassette.