

THE RAW AND THE COOKED 1984: THREE RECENT FILMS

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At the jaguar's home the hero saw a big jatoba trunk burning: beside it was a pile of stones such as the Indians now use to build their earth ovens (*ki*). He ate his first meal of cooked meat.

Kayapo-Gorotire myth, quoted in
The Raw and the Cooked

One need not have recently read Claude Lévi-Strauss's *The Raw and the Cooked* to recognize that *Iceman*, *Greystoke: The Legend of Tarzan, Lord of the Apes*, and *Splash* all deal with the clash between nature and culture, wilderness and civilization. Indeed, *Iceman* and *Greystoke* fall together so conveniently that even *Variety* has labelled them a "newfangled genre" of movies dealing with primitive men.¹ It may be premature to build a genre around so few films, but it strikes me as a curious quirk of film distribution that these three should be released within five weeks of one another. More significantly, I would suggest that this "genre" extends and inverts the structure of the traditional Western while maintaining many of the same antinomic pairs suggested by Jim Kitses in *Horizons West*: that is, wilderness/civilization, nature/culture, and so on.² It would seem that although the American public's interest in the Western is currently at low ebb, our concern with the well-worn wilderness/civilization antinomy flows just as strongly as ever. In

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this regard, the Western is as much if not more of an antecedent to the films under discussion than more obvious predecessors: *Trog* (1970) for *Iceman*; the many Tarzan films (especially *Tarzan's New York Adventure*, 1942) and *The Wild Child* (1970) for *Greystoke*; *Mr. Peabody and the Mermaid* (1948) for *Splash*. Conversely, *Iceman*, *Greystoke* and *Splash* are important successors to the seemingly moribund Western. To study them is to better understand the function of the premiere—for decades, the prevalent—American film genre, the Western, and to explore how that genre's concerns have indeed not perished, but instead found new expression in contemporary popular culture.

Thus, in an effort to better understand how society's fascination with nature—a fascination extending back through the Western genre to primitive mythology—is articulated in the 1980's, I have drawn freely from the still expanding volume of writing on the Western genre and the works of Lévi-Strauss to develop the following thoughts on *Iceman*, *Greystoke* and *Splash*.

The Raw and the Cooked: An American Variation

In a sequence from *My Darling Clementine* (1946) so frequently noted that it has become a talisman of genre analysis,³ Wyatt Earp (Henry Fonda) emerges from a barbershop where he has just been "civilized" with an extra dousing of cologne. He is inveigled into escorting the recently arrived (from the East) Clementine Carter (Cathy Downs) to a half-built

church where Tombstone's citizens are participating in a communal dance. The settlers step aside as Earp, man of the West, awkwardly dances with Clementine, woman of the East. Their tentative union in this *half-civilized* "world of metaphor" (Kitses's phrase) signals a mediation of the antinomic East and West.⁴ It must be emphasized, as Kitses and Lévi-Strauss do, that it is through the *counterposing* of wilderness and civilization that meaning is generated. Without "civilization" there could be no concept of "wilderness"; meaning is produced through the difference between the two terms. We are here studying a symbolic system rather than suggesting intrinsic meaning for lone symbols. Kitses codifies this "symbolic system" in a table charting the "shifting ideological play" represented in a set of antinomies under the headings of "The Wilderness" and "Civilization": freedom/restriction, honor/institutions, solipsism/democracy, and, under the sub-headings Nature/Culture, purity/corruption, pragmatism/idealism, savagery/humanity.⁵ In this context, Earp becomes a representative of the wilderness *in comparison* to the woman from the East, Clementine.

That civilization will finally conquer the wilderness is, of course, an historical fact, but the Western stresses that unstable time of *transition* (1865-1899) during which culture overcame nature, the raw became cooked. The Westerner, such as Wyatt Earp/Henry Fonda, is more than the man in the mythic white hat—a chivalric knight in chaps and spurs—he *mediates* between nature and culture. The Westerner is of the wilderness and is most at home in the desert, but he is frequently recruited by the townsfolk to protect civilization from others of the wilderness. At the denouement he might be incorporated into that community (*The Far Country*, 1955), but more frequently he rides off, to wander forever between the winds (*The Searchers*, 1956). As a mediator he belongs completely to neither the

wilderness or civilization.

In complicated, sometimes ambivalent fashion, the classical Western endorses culture's conquest of nature.⁶ The train brings prosperity to the desert (*The Iron Horse*, 1924); the Westerner establishes law and order in the brutal wild West town (*Destry Rides Again*, 1939); settlers displace ruthless cattle barons (*Shane*, 1953); civilization's empires are built (*Cimarron*, 1931 and 1961). In the 1950's and 60's, however, the image of the Westerner, his relationship to the community and the genre in general began to undergo significant changes. It has been suggested that most genres follow a standard pattern of evolution; the later stages of which are marked by films which undercut the genre's conventions— leading to a "baroque" or "self-reflexive" stage that frequently presages the genre's complete dissolution.⁷ The Western, the cinema's oldest genre, forms the basis for many theoretical generalizations such as these. Christian Metz provides some particulars about the Western's waning years: "With the Italian Western, notably *Once Upon A Time In The West* (Sergio Leone, 1969), contestation gives way to 'deconstruction': the entire film is an explication of the code [of the West] and of its relation to history."⁸ By 1969 the Western was no longer a naive representation of the assumed worth of culture's triumph. Instead, the values promoted by civilization—order, industrialization, communal cooperation—are now critiqued and questioned. Order becomes repression. Industrialization becomes environmental exploitation. Communal cooperation becomes institutionalized bureaucracy. Nature, in these ecologically aware days, begins looking better and better. So it is that a film such as *Cheyenne Autumn* (1964), with its sympathetic representation of the Indian, can epitomize a new phase in the development of the Western. The loss of the wilderness is eulogized rather than celebrated (see *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance*, 1962). Wilderness character

types—the Westerner and “noble savage”—are extolled over the genocide and defoliation implicit in civilization’s subjugation of the wilderness.

The protagonists of *Iceman*, *Greystoke* and *Splash* are variations on the theme of the noble savage. In these three films we see a continuation of the concerns articulated in the Western’s wilderness/civilization antinomy. However, these texts stand that antinomy on its head, inverting the genre’s values in a fashion that is approached by later Westerns, but never fully realized within the genre itself. This inversion is immediately apparent in the iconographically significant shift from the American West to civilized locations. The Western charts civilization’s invasion of the wilderness, but, in contrast, these three films detail the adventures of a wilderness figure in a civilized environment: specifically, a scientific compound, early twentieth century England and contemporary New York City. These sites of civilized activity, filled with potent icons, become peculiar and hostile. The protagonists are strangers in strange and mostly unfriendly worlds of civilization metaphors: computers, British mansions, modern skyscrapers. Whereas the classical Western portrays European Americans as sympathetic outsiders exploring a cruel wilderness, *Iceman*, *Greystoke*, and *Splash* reverse that value structure and present innocent creatures of the wild, trapped in a land of evil, excessive civilization. As a result, positive values and viewer sympathies are transposed from civilization to the wilderness.

Metaphors, obviously, do not exist in a vacuum. In order to understand how *Iceman*, *Greystoke* and *Splash* work through the wilderness/civilization paradigm we must analyze their common narrative, syntagmatic structure.

The Raw and the Cooked: Narrative Structure

In Will Wright’s *Sixguns and Society: A Structural Study of the Western* he addresses the genre’s structure through a “set of functions” that characterizes specific plots within the genre.⁹ This technique, rooted in Vladimir Propp’s mythological work, is used to explain how the genre’s conceptual, paradigmatic framework (arrayed in binary oppositions) is inscribed in the films’ narrative, syntagmatic structures. Wright’s method, though flawed,¹⁰ allows us to sketch the articulation of the wilderness/civilization antinomy in the three-film “genre” under discussion.

Reviewing the plots of *Iceman*, *Greystoke* and *Splash*, therefore, I have derived a provisional set of functions. Each function need not occur in every film, nor will they always appear in the following order. Also, I have chosen to signify the wilderness figure with the word “savage”—lacking a better term. The word does not, however, carry its customary negative connotations—i.e., brutality, barbarism, etc. As noted above, the savage is basically a positive figure.

1. Civilization enters the wilderness.
2. The savage enters civilization.
3. The savage bonds with a sympathetic civilization figure(s).
4. The savage breaks social customs.
5. The savage is acculturated—or not.
 - A. He/she eats cooked food, or does not.
 - B. He/she acquires cultural clothing, or does not.
 - C. He/she acquires language, or does not.
 - D. He/she has sexual intercourse with a civilization figure, or does not.
6. The savage returns to his/her wilderness behavior, within the civilization environment.
7. The savage is deserted by the civilization figure(s).
8. The savage confronts a scientific institution.
9. The sympathetic civilization figure(s) rejoins the savage.

10. The savage escapes from civilization, accompanied by the sympathetic civilization figure(s).

The overall structure is a symmetrical one: the savage enters civilization, attempts acculturation and then leaves civilization along basically the same route. To comprehend the working of the nature/culture opposition within this symmetry we must analyze the individual functions.

1. *Civilization enters the wilderness.* In a pre-diegetic equilibrium, nature and culture are presumably balanced, each in its "proper place." This equilibrium is quickly destroyed, however, as civilization invades the wild—providing the catalyst for the entire diegesis. A scientific expedition explores the Arctic; a British couple are shipwrecked on the coast of Africa; and an eight-year-old boy impulsively leaps into the waters off Cape Cod. In a sense, civilization has encroached upon nature's territory and hence is to blame for any misfortunes that may follow. In American film, tampering with nature often leads to disaster. Witness the horror and science fiction films—e.g., *Star Trek III: The Search For Spock* (1983)—in which scientists pry into nature's secrets and unleash natural forces beyond their comprehension and control (frequently a metaphor for the real life splitting of the atom). Films such as these suggest that society and, more specifically, science is at fault for the chaos ensuing from the disruption of the natural order. Of course, the "chaos" that ensues in *Iceman*, *Greystoke* and *Splash* is of a rather minor nature compared to, say, *Crack In The World* (1965), and is limited instead to the savage's effect upon a small circle of friends and relations, and society's impact upon the savage. Still, the unspoken conflict that these films work through is the relationship of humanity to nature. They seem to suggest that a *single*, extraordinary human can develop a symbiotic relationship with nature, but that groups, institutions, of men and



Daryl Hannah as Madison the mermaid eats "native" food in Ron Howard's *Splash*.

women can only disrupt the natural scheme of things. We can date this notion back to Thoreau and beyond, but it seems to have accrued more urgency as the supply of natural resources dwindles here in the late twentieth century. Humanity must explore and exploit the earth in order to survive, but that exploitation—if it is done without regeneration—will ultimately lead to our demise. Ecology is obviously not an overt concern of these films, but it also is not too far from the surface. If, as Lévi-Strauss contends, myths work through a society's unresolvable conflicts, it may well be that *Iceman*, *Greystoke* and *Splash* express late-twentieth century ambivalence toward nature and the use thereof.

2. *The savage enters civilization.* The savage responds to a summons from civilization. Only in *Iceman* is the savage, nicknamed Charlie (John Lone), brought into civilization without his/her consent; Tarzan¹¹ (Christopher Lambert) seeks his kin and *Splash*'s Madison (Daryl Hannah) is sexually attracted to Allen Bauer (Tom Hanks). In each case, the entry is a reaction to an action taken by civilization, rather than a movement initiated by nature. As noted above, this places the

guilt for any mishaps on civilization, and hence contributes to the childlike innocence of the savage. He/she is thus not culpable for any violations of human laws, customs, moral systems.

These savage innocents—Charlie, Tarzan, Madison—share two main characteristics. First, each is a solitary figure, a lone wolf. Charlie is isolated in the ice, having lost his prehistoric family. Madison apparently belongs to no school of mermaids. Tarzan does have his ape family, but his contacts with his own (human) kind are rare and confrontational. Thus, the solipsism that Kitces observes in the Westerner also obtains with these savages. Moreover, as the Westerner is frequently *recruited* by the townsfolk to secure the tentative toehold civilization has made in the wilderness (e.g., *Shane*), so is the solitary savage summoned to civilization. The Western and the films under consideration differ, though, in that civilization has now become a dominant, almost evil force. New York City amplifies the worst civilization aspects of, say, Tombstone. As a result of civilization's relatively recent dominance the outsider (Westerner or savage) no longer functions to preserve civilization, but rather he/she unintentionally disturbs its workaday operation.

A second characteristic of the savages is that each is an *ambivalent* member of the natural world; that is, each is divided intrinsically between nature and culture. Tarzan is raised by apes, but is an English lord by blood. At one point he growls, "Half of me is the Earl of Greystoke. The other half is wild." Madison is half woman and half fish. Charlie, less clearly, is a prehistorical specimen—but a *human* artifact rather than, say, a mastodon or some other, more conventional, animal specimen. Although each is associated with the natural world by proximity—having been discovered in the wild—they are actually halfway between nature and culture and hence they can serve a mediating function. They are of both worlds.

The most important aspect of this function—"the savage enters civilization"—is that it creates the possibility of its inverse: Will the savage leave civilization? Assuming, as Roland Barthes does, that narratives open enigmas that must be resolved in order to attain narrative closure, one might say that the principle enigma of this genre is whether the ambivalent savage will choose the wilderness or civilization. Tarzan's quest for identity, Madison's desire for Allen, and Charlie's despair over the loss of his family are all expressions of this same enigma. Though posed in superficially different terms, the underlying structure remains the same. Only when the savage's ambivalent, mediatory position is significantly shifted toward the wilderness or civilization can the films come to narrative closure (see function #10).

3. *The savage bonds with a sympathetic civilization figure(s).* Charlie's Dr. Shephard (Timothy Hutton), Madison's Allen and Tarzan's Capitaine Phillippe D'Arnot (Ian Holm) and the Sixth Earl of Greystoke (Ralph Richardson) are not arbitrary points of connection for the particular savage. In each instance, the savage bonds with a civilization figure who is predisposed to the wilderness. The anthropologist Shephard is an anomaly within the scientific community, which is quickly established when several characters remark on the (natural) stench he emanates. Allen has two aquariums in his apartment and one in his office. D'Arnot castigates the hunting party he accompanies for their lack of respect for nature and the partially senile Earl of Greystoke has entered his second childhood, performing antics on the staircase that resemble Tarzan's naive activities. In each case, the savage will entice a civilization character to reject culture's trappings, which the latter does to a degree.

4. *The savage breaks social customs.* The initial disruption of civilization's routine occurs when the savage encounters and,

always unknowingly, violates one or several of society's minor taboos. Tarzan's lack of table manners at a formal dinner or Madison's naked appearance at the Statue of Liberty is used as a source of humor. Their actions could conceivably threaten the status quo, but laughter functions here as an ideological safety valve, providing harmless release for anti-social impulses the viewer may harbor. The diegetic purpose of these scenes is to establish the "otherness" of the savage—to place him/her at odds with the ideological apparatuses of a society.

5. *The savage is acculturated—or not.* As Lévi-Strauss notes at several points in *The Raw and the Cooked*, many myths stress the *transition* from nature to culture—for example, myths explaining the origin of the cooking of food. Cooking is the process by which the raw food of animals and primitive humans becomes the cooked food of more civilized societies. Certain myths, he notes, "...view culinary operations as mediatory activities between heaven and earth, life and death, nature and society."¹² Just as raw, natural food must pass through the cooking process to become cooked, cultural food, so must Charlie, Tarzan and Madison pass through an acculturation process in order to become civilized beings. The important point here is not whether or not they reach that final goal, but what sort of dust is kicked up along the route. In Lévi-Strauss's scheme, the process is interpreted as a mediatory bridge between two states—in the present example, nature and culture. The fact that Charlie does not progress as far toward culture as do Tarzan and, especially, Madison does not negate the significance of this process. Charlie's failure is merely an "inversion"—as Lévi-Strauss would say—of the narratives of Tarzan and Madison. Charlie rejects the accoutrements of civilized society, but he does so within the same framework as Tarzan's and Madison's acceptance of it. Meaning thus resides within the transition, the process. To clarify this accultura-

tion process I have broken it down into four constituent acts (listed above, p. 6).

Since Lévi-Strauss privileges "culinary operations," let us begin there. *Iceman*, *Greystoke* and *Splash* include significant eating sequences: Charlie repulses his scientist captors by sharing raw insects with them; Tarzan and Madison both eat elaborately cooked foods, but improperly so. Charlie's artificially natural environment within the scientific compound basically keeps him primitive while Tarzan and Madison make earnest efforts to learn humanity's arbitrary rules. The act of dining thus becomes a barometer of how wild/civilized a character has become. Further, it must be remembered that the savage's style of eating only appears wild in comparison to civilized mores. Without the cooked there is no concept of raw.

A second indicator of the degree of civilization attained by Charlie, Tarzan or Madison is dress, or lack thereof. The natural condition is nakedness, which as *Splash* emphasizes, could only be conceived in a society in which nakedness' antinomy prevails. As the Christian myth of the Garden of Eden suggests, without a sense of clothing there could be no "nakedness." Hence, a mermaid knows no modesty until she is introduced to American culture, circa 1984.

All three films concentrate on the third aspect of the acculturation process: the learning of language (cf. *The Wild Child*). Most complex among these is *Greystoke* in which Tarzan acquires two proper languages (French and English) and, additionally, one communication system (the kinesics-based "language" of the apes). Psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan contends that, with the acquisition of language, the human subject also enters the realm of the Symbolic, which is governed by the rules of a particular society. This confluence of language and ideology is readily apparent in *Greystoke*. D'Arnot, the first European

man Tarzan encounters, teaches him both the languages and the customs of the Europeans. Characteristically, the first English word Tarzan masters is "razor," with which he then learns to shave his natural beard in favor of a clean-shaven, civilized look (cf. the Westerner's use of the barbershop). In an interesting inversion, however, Tarzan's facility with languages is represented as a *natural* talent. He is an accomplished mimic who can imitate the sounds of the wild as well as those of civilization—as he demonstrates at the dinner table, duplicating one diner's stuffy British dialect as well as birds' cries and a leopard's growl. Natural mimicry and cultural languages are brought together in the ambivalent, mediatory figure of Tarzan.

Splash updates the acquisition of language to the television age. Madison learns English from a six hour study of television—featuring *The Richard Simmons Show* and Crazy Eddie electronics commercials. Not surprisingly, she winds up talking in a television "dialect": pizza is "wonderfully delicious and soooo good for you!" Beneath the film's satire is the suggestion that Madison has breathed too deeply of civilization's popular culture. The completely innocent child, ready to believe anything her teacher (television) tells her, she weeps while watching *Bonanza*. Of the three savages, Madison is the most completely assimilated into human society—ironically so, because she is actually the least human.

Madison's rapid acquisition of language hints at another aspect of her ambivalence. Rather than a simple member of the natural environment, she may well be a representative from a different civilization, hidden underwater like a modern-day Atlantis. After all, she does have a name (although unpronounceable); she does understand written symbols (tracing Allen with his driver's license); and she wears a necklace featuring a hand-crafted coin. None of these aspects is

associated with creatures of the wild. Furthermore, *during the end credits*, Madison and Allen swim toward an unexplained array of lights on the ocean's floor. Could this be Atlantis? The film leaves it to the discretion of the viewer—that is, the viewer who has remained in the theater to see the entire cast list. In unconventional fashion, the shot of the city (?) lights occurs after the main actors have been listed and just before the featured players credits. The lights' ambiguity suits well a mediatory figure such as Madison. Her association with them helps to construct her as a mysterious trickster. Is she of the wild, or just of a civilization different from our own? *Splash* refused to clarify.

Charlie, on the other hand, continues his role as an inversion of Tarzan and Madison. He does not so much learn the language of the scientist Shephard, as do the two of them exchange languages. Shephard comes to understand Charlie's primitive communication system (cf. *Greystoke's* apes), as Charlie comes to understand Shephard. Still, in an attempt at "realism," I suppose, Charlie never really learns to speak English—or comes to fully understand society's customs.

One final part of the acculturation process is the savage's mating with a civilization figure. In *Greystoke*, Tarzan has sex with Jane Porter (Andie McDowell), a civilization figure whose position as such is somewhat attenuated since she is from America, which, in popular culture, is thought to be less "civilized" than England. Her sexual union with Tarzan—outside the bounds of ideologically approved marital sex—is marked by his leopard-like growl and ape-like posture. Their sex is a natural act. Madison's sexual appetite is presented as a naturally healthy one; she initiates sexual activity on the beach, in the elevator, in Allen's bedroom when he's trying to leave for work, and so on. In both films, sexual congress is marked as a wild, animalistic event. *Iceman's* savage also makes a natural

attempt at sexual activity—with a colleague of Shephard's. In line with Charlie's limited success with civilized food, clothing and language, he does not achieve coitus.

6. *The savage returns to his/her wilderness behavior, within the civilization environment.* This function occurs in a variety of places in the films: Tarzan's ape movements on the pool table, Madison's late-night bath, Charlie's attempted escape, and so on. Each is used to restate the conflict between the savage and his/her civilization environment—re-emphasizing his/her heterogeneity within it.

7. *The savage is deserted by the civilization figure.* D'Arnot's departure and the Earl's death in *Greystoke*, Allen's alienation from Madison, and Shephard's brief neglect of Charlie destroy the savage's motivation to complete the acculturation process, thus leading to the conclusion of that process. Once Tarzan is no longer trying to please the Earl, or Madison struggling for Allen's sake, there is little impetus to become civilized. Tarzan and Madison abandon civilization's veneer, which leads to the following function.



Christopher Lambert in *Greystoke: The Legend of Tarzan, Lord of the Apes*, directed by Hugh Hudson.

8. *The savage confronts a scientific institution.* Rather than an individual, the principle villain in each of these films is an institution, a *scientific* institution (in contrast to the scientist in *The Wild Child*). The American cinema has a long history of films which criticize institutions, government bureaucracy or a broad variety of organizations: *The Crowd* (1928), *Modern Times* (1936), *The President's Analyst* (1967, in which the villain is the phone company), *The Parallax View* (1974), and so on. This anti-institutional stance is underpinned by one of middle-class ideology's critical contradictions. Popular culture "mythology" valorizes the rugged individualist. Yet, in order to survive, our society cannot be completely laissez-faire; some degree of cooperation and hence conformity becomes necessary. Otherwise, we would live "the law of the jungle," and bourgeois society would cease to function effectively. The metaphor seems an appropriate one, since *Greystoke*, *Splash* and *Iceman* all present us with an actual savage, the apotheosis of the "rugged individual." The difficulty they have surviving in a civilization environment serves two purposes. First, it illustrates the impossibility of survival as a lone wolf in contemporary society. Second, it provides an outlet for anti-social impulses the viewer may have. By placing the savage in conflict with an institution these films condense the conventional individual/institution antinomy and inflect it so: wild individual versus civilized institution. As is so often the case in the late Western, these films stress the negative aspects of civilization—in particular, misguided technology and officious bureaucracy.

Science, in these films, invariably destroys what it studies. Of the three savages, Madison most visibly suffers—shedding her scales—but Tarzan and Charlie also begin to destruct from within when put under scientific observation. Indeed, scientific study threatens the existence of each of the savages. The films promote a

retreat from science, suggesting that it has overstepped its bounds and is unstoppable in its wrong-headed endeavor to explain the mysteries of nature. Some things are better left unknown, the films seem to be saying.

9. *The sympathetic civilization figure rejoins the savage.* The threat to the savage's existence motivates the sympathetic civilization figure's return. The two of them now unite in a battle against the common civilization enemy: the scientific institution. This turn of events brings D'Arnot, Allen and Shephard—and, presumably, the viewer's sympathies—over to the side of the wilderness. As noted before, each of them has a small element of the wilderness within him. Motivated by sympathy/love for the savage, they release the savage within themselves.

10. *The savage escapes civilization, accompanied by the sympathetic civilization figure.* This concluding function inverts function #2, resolving the enigma that was opened when the savage entered the milieu of civilization: Charlie returns to the ice, Tarzan to the tropical jungle and Madison to the ocean. Their escapes could be accomplished only with the aid of a civilization figure. Even though the savage is presented as solipsistic and self-sufficient in the wilderness, he/she still does not comprehend the "absurd intricacies" (D'Arnot's phrase) of civilized society.

How does this ending resolve the antinomic pair, wilderness/civilization? The savage *chooses* the wilderness, thus ending his/her previous ambivalence. He/she no longer mediates between two terms, but rather elects one (the wilderness) over the other. With the end to his/her ambivalence comes the underlying meaning of this small "genre": the raw, naked, language-less, sexy wilderness is to be preferred over cooked, clothed, linguistic, impotent civilization. But the genre does not suggest this without some am-



Timothy Hutton as Dr. Stanley Shephard and John Lone as the Iceman, his 40,000 year old counterpart in *Iceman*, directed by Fred Schepisi.

bivalence of its own. In two out of the three films (i.e., *Greystoke* and *Iceman*), the characters closest to our own presumably civilized experience (i.e., D'Arnot/Jane and Shephard, respectively) and thus most likely points of identification, do *not* accompany the savage into the wilderness. Hence, the films stop short of complete endorsement of the savage life. D'Arnot, and the viewer, watch in long shot as Tarzan sheds his clothing and disappears into the dense foliage. Shephard tries to go with Charlie, but they are separated by a crevice in the glacier and he watches helplessly as Charlie falls to his death within the (natural) ice. Only Allen follows his savage into the wilderness, after some initial hesitation. Allen's act marks *Splash* as a very different film from the other two, but it does not alter the fact that the three should be joined together in a genre structure. *Splash*, I would contend, simply follows to logical conclusion what is suggested in all three films: civilization is anathema and must be escaped. *Splash* is able to tread where *Greystoke* and *Iceman* do not because it is marked from the beginning as a comedy and a fantasy. Characters such as Tarzan and Charlie

may be implausible, but the films take pains to make their existence seem possible. *Splash* does not concern itself with such "realistic" details. The impossibility of a woman transforming herself into a mermaid is an inconsequential consideration, for this is fantasy. Since *Splash* is not limited by the ideologically determined code of realism, but, instead, by certain diegetic codes, it has more freedom to play out the wilderness/civilization antinomy without confining itself with questions of realism. If I may be permitted a psychoanalytic metaphor, *Splash* reveals the repressed of *Greystoke* and *Iceman*. The latter two, contained by the reality principle, do not allow the free expression of the civilization figure's desire to strip off his/her clothing and join the savage in the wild. *Splash*, *Greystoke* and *Iceman*, I believe, share a similar structure, but with sometimes significant differences in how that structure is articulated in the specific film.

Final Thoughts on the Westerner and the Savage

In concluding, I would like to return to my comparison between these films and the Western. The thematic structure of the now moribund Western has found new expression in these and other films, but with a significant difference that can be observed if one compares the protagonist's departure from civilization. A Westerner figure such as Ethan Edwards (John Wayne) in the late, but still mostly classical film, *The Searchers* (1956), leaves civilization of his own volition, as do Charlie, Tarzan and Madison. However, the civilizations that they are leaving differ greatly. The warm earthen colors of a settler's home perched on the edge of survival have become the cold steel blue and porcelain white of menacing scientific laboratories. The school marm struggling to educate the West has become the

scientist trying to explicate nature's magical mysteries. Late Westerns such as *The Searchers* and, especially, *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance* (1962) do mourn the passing of the wild Westerner, but they still present the burgeoning civilization as basically positive. This small genre that I have posited also grieves for the passing of the savage, but additionally paints a largely negative portrait of the civilization that has conquered the wilderness.

Notes

¹"Iceman," *Variety*, April 11, 1984, p. 16. Signed by "Gran."

²Jim Kitses, *Horizons West: Anthony Mann, Budd Boetticher, Sam Peckinpah: Studies of Authorship within the Western* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1969), p. 11.

³See especially, Kitses, pp. 21-22.

⁴*Ibid.*, p. 22.

⁵*Ibid.*, p. 11.

⁶For further explication, see Thomas Schatz, *Hollywood Genres: Formulas, Filmmaking, and the Studio System* (New York: Random House, 1981), pp. 45-80.

⁷*Ibid.*, pp. 36-41.

⁸Christian Metz, *Language and Cinema*, trans. Donna Jean Umiker-Sebeok (The Hague: Mouton, 1974), p. 152. Metz's comments on genre are insightful but too brief and inconclusive, especially in his short remarks on the Western.

⁹Will Wright, *Sixguns and Society: A Structural Study of the Western* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975), pp. 33.

¹⁰For example, his classification of four types of Westerns is based on little more than tautologies; *Shane* is a "classical" Western because it has a "classical" Western plot.

¹¹Tarzan is never so called in the film. The apes have no name for him and, in England, he is known as Lord John Clayton, heir to the title, the Earl of Greystoke. In the context of this paper I shall refer to him as Tarzan to better distinguish him from his grandfather, the Sixth Earl of Greystoke.

¹²Claude Lévi-Strauss, *The Raw and the Cooked*, trans. John and Doreen Weightman (New York: Harper and Row, 1969), pp. 64-65.